

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2007

3:05 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair  
Representative Bob Roses, Vice Chair  
Representative Anna Fairclough  
Representative Mark Neuman  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Representative Berta Gardner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Representative Andrea Doll

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3  
Relating to proclaiming April of 2007 as Sexual Assault  
Awareness Month.

- MOVED HCR 3 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 10  
Relating to reauthorization of federal funding for children's  
health insurance; and encouraging the Governor to support  
additional funding for and access to children's health  
insurance.

- MOVED CSHJR 10(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW: SYSTEM OF EARLY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HCR 3

SHORT TITLE: SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MEYER

02/12/07 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/12/07 (H) HES  
02/27/07 (H) HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HJR 10

SHORT TITLE: MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN

SPONSOR(s): HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES

02/15/07 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/15/07 (H) HES, FIN  
02/27/07 (H) HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MEYER

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HCR 3, as prime sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREA DOLL

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 3.

CHRISTINE ASHENBRENNER, Interim Program Administrator

Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HCR 3.

ROBERT MYERS, JR., Staff

to Representative Peggy Wilson

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 10, on behalf of the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee, sponsor by request, which is chaired by Representative Wilson.

KARLEEN JACKSON, Commissioner

Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HJR 10, and responded to questions.

CAROL PRENTICE, Project Manager

System for Early Education Development (SEED)

University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced the SEED presentation, and responded to questions.

JIM CALVIN, Partner  
McDowell Group  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the SEED commissioned survey results, and responded to questions.

ABBE HENSLEY, Director  
Ready to Read, Ready to Learn  
Representative, Alaska Humanities Forum  
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented Ready to Read, Ready to Learn, as an agency in collaboration with the SEED program.

JOY LYON, Executive Director  
Association for the Education of Young Children  
SE [Southeast] Alaska  
Representative, Alaska Resource and Referral Network  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the Quality Rating System (QRS), as an aspect of the SEED program.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

**CHAIR PEGGY WILSON** called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:05:12 PM](#). Representatives Fairclough, Roses, Seaton, and Gardner were present at the call to order. Representatives Cissna and Neuman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### HCR 3-SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

[3:05:52 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3, Relating to proclaiming April 2007, as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

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REPRESENTATIVE KEVIN MEYER, Alaska State Legislature, presented HCR 3, as prime sponsor, paraphrasing from a statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Sexual assault is a difficult and uncomfortable issue to discuss, however, given the status of this crime in our state, as leaders, we must continue to address and educate Alaskans on this issue.

HCR 3 acknowledges the problem of sexual assault in our state and the need for greater awareness, prevention, and education.

By observing this month, schools, community organizations, state agencies, and individuals are encouraged to seek out or sponsor activities that educate and work to increase the public's awareness of sexual assault in our state.

The statistics relating to these crimes should provide a sobering reality to all Alaskans: Sexual assault is one of the most violent and underreported crimes in Alaska.

Alaska's forcible rape rate is 2.5 times larger than the national average.

Alaska's rape rate is larger than California's and Washington's rape rate combined.

Alaska has six times the national average of reported child sexual assault.

These statistics are just based on what is reported to law enforcement officials and child protection services.

In 2006, the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault conducted a survey in Alaska focused on the public opinion on domestic violence and sexual assault.

Seventy-five percent of Alaskans polled have experienced or know someone who has experienced domestic violence or sexual assault.

Over the course of the past few years, the Legislature has made a great effort to increase penalties for sexual assault offenders and to make our laws tougher to combat this plague on our state.

However, we also need to encourage and work together with service providers and agencies in our state to increase awareness and education on this issue.

As a society, we must make a statement that sexual assault will not be tolerated and that we support organizations that assist sexual assault survivors and their loved ones.

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REPRESENTATIVE MEYER summarized that this resolution brings an awareness to this issue and confirms that it will not be tolerated. He pointed out that this resolution has been brought in previous years. Responding to a comment, he said that a permanent resolution may be in order.

[3:11:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH stated that generational violence exists in Alaska, and bringing a resolution forward, on an annual basis, serves to focus the attention of the legislature and the state on this recurring issue. Some homes experience domestic violence, or sexual assault, on a daily basis. The legislature, as a whole, has been bringing more attention to this issue for the last six years, and as such providing support for the victims, enforcement officials, and incidence responders. Increased accountability for perpetrators has also resulted from this campaign.

[3:13:05 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked whether public service announcements (PSAs) are increased during the awareness month.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH responded that all Alaskan citizens, and networking agencies, are requested to "reach out" to the community, at this particular time; including requests for additional PSAs. Referring to the STAR (Standing Together Against Rape), program, she said that it pays for additional PSAs to increase awareness.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER commented that the statistics for these abuses correlates with the statistics for Alaska's high rate of

alcohol abuse. She asked if the pro-active efforts to encourage reporting of sexual assaults may contribute to Alaska's high national ranking.

REPRESENTATIVE MEYER responded that alcohol and drugs "play a big part" in sexual assault. He reported that he introduced a bill, three years ago, to have alcohol included as an aggravator in sexual assault cases. He deferred to Representative Fairclough for further response.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH added that 80 percent of reported sexual assault cases indicate alcohol involvement. The percentage may be equal, if not higher, in domestic violence cases, she speculated. Speaking to the incidence rate, she conceded that it is possible that the reporting is more accurate in Alaska than in other states. The reporting rate by children has increased, due to the outreach in the schools. The children may be reporting more, however, the 500 annually reported, statewide, adult cases have remained a constant.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN suggested that awareness, and societal tolerance levels, have changed over the years. The "swept under the rug" approach does not occur as frequently. By having this resolution brought before the legislature on an annual basis, it keeps the conversation alive and before the legislature. He relayed that only 27 percent of committed crimes are ever reported. Further, if this does not directly affect your life, it can be overlooked. Bringing this before the legislature each year provides a certain level of awareness, and encourages involvement. Less tolerance in society is important to cultivate. He opined that mandatory sentencing for sexual molesters has played a significant role.

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CHAIR WILSON restated that the percentage of alcohol involvement is integral to the issue.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES echoed the importance of educating the school children, to cultivate long range effects. Additionally, he relayed that when legislation was passed requiring the public teachers to report any suspected incidences of abuse to authorities, the statistics soared.

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDREA DOLL, Alaska State Legislature, stated support for HCR 3, and said that she is pleased to have this brought to the community for discussion. As a past worker at the AWARE (Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies) Incorporated Shelter, she recounted an incident to illustrate the difficulty of abuse as a topic for conversation, but emphasized how important it is to have such conversations.

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CHRISTINE ASHENBRENNER, Interim Program Administrator, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, stated support for HCR 3, and stressed the importance of having an annual awareness month. She related a rape story, from her time as a volunteer at AWARE:

In the winter, ... [the rape victim] walked through a neighborhood looking for a light on, because she didn't want to bother anybody. ... [This resolution] keeps the light on across the state, ... it is very important that we keep talking about this, take it out of the closet, say it is wrong, ... hold perpetrators accountable, and support victim services.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER commented that it gives new meaning to the phrase: "We're keeping the light on for you."

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REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH moved to report HCR 3 out of committee with individual recommendations. There being no objection, HCR 3 was so moved.

HJR 10-MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN

[3:29:43 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 10, Relating to reauthorization of federal funding for children's health insurance; and encouraging the Governor to support additional funding for and access to children's health insurance.

ROBERT MYERS, JR., Staff to Representative Peggy Wilson, Alaska State Legislature, presented HJR 10 on behalf of the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee, sponsor on request, which is chaired by Representative Wilson, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Due in large part to the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the percentage of low-income children in the United States without health coverage has fallen by one-quarter since SCHIP was created in 1997, despite the erosion of private health coverage over this period. More than 4 million low-income children, most of whom would otherwise be uninsured, are enrolled in SCHIP.

This remarkable success, however, is now threatened. Unlike Medicaid, an entitlement program whose federal funding increases automatically to compensate for increases in health-care costs (as well as increases in caseloads), SCHIP is a block grant with a fixed annual funding level. That block grant is due to run out in September, 2007. Denali KidCare, the form that SCHIP takes in Alaska, will be put in a very precarious position when that happens.

Congress has allocated \$5 billion for FY 2007 for all SCHIPs. Currently there are no further allocations.

The number of children in the program has been declining since 2003 because of the frozen income guidelines. About half of the children that dropped out were picked up by Medicaid.

28 percent of Alaska's population is under 18. This compares to the US population, which is 25 percent.

In 2003, Alaska spent almost \$1,200 more per enrollee for Medicaid than the national average. We rank second highest in the nation for expenditures per child.

Currently, we have 7,600 children enrolled in Denali KidCare. In FY 2006, we spent \$25,894,400. Of that, \$7,688,300 was state money. Federal money accounted for \$18,206,000 of the funding.

The state expends an average of \$2,114 per child and \$1,966 per pregnant woman enrolled in Denali KidCare. These are the cheapest expenditures per person of all Medicaid programs in the state.

In the past, we have relied heavily on unallocated funds from the general SCHIP fund. For example, if Virginia has not used all of its allotted federal funds for its SCHIP, Alaska could get some of those funds. However, now that the programs across the nation have matured, there are no more unused funds. Alaska is one of 14 states expected to have a shortfall in SCHIP by May of 2007.

The Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for 2007 is 57.58 percent regular and 70.31 percent enhanced. Medicaid is matched under the regular rate while Denali KidCare is matched at the enhanced rate.

For 2008, we are anticipating roughly a 67-33 percent split for federal/state expenditures for Denali KidCare.

The president's budget includes a provision to extend SCHIP by five years and increase the funding by \$5 billion.

DHSS estimates that Alaska will exhaust its dedicated federal funds somewhere in the second quarter of FY 2008. This will leave us with a \$2.6 million shortfall that will have to be covered by the state general fund.

We ask that this committee and the Legislature pass this resolution to urge Congress to renew its funding for SCHIP in general and Denali KidCare in particular so that we can continue to provide adequate coverage for the children of Alaska

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER clarified the funding distribution, and asked if Alaska is spending above allocation, or whether the federal funding will no longer be available.

MR. MYERS responded that SCHIP is a matching block grant, and restated how recipients may default to Medicare.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER stated concern for establishing a program dependent on receipt of tenuousness federal funding. She asked whether a situation might occur in which the state incurs expenditures and the matching funds are never received; a question for Congress perhaps.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH reported her experience of a federal block grant that was awarded, but ultimately reneged upon.

CHAIR WILSON offered, "You don't spend it until you have it."

MR. MYERS relayed that funds will begin to wane in May, 2007. Additional federal funding may be provided in September, 2007, but until then the state must address the four and one-half month funding gap.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN directed attention to the terms "children of modest means," and "children who qualify," page 2, lines 5 and 19 respectively, and asked how this is determined. Further he asked what it equates to for a family of four.

MR. MYERS answered that the qualifiers are stipulated in Alaska Statute. It is calculated at 160 percent of the federal poverty level, is based on family size, and is specifically listed up to a family of eight. He located the base poverty level figures, in the statutes, and read the first three parameters:

Household of: 1 - \$1,635 per month  
2 - \$2,208 per month  
3 - \$2,782 per month

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KARLEEN JACKSON, Commissioner, Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS), stated support for HJR 10, and reported that the issue of children's health insurance funding is at the forefront, both at the governor's office and at the federal level.

[3:43:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH asked how the state is planning to handle the shortfall of funds, beginning in May.

COMMISSIONER JACKSON relayed the options, previously outlined, that would be used prior to defaulting to Medicare: reauthorization of the SHIP program; redistribution of excess funds, from other state's SCHIP authorizations; and a component to revise the formula used in redistribution of funds.

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN asked if a resolution is a stable means to solicit federal funding, and whether there is a precedent for HJR 10.

MR. MYERS offered that when congress authorized the original SCHIP block funding in 1997, the grant authorization totals were established for ten years; through 2007.

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CHAIR WILSON closed public testimony.

[3:46:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved Conceptual Amendment 1:

Page 2, line 21

Following "sent", insert "both electronically and by postal service"

There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted.

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REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH moved to report HJR 10, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHJR 10(HES) was reported from the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee.

OVERVIEW: SYSTEM OF EARLY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

[3:48:46 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the final order of business would be an overview by the System for Early Education Development (SEED) program.

[3:49:46 PM](#)

CAROL PRENTICE, Project Manager, System for Early Education Development (SEED), University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), stated that the mission, of this federally funded program, is to support the professional development of people who work in the early childhood workforce sector. The SEED Counsel is comprised of twenty stakeholders, who are guiding the program through its fourth and final cycle. During this final year, the council determined that an economic impact report could provide a lasting impact on the future of child care in Alaska. Thus, the McDowell Group was commissioned to design, and conduct, a statewide survey. She said that "good policy comes from good data," and she introduced the speaker who engineered the study.

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JIM CALVIN, Partner, McDowell Group, presented slides of the survey results, accompanied by a committee handout. He relayed that the scope of the study was to measure the economic impacts of the early education and child care sector in the state's economy. It focused on education and care of children under six years of age: economic impacts measured in terms of employment; spending on child care services; and the role of child care services in allowing Alaska families to earn income. In 2005, the statistics presented in slide 5 [page 2], "Economic Impact on Alaska, Working Parent Demographics," indicated: 62,913 children under six in Alaska; 63 percent (39,400) in households where all parents in workforce; represents 29,400 households.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked if the 62,000 represented the total number of children in Alaska, or the ones who are receiving out of home child care.

MR. CALVIN responded that of the 63,000 children under six, 39,000 are receiving paid child care services, including in-home services.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN further clarified the assumption that 62,000 under six would average 10,100 per age group, and 39,000 households figure would also be divided by six to arrive at the average number impacted.

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MR. CALVIN continued with the slide titled "Economic Impact on Alaska" [slide 7, page 3], and explained the importance of child care to "free" parents to join the workforce. The impact is significant, representing 29,400 available workers, or 9.5 percent of Alaska's resident workforce. Although the income characteristics of this segment have not been surveyed directly, it is surmised that this segment averages \$28,820 per family. The availability of child care services allows a family to increase the household income, and raise their standard of living. The average Alaskan family earns \$72,000 per year. On request, he clarified that with child care available, a family member is able to leave the home and earn \$28,820 in additional annual income, effectively increasing the family average to \$72,000.

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MR. CALVIN explained that the model indicates a workforce of 7,400, who are directly or indirectly involved in the early child care workforce sector, earning an annual combined wage of \$124 million. The number of workers who are directly providing care for children, less than six years of age is 6,500, with a combined annual earning of \$95 million. In response to a question, he stated that the annual individual payroll figures would be presented.

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MR. CALVIN explained the graph on slide 9, [page 3], to illustrate how the child care sector ranks with other state industries. Representing about 1.5 percent of Alaska employment opportunities, the sector is comparable to opportunities in air transportation and residential/nonresidential building construction.

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REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH asked what the economic study was based on to establish these numbers.

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MR. CALVIN responded that the data was gathered from secondary sources: Department of Labor [Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD)] figures, Bureau of Economic Analysis

information, census data, America Community Survey data, and other published governmental data.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH questioned how "soft or hard these numbers" are, and requested a base line statistic to support the numbers being presented.

MR. CALVIN responded that the states licensing database for child care was a key source.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH asked if an assumption was made that the licensee would be maximizing the potential enrollment numbers, and how that factor was considered.

MR. CALVIN responded that a survey of child care providers was conducted, and the DLWD was an important source.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked if there is a possible overlap in the 6,500 direct jobs with parents who work in the child care sector. He asked if this factor was taken into consideration.

MR. CALVIN responded that a small percentage of overlap may occur; however, this survey indicates the number of persons made available for other work, due to the availability of child care. In follow-up, he said that there was not a direct correlation of parents employed as child care providers drawn by this survey.

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REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA inquired in what size community the numbers begin to diminish, and suggested that the smaller communities may not be adequately represented.

MR. CALVIN relayed that a statewide, household survey was conducted, with 700 urban and rural residents participating, and that further discussion on that survey will be forthcoming in the presentation.

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MR. CALVIN reported that the early learning, and child care sector, annual wages range from \$16,000-\$21,000. For perspective, he said, the average wage in the Alaskan economy is \$38,000 and the average wage paid to a child care giver is half of that amount; one of the poorest paid workers in the economy.

He pointed out that these are the people who are entrusted to care for the youngest children in our society. He presented slides 11 and 12, [page 4], to illustrate the contrast of long-term socio economic impacts for children who were in early learning centers vs. disadvantaged children, without such access. The percentages are based on data from specifically focused, small scale, long term survey projects, conducted in other states.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER cautioned that the data would not reflect whether a child was from an affluent home, with a private nanny, and became a college educated member of society, or was a child in a corporate/institutional day care setting, from a home that did not provide for college education. She suggested that these are variables that may not be taken into account by the percentages being presented.

MR. CALVIN agreed, and offered to provide further information on the referenced studies.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN asked how can the numbers are associated to the age of the child, beginning from birth to six years old.

MR. CALVIN responded that the answer to that question lies beyond the scope of this survey.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON clarified that the statistics presented are not correlated to the Alaska SEED program, and that the results are from a survey conducted elsewhere in the United States.

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MR. CALVIN presented slide 13 [page 5] titled "Household Survey Overview," which established the criteria used for the survey. This criteria provided the data for the analysis, presented on the subsequent slides. The 725 households surveyed responded to questions regarding use of child care services, costs for those services, and opinion of publicly funded child care. Also, the responses were designated urban, rural I, and rural II, relating to communities with populations of above 8,000, 2,000-8,000, and

less than 2,000 respectively. Mr. Calvin relayed that in households with children under six, 36 percent reported that either the quality, cost, or availability of child care services, had prevented someone in their household from seeking employment, or had in some way restricted the number of hours that they could work. Cost was cited by 50 percent of the respondents, as the primary constraint in obtaining child care, while 25 percent indicated quality as an issue, and the remaining 25 percent stipulated availability. In rural Alaska, 50 percent cited availability as the issue, 25 percent indicated cost, and the remaining 25 percent stipulated quality. Cost data suggests a range from \$400-\$900 per month, depending on the age of the child, and the location of the service. One in seven households, with children under six in child care, receives financial assistance for the service. Additionally, 87 percent of Alaskans consider it important, or very important, for state government to provide financial support for early education and child care.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN questioned the wisdom of combining early education with child care, and asked if the survey allowed for differentiation of these two entities.

MR. CALVIN relayed that quality child care is considered to be early education, for purposes of this survey, and he conceded that the result may otherwise have been different. He speculated, "No one would like to provide financial support for low quality child care services, or just babysitting services, ... that's a forgone conclusion."

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN pointed out the questionable learning abilities of a six month to one year old child. He restated his interest in knowing what the public sentiment would be for funding child care from birth to six.

MR. CALVIN suggested that the committee focus on the broader aspects of the survey. Those being: the ability of family members to contribute to the workforce; public opinion of state funding for early education/child care; and the availability/affordability of existing services. Follow-up research would be important, he said, to further the scope of the survey and answer more questions.

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CHAIR WILSON conjectured that public sentiment for funding may be high because Alaska does not impose a state income tax. She suggested that if an existing tax had to be increased to fund these services, public opinion might be different.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER agreed with the previous legislator that early education and child care are not the same, and asserted that care givers for young children, 2-13 months old, are daycare providers, not teachers. She opined that the way in which the survey question is posed, may effect the response, and stated that it would be helpful to have a copy of the survey.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES reiterated the importance of separating early education from child care.

[4:30:11 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON pointed out that appropriate interaction, and stimulation, of the young child is important, and would constitute quality day care, as opposed to babysitting where little interaction may occur. She agreed that the care giver would, however, not be termed a teacher.

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MR. CALVIN said that funding for early education and child care ranks second to k-12 education, and leads college level education, new roads/highways, and local government [slide 20, page 7]. Elaborating, he said that this is typical for this type of survey; education always comes out on top. Two successive pie charts, slides 21 and 22 [pages 7 and 8], indicated that Alaskan residents spend \$150 million yearly on child care, federal funding covers \$74.8 million, and the state funds \$13.3 million. The federal allocation funds \$37.7 million to the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) child care program office, \$27.8 million for Head Start programs, and \$9.3 million is directed to tribal organizations. Alaska allocates \$7 million to the DHSS child care program office, and 6.3 million for Head Start programs.

MS. PRENTICE pointed out that nationally, Alaska is one of ten states without a state-funded, statewide, early childhood

education system, although funding levels and focuses vary between the states.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES related that some states may fund full-day kindergarten, which could skew the reported statistic.

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REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH asked by what means the survey was conducted.

MR. CALVIN explained that it was a telephone survey. Speaking directly to the participants helped to identify the type of child care used, how many hours needed each day, the cost, and where people viewed potential sources for funding to meet child care needs.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH asked if it was a random dial process, and she suggested that by only contacting residents with telephones, a vast number of impoverished households may have been overlooked. Additionally she asked whether cell telephone numbers were utilized.

MR. CALVIN maintained that the vast majority of Alaskan households do have telephone service. Further, he said that the random digit dial approach only works in the major cities. In the rural areas a telephone book was used for random dialing.

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REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN inquired about the cost for the study, and who covered that cost.

MS. PRENTICE responded that SEED commissioned the study, as a federally funded project, for approximately \$60,000.

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ABBE HENSLEY, Director, Ready to Read, Ready to Learn; Representative, Alaska Humanities Forum, described the program as "a public/private collaborative effort providing leadership for Alaska's investment in it's youngest citizens, ensuring a best beginning for children, and a vital future for Alaska." Ready to Read, Ready to Learn is co-managed by the Alaska Humanities Forum, the United Way of Anchorage, and staffed by both entities. The original task force was formed out of concern for low literacy. Additionally, compelling aspects of

early development of the brain, birth to 2 years, has been brought forward. She highlighted the importance of supporting family involvement, as the foundation and "heart" of the project. Recommendations in the report are included for: In the Home, Out of the Home, Child Care and Early Education Programs, and Looking Ahead. She called attention to the document titled "Investing in Alaska's Young Children," dated February 2007, which details the usage and accomplishments of the FY06, \$250,000 appropriation. The current funding request will further the development of the early learning guidelines for birth to 5 year-old expectations, and printing costs of the document, which is being translated to other languages. Continued work will be accomplished in the areas of: on-going community conversations regarding early learning; securing additional private funds; foundational development of an early education, statewide system; and continued collaboration with the state to develop a quality rating system (QRS) for child care and early learning programs.

[4:50:36 PM](#)

JOY LYON, Executive Director, Association for the Education of Young Children, SE [Southeast] Alaska; Representative, Alaska Resource and Referral Network, explained that the goal of a statewide QRS provides a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and educational settings. Additionally, it ensures a standard for a consistent, unified, supportive approach, in whatever location and learning environment a child is being received. The QRS is a core piece of a comprehensive system, for assessing, improving, and communicating what constitutes quality in early learning. National programs are in place and available to assist in establishing, and measuring, these achievable goals. She reported that 15 states have a QRS in place, and Alaska is one of 25 that are developing standards. Additional benefits of a QRS include: providing information, and guidelines, to parents who are evaluating a program, as well as accountability for measurable program outcomes to assure public and private contributors. Ms. Lyon reported that states with a QRS have experienced positive impacts. Three states evaluated found: increased education level of workers; increased staff retention; increased salaries; and an increase in the number of children on child care assistance who are entering into higher quality programs.

[4:58:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that implementing these procedures will cause an increase in current child care costs, which has been cited as an impediment by the majority of the households surveyed. He asked how families are expected to afford the proposed higher quality child care, and how does increasing the cost make more child care available.

MS. LYON suggested that "people don't want to pay for low quality day care." By implementing measurements for which programs are meeting quality standards, monetary support can be attracted from the public and private sector. She pointed out that businesses experience increased productivity when working parents know that their children are in a safe and healthy environment. These outside dollars do need to be brought into the system, or high turnover and low quality child care will persist. In 2006, a statewide pilot program was brought to 120 classrooms, in six communities, and a baseline assessment was conducted. During the course of the year, areas for improvement of quality were identified, consultation was made available, and incentives were offered. The evaluation of this pilot program is still pending release, and will allow the development of a recommended system to be implemented by November, 2007.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES stressed the importance for stringent licensing, and reporting, of child care providers, as part of ensuring quality services.

[5:03:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN inquired as to what the cost would be to implement the recommendations, and fully fund the program.

MS. HENSLEY responded that some recommendations cannot have a dollar value directly attached. It is intended that this initiative will continue to be a public/private partnership. She said that it is not the state's responsibility to ensure that all of these recommendations are implemented.

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REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH noted that the United Way of Anchorage is a sponsor of the program.

MS. HENSLEY named the various sponsors and private entities that provide financial support. To a follow up question, she said

that, in FY 07, \$73,000 was received from the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), for developing the QRS. Additionally, \$1.5 million was included in the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) budget request, to fund the phased in implementation of the QRS. With close to \$1 million dollars, 30-40 child care centers, or other early education programs, could be initiated across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH clarified that the committee is being asked to support the \$1.5 million request in the EED budget.

MS. LYON confirmed that understanding.

MS. HENSLEY interjected that the second pilot program, called "Parks for Kids" was conducted in Fairbanks and deemed a success.

[5:09:56 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.