

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 22, 2013

1:33 p.m.

[1:33:30 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Kelly called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair  
Senator Anna Fairclough, Vice-Chair  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Mike Dunleavy  
Senator Donny Olson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman

ALSO PRESENT

Carl Rose, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau; Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Colin Olnor, Senior Accounting Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks; Nick Gasca, Supervising Attorney, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Fairbanks; Chris Piech, Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks; Eddy Hix, Self, Fairbanks; Casey Peterson, Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks; Taber Rehbaum, Artic Alliance for People, Fairbanks; Sara Malenfant, Parent, Fairbanks; Heather Lambert, Parent, Fairbanks; Duncan Marriott, Self, Fairbanks; Margaret Hernandez, UAF Accounting, Fairbanks; Roger C. Berggraff, Self, Fairbanks; Melissa D. Kelsey, Self, Fairbanks; Aldean Kilbourn, Self, Fairbanks; Kaitlyn Morse, North Star Youth Court, Fairbanks; Luke Hopkins, Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough; Brenda Luthi, Educator, Matsu; Michelle Tarin, Speech Pathologist, Matsu School District, Matsu; Nathan Dunn, Alaska Addiction Rehabilitation Services, Matsu; Lydia Lester, Infant Learning Program, Matsu; Kelly

McBride, Early Childhood Partnership, Matsu; Polly Smith, Early Childhood Partnership, Matsu; Kevin Munson, Chief Executive Officer, Matsu Health Services, Matsu; Adam Naranjo, Support Staff Supervisor, Matsu Services for Children and Adults, Matsu; Lynda Gregory, Parent, Fairbanks; Astrid Larson, Self, Fairbanks; Jim Wanamaker, Retired District Court Judge, Anchorage; Terri Lynn Draeger, Student, University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage; Betty Walters, Self, Kodiak; Faith Myers, Self, Anchorage; Dorrance Collins, Mental Health Advocates, Anchorage; Stephen Trimble, Chairman, UAA Geological Sciences Advisory Board, Anchorage; Donna White, Self, Anchorage; Julie Rabeau, Self, Anchorage; Kristin Ramstad, Advocate, Parents as Teachers, Anchorage; Jaad McElroy, Education Coordinator, Head Start and Early Head Start, Anchorage; Melissa Pickle, Self, Anchorage; Jonathan Teeters, Partnership Manager, Best Beginnings, Anchorage; Sam DuBois, Self, Anchorage; Jerry Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Anchorage; Jennifer Smerud, Director of Community Relations, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Anchorage; Ronald Wilson, Anchorage Alumni Group, Anchorage; Craig Johnnie, Anchorage Alumni Group, Anchorage; Kima Hamilton, Self, Anchorage; Doreen Schenkenberger, Anchorage Alumni Group, Anchorage; Rachael Gaedeke, Lead Advocate, Victims for Justice, Anchorage; Tammy Williamson, Youth Job Center, Anchorage; Rosalie Nadeau, CEO, Akeela House, Anchorage; Andree McLeod, Self, Anchorage; John Crews, Board Member, Alaska Vocational and Technical Center (AVTEC), Anchorage; Louis A. Bencardino, Self, Seward; Andree McLeod, Self, Anchorage; Christina Pichotta, Self, Seward; Willard Dunham, Self, Seward; Scot Wheat, Self, Homer; Ron Long, Self, Seward; Lolita Brache, Self, Homer; Rick Malley, Self, Homer; Kim Burrows, Self, Homer; Hal Smith, Self, Homer; Liz Downing, Self, Homer; Joyanna Geisler, Director, Kenai Peninsula Independent Living Center, Centers for Independent Living, Homer

#### SUMMARY

CS HB 65 (FIN)

APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

CS HB 65 (FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CS HB 66 (FIN)

APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

CS HB 66 (FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb65

#hb66

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 65(FIN)

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs, capitalizing funds, and making reappropriations; and providing for an effective date."

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 66(FIN)

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program and making a reappropriation; and providing for an effective date."

FAIRBANKS, MATSU

[1:35:04 PM](#)

COLIN OLNER, SENIOR ACCOUNTING STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) accounting initiative. He stated that the initiative would introduce an e-learning controllership degree program at UAF. He stressed that the program would allow students to obtain their education without leaving their communities. He stressed that Alaska faced a crucial shortage of trained accountants. He pointed out that the demand for accountants would continue to grow as Alaska's current accountants retire and businesses expand. He shared that a recent national study showed that 75 percent of accountants would retire in the following decade. He felt that local businesses had difficulty finding trained accountants within Alaska, so they were forced to hire accountants outside of Alaska.

[1:37:05 PM](#)

NICK GASCA, SUPERVISING ATTORNEY, ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in

support of a line item in the Health and Human Services Community Services Block Grants be increased by \$200,000 for eligible essential programs in Fairbanks could be funded, specifically Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC). He explained that ALSC provided essential human services to low income Alaskans; and also helped the local and state economy. He remarked that for every one dollar invested in ALSC, five dollars of economic benefit occurred for the client, the community, and the state.

[1:37:55 PM](#)

CHRIS PIECH, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the controllership track accounting program at University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). He explained that UAF was geared toward preparing accounting to become Certified Public Accountants, but not every accounting student would prefer that training. He stressed that the controllership track would provide students other options while they pursue their accounting degrees. He pointed to the current lack of accountants in the country and state. Within the following decade, more than half all accountants were expected to retire. He explained that the controllership track was designed to be inviting and flexible for potential students.

[1:39:11 PM](#)

EDDY HIX, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), voiced support of the accounting controllership program at UAF. He shared that his mother had recently sent him a job posting from an Alaskan company that was seeking accountants that were not Certified Public Accountants (CPAs). He stressed that the controllership program would allow students to obtain their education without leaving their communities. He stressed that Alaska faced a crucial shortage of trained accountants. He pointed out that the demand for accountants would continue to grow as Alaska's current accountants retire and businesses expand.

[1:40:02 PM](#)

CASEY PETERSON, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of the accounting controllership program at UAF. He felt that the program would strengthen UAF and Alaska's future.

[1:40:49 PM](#)

TABER REHBAUM, ARTIC ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), urged support of Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and early childhood education at the governor's recommended funding levels. She requested funding for the Health and Human Services Community Block Grants. She also spoke in support of behavioral health services funding. She stressed the importance of needed behavioral health programs, because of the high rates of suicide, domestic violence, and substance abuse. She stressed that a robust behavioral health system was essential to keeping the citizens of Alaska healthy and productive; and to reduce the need for costly incarceration or institutionalization.

[1:43:01 PM](#)

SARA MALENFANT, PARENT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) funding. She remarked that former Governor Tony Knowles had adopted the No Child Left Behind Act; which affected both the mental health of the community, and the education system. She stressed that the children were the future of Alaska.

[1:44:24 PM](#)

HEATHER LAMBERT, PARENT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), urged an increase in the base student allocation (BSA). She explained that it would be easier for districts to create plans for upcoming year, if the class sizes were significantly smaller. She pointed out that cutting the number of teachers would decrease the student to teacher ratio. She explained that her son was in a classroom of 29 children, and pointed out that teachers of such large classes were hurting and exhausted by the end of the day. She felt that teachers of such large classes were more like managers rather than teachers. She stressed that kids needed direct attention from teachers. She felt that it was necessary to use Alaska's funds to invest in Alaska's most valuable asset: children.

[1:46:06 PM](#)

DUNCAN MARRIOTT, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), urged support for increased funding for DEED. He felt that the funding needed to match the rate of inflation utilities costs in education funding, such that the funding for actual education by teachers did not get decreased every year. He remarked that the flat funding for education had decreased for teachers. He stressed that Alaska valued education, because education itself had value. He felt that each dollar spent on students saved money as they grow older. He shared that he had observed both small and large sized classes, and shared that as the class sizes grow, teachers change how they teach.

[1:48:17 PM](#)

MARGARET HERNANDEZ, UAF ACCOUNTING, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), voiced support of funding for the Accounting Controllership Program at UAF. She pointed out that qualified and experience accountants were in high demand in the state, but the state was experiencing serious shortages of qualified accountants, forcing employers to seek out of state accounting students. She felt that encouraging funding for this program would encourage local employers to recruit local graduates. She felt that the controllership track would be beneficial for students that were interested in the accounting field, but had no plans of obtaining a CPA license.

[1:50:21 PM](#)

ROGER C. BERGGRAFF, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), urged support for funding for the new UAF programs. He stressed the importance of education that results in employment in the state. He felt that mining industry, maps training, engineering, nursing, and accounting programs were important educational programs. He felt that young Alaskans had the right to an education that would put them on a track towards becoming gainfully employed in Alaska, in industries that would enhance Alaska's economy.

Vice-Chair Fairclough shared that the Senate had included funding for the nursing program in Bristol Bay and other University of Alaska funds.

[1:53:09 PM](#)

MELISSA D. KELSEY, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of therapeutic courts. She shared that she was a graduate of the therapeutic courts program, and felt that the program enabled her to choose to breakdown and begin to restructure her life. She was able to develop tools, gain effective coping skills, and become accountable for her choices and collateral consequences. The program allowed her to co-labor and facilitate a reality check program that spoke to second time offenders and mental health providers in the community.

[1:55:19 PM](#)

ALDEAN KILBOURN, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding the Digital Learning Initiative, specifically the Online will Libraries (OWL) and Homework Help programs. She stated that she had provided a detailed letter to the committee, outlining her feelings about why those programs were cost effective means for providing help for all Alaskans.

[1:56:26 PM](#)

KAITLYN MORSE, NORTH STAR YOUTH COURT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), urged a \$200,000 increase to the Health and Human Services Community Matching Block Grants. She shared that North Star Youth Court was one of the many programs in her community that had benefitted from the grant program. She stated that for every case that North Star Youth Court and other youth court takes saved the State \$10,000 in administrative fees.

[1:57:41 PM](#)

LUKE HOPKINS, MAYOR, FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH (via teleconference), testified in support of University of Alaska Fairbanks funding. He specifically spoke to the Salmon Research program and the Unmanned Arial Vehicle (UAV) Test Program application. He suggested a moderate increase to the Fairbanks North Star school system operating budget, in order to sustain existing jobs in the community. He also urged an increase of funding for Centers for Independent Living, with a specific focus on transit improvements.

[2:00:10 PM](#)

AT EASE

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RECONVENED

[2:00:56 PM](#)

BRENDA LUTHI, EDUCATOR, MATSU (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Alaska Teacher Placement program. She stated that she and her husband moved to Fairbanks in 1978 to work at the Alaska Teacher Placement to begin their teaching careers. She had worked as a teacher for 28 years in both rural and urban communities in Alaska, and retired. She currently works with the Alaska Statewide Mentor project as a teacher mentor. She explained that she had volunteered at a job fair that was hosted by Alaska Teacher Placement. She stressed the importance of Alaska Teacher Placement, because it focused on recruiting quality teachers for Alaska schools.

[2:02:58 PM](#)

MICHELLE TARIN, SPEECH PATHOLOGIST, MATSU SCHOOL DISTRICT, MATSU (via teleconference), urged support for early childhood education funding. She shared that she and her mother had experience working in high quality early education centers. She felt like some private preschools encourage children to be submissive when expressing emotion. She felt that a public preschool with teachers that followed outcome driven curriculum would better provide children for success in school and life. She felt that the social and emotional instruction that was provided by early childhood educators was imperative to the success of her daughter.

[2:05:19 PM](#)

NATHAN DUNN, ALASKA ADDICTION REHABILITATION SERVICES, MATSU (via teleconference), voiced support of behavioral health services funding. He specifically pointed to \$8.3 million reduction in that funding, and urged the committee to reinstate those funds. He felt that the communities would suffer without behavioral health services.

[2:06:58 PM](#)

LYDIA LESTER, INFANT LEARNING PROGRAM, MATSU (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the early

intervention learning program and early childhood education funding. She felt that a focus on early learning in children would prevent problems later in life. She shared that she had recently conversed with a parent of a two-year-old, who expressed confidence in her son's ability to learn in part because of early intervention learning.

[2:08:36 PM](#)

KELLY MCBRIDE, EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP, MATSU (via teleconference), testified in support of Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and pre-K funding. She explained that the State pre-K program was established because of the Best Beginnings partnership. She stated that the Matsu School District had worked Head Start to provide preschool for eighty children in the Matsu, who were either on the waiting list or above the income requirements to attend Head Start. She shared that there were currently preschools at Trapper Creek Elementary, Shaw Elementary, and Wasilla High Schools taught by highly qualified teachers. The students in the preschool programs were on track to be prepared the following fall socially and academically in kindergarten.

Co-Chair Kelly handed the gavel to Vice-Chair Fairclough.

[2:10:32 PM](#)

POLLY SMITH, EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP, MATSU (via teleconference), urged support for funding all DEED programs. She testified in support of an increase in funding for Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers. She stated that she was a trainer for parents in the Best Beginnings partnership. She shared that 80 percent of children that enter kindergarten with less than 4000 words never catch up to their peers, and only 6 percent of those students go to college. She felt that Alaska needed early childhood education programs to support parents and caregivers in developing opportunities for all children. She also spoke against using state money for private schools.

[2:12:03 PM](#)

KEVIN MUNSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MATSU HEALTH SERVICES, MATSU (via teleconference), thanked the committee for maintaining the governor's recommended budget for

behavioral health services funding. He encouraged a focus on the valuable services for individuals and families in Alaska communities. He felt that the behavioral health programs helped people educationally and vocationally.

[2:13:12 PM](#)

ADAM NARANJO, SUPPORT STAFF SUPERVISOR, MATSU SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS, MATSU (via teleconference), read a letter from the Matsu resident, Allison Verbose:

I'm the mother of a 25-year-old son who experiences autism, and who has recently received support from the Complex Behavior Collaborative. The supports provided by the Complex Behavior Collaborative have helped my son decrease aggressive behaviors, remain stable in his placement, and function successfully in his community. Most importantly, the Complex Behavior Collaborative has enabled my son to remain in Alaska, receiving services in his own community, rather than being forced to seek services outside of the state. The ongoing support has proven immensely helpful. We have seen excellent progress, and believe that continued support is necessary in order to ensure that my son continue to live a full life within his community.

[2:15:35 PM](#)

LYNDA GREGORY, PARENT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of DEED funding, specifically an increase in the BSA. She stressed that children were Alaska's most valuable resource. She stressed that a low teacher to student ratio was imperative to the classroom learning environment. She felt that large class sizes resulted in teachers dealing with crowd control, rather than actually teaching.

[2:17:10 PM](#)

ASTRID LARSON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), encouraged DEED funding, specifically education funding in Fairbanks. She shared that she has foster children, and remarked that the impact of good teachers is remarkable. She urged an increase of \$200,000 to the Health and Human Services Community Services Block Grants. She also voiced support for the Fairbanks Youth Court.

2:22:22 PM

AT EASE

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RECONVENED

ANCHORAGE

Co-Chair Meyer stated that he was in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO).

2:24:01 PM

JIM WANAMAKER, RETIRED DISTRICT COURT JUDGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the therapeutic courts. He felt that the program provided a pathway for saving the State money. He explained that it cost approximately \$10,000 to put a person through the therapeutic court program; and it cost approximately \$70,000 to incarcerate an individual that was convicted of a Driving Under the Influence (DUI) third time offence conviction.

2:25:21 PM

TERRI LYNN DRAEGER, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the engineering buildings at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and UAF. She felt that the engineering buildings were needed to stay credited and increase needed space. She pointed out that there was an anticipation of an influx of engineering major from the Anchorage Engineering Academy, so the labs would be overflowing with a result in a wait list. She explained that the funds from the previous session allowed for groundbreaking the following session, and she didn't want the construction to be halted.

2:26:52 PM

BETTY WALTERS, SELF, KODIAK (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Alaska Teacher Placement program in the University of Alaska budget. She shared that the program functions without a director, and she volunteers for the program. She echoed Ms. Luthi's testimony. She felt that the director should have

leadership skills; budget and finance background; knowledge of recruitment; program management interest; and commitment to Alaska. She felt the director could build partnerships with school districts, universities, and state agencies that support children in schools. She stressed that the Alaska Teacher Placement program was the information center for teacher applicants that were new to the profession.

Vice-Chair Fairclough explained that the Alaska Teacher Placement Director request was a \$100,000 increment in Statewide Services.

[2:30:52 PM](#)

FAITH MYERS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), urged support for funding for diversionary mental health courts, and funding to improve the psychiatric patient grievance procedure law (AS 47.38.47). She announced that recognition of disabled psychiatric patients should require the state to give all disabled psychiatric patients a special grievance procedure. She stated that Alaska was one of the very few states that had not set up statewide uniform grievance procedure rules outlining due process and appeal processes for disabled mentally ill individuals. She remarked that most hospitals in Alaska were treating disabled psychiatric patients using the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospital Organizations grievance rules as their foundation.

[2:32:53 PM](#)

DORRANCE COLLINS, MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for diversionary mental health courts, and funding to improve the psychiatric patient grievance procedure law (AS 47.38.47). He echoed Ms. Myers' comments. He remarked that Alaska had never set up the ground rules for an impartial body to respond to psychiatric patient grievances, nor provided the funding. He pointed out that, if a psychiatric patient or guardian filed a grievance, it was the employees of the institutions that were conducting the investigation and supplying the resolution.

[2:34:36 PM](#)

STEPHEN TRIMBLE, CHAIRMAN, UAA GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES ADVISORY BOARD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), urged strong support

for the inclusion of the Consolidated Alaska Mining Initiative line items in the University of Alaska budget. He stressed that mining was a critical resource development industry in Alaska. In order for Alaska's economy to advance and investment in the future must be made soon. He felt that there was no better place to invest than in the crucible of home grown higher education at University of Alaska. He felt that there needed to be a focus on empowering University of Alaska graduates to seek employment in state.

[2:37:17 PM](#)

CARL ROSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS, JUNEAU, spoke in support of operations, programs, and instructions funding in the DEED. He pointed out that the Court had determined the legislature was ultimately responsible for children and learning. He remarked that the funding over the four years prior had affected the operations, program, and instructional responsibility as school districts. He pointed that there were strict state standards for curriculum development, but if the funding was not available to appropriately meet those standards, the students may not be eligible for proper higher education opportunities. He specifically urged funding for early childhood education funding in Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers.

Vice-Chair Fairclough shared that the Senate Finance Committee and the current majority caucus was looking at education funding to examine ways to meet some of the concerns addressed in Mr. Rose's testimony.

[2:40:44 PM](#)

DONNA WHITE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of \$100,000 for Victims for Justice. She stressed that violent crimes have a terrible impact on the victims. She stressed that Victims for Justice provided a wide array of services. She felt that the Department of Corrections (DOC) may empathize with victims, but was seldom in a position to help the victims directly. She values the work of Victims for Justice. She explained that Victims for Justice was a 501 C3 nonprofit agency that had been serving the victims of violent crime in Alaska for 27 years. Victims for Justice provided a wide variety of

services to assist primary and secondary victims of crimes to stabilize their lives after victimization.

[2:43:46 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:52:41 PM](#)

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JULIE RABEAU, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), urged support of the Trauma Care Fund. She shared that trauma accounted for 42 million emergency departments and 2 million hospital admissions across the United States. She shared various statistics related to trauma.

[3:01:37 PM](#)

KRISTIN RAMSTAD, ADVOCATE, PARENTS AS TEACHERS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for Parents as Teachers. She explained that Parents as Teachers was highly effective, evidence based early childhood education and family support program that had produced positive outcomes in Alaska in both rural and urban communities. She stated that Parents as Teachers currently provided 116 children and families services in Anchorage, Ketchikan, Seward, Tanacross, and Tok. The Parents as Teachers program had a rigorous evaluation process that consisted of both an internal and external evaluation. The external evaluation was conducted by a third party, and the results of both evaluations annually drive ongoing continuous improvement.

[3:04:20 PM](#)

JAAD MCELROY, EDUCATION COORDINATOR, HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), encouraged support for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and other Head Start programs. She stressed the importance of early childhood education. She stated that she had several opportunities to observe the positive impact

[3:06:42 PM](#)

Co-Chair Meyer made a joke.

3:07:05 PM

MELISSA PICKLE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), urged support of Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings funding. She shared that in her experience working with families through Parents as Teachers, she worked with children who had experienced neglect and/or abuse and had to be removed from their homes. She announced that research had shown that families and children who were enrolled in the Parents as Teachers program experienced many positive benefits. She focused on some of the impacts that the program had on parents: Parents in the Parents as Teacher program had increased knowledge of child development and positive child rearing practices, and had fewer documented cases of child abuse and neglect.

3:10:18 PM

JONATHAN TEETERS, PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, BEST BEGINNINGS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for Best Beginnings and Parents as Teachers. He specifically spoke about the Imagination Library program within the Parents as Teachers program. He pointed out that he worked with the Early Childhood Partnership, which occurred between different communities in the state.

3:12:44 PM

SAM DUBOIS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the therapeutic courts. He thanked the Senate for reinstating that funding. He felt that adjusting the funding per participant. He echoed Mr. Wanamaker's statements. He stressed that the therapeutic courts were incredibly effective in Alaska, because the state had significant control over the environment that the individuals could be released into. He reiterated the substantial cost of incarceration, and the problem related to releasing individuals into the community without proper therapy.

3:14:33 PM

JERRY JENKINS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of behavioral health services funding. He urged continued support in the conference committee. He reiterated the points of previous testifiers related to

strategically investing. He stressed that the mental health care providers used community tenure as the gold standard. He shared that the Bridge Home had a 92 percent reduction in jail time. He remarked that there needed to be a significant focus on encouraging adults to participate in the workforce or engage in positive activities.

[3:18:11 PM](#)

JENNIFER SMERUD, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS, ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of behavioral health services funding. She felt that restoring funding for behavioral health services, the state would ensure that its most vulnerable citizens received wrap around service that would assist them in achieving recovery and remove them from needing to rely on other first responders or service organizations that had a higher per incident cost.

[3:19:25 PM](#)

RONALD WILSON, ANCHORAGE ALUMNI GROUP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of therapeutic courts. He stated that, in 2008, he was charged with misconduct involving a controlled substance. His case was transferred to the therapeutic court, and he was able to receive treatment and identify an anxiety disorder. Because he was able to identify this issue through the therapeutic court, he was able to rejoin with his family because of his treatment through the therapeutic court. He remarked that his children felt the "ripple effect" benefit of his treatment and therapy; and also allowed for him to be gainfully employed, tax payer, and positive member of the community. He shared that the Anchorage Alumni Group was formed by graduates of the therapeutic courts, and was recognized nationally as being one of the strongest and most active alumni groups in the country. He stated that the Anchorage Alumni Group was currently engaged in outreach programs and efforts with the Community of the Victims Impact Panel for Adults for first time DUI offenders.

[3:22:53 PM](#)

CRAIG JOHNNIE, ANCHORAGE ALUMNI GROUP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), urged support of funding for therapeutic courts. He shared that he had his first DUI in 1999, and

graduated to the therapeutic court in May 2011. He felt that it was a subconscious act for him to receive his fourth DUI, to enter into the therapeutic court at that time. He remarked that the therapeutic court caused him to look at his life, engage in the program, and obtain proper accountability.

[3:25:55 PM](#)

KIMA HAMILTON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke support of Best Beginnings funding. He stressed that the education of a very young person was imperative to their success as an adult. He echoed Mr. Peters' testimony. He felt that investing in Best Beginnings would save the State costs further along in a child's life.

[3:27:53 PM](#)

DOREEN SCHENKENBERGER, ANCHORAGE ALUMNI GROUP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for therapeutic courts. She shared that she graduated from the therapeutic court program in 2005. She stated that she entered the therapeutic court in 2003 after she had received multiple DUIs, and she has been sober since she graduated in 2005. She shared that she came from three generations of alcohol induced and devastation to her family. She shared that her family had experienced innumerable suicides and early death caused by alcohol. She stated that many of the children in her family were failing in school; dropping out of school; going on welfare; and eventually cycling into the life of addiction, jail, and ultimately death. She announced that after she became sober in the therapeutic court, two of her siblings became sober. She and her two siblings were the first in her family to break the cycle of alcoholism in their family after three or more generations.

Co-Chair Meyer stated that it was snowing in Anchorage.

[3:33:03 PM](#)

RACHAEL GAEDEKE, LEAD ADVOCATE, VICTIMS FOR JUSTICE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of Victims for Justice. She stressed that violent crimes have a terrible impact on the victims. She stressed that Victims for Justice provided a wide array of services. She felt that the Department of Corrections (DOC) may empathize with

victims, but was seldom in a position to help the victims directly. She values the work of Victims for Justice. She explained that Victims for Justice was a 501 C3 nonprofit agency that had been serving the victims of violent crime in Alaska for 27 years. Victims for Justice provided a wide variety of services to assist primary and secondary victims of crimes to stabilize their lives after victimization.

[3:36:13 PM](#)

TAMMY WILLIAMSON, YOUTH JOB CENTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the UAA Area Health Education Center. She felt that the recent budget reductions had made a significant negative impact on the health care. She stressed that young people had shown increased interest in health care involvement. She stressed that the Area Health Education Centers were important to organize the clinical rotations that gave students the needed experience to complete their programs. She also testified in support of the Tech Prep High Payoff High School College Bridging line item. She stressed that high school graduates needed to obtain training and identify a career pathway in order to receive a living wage.

[3:39:29 PM](#)

ROSALIE NADEAU, CEO, AKEELA HOUSE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of behavioral health services funding. She expressed concern regarding the focus on the extreme increase in the budget for behavioral health services funding. She remarked that there were some expensive allocations, which made it seem like there were tremendous increases, but most of the behavioral health programs were funded in a fairly flat trajectory. She shared that the specific budget for Akeela House was \$682,000 in FY 91, and in FY 13 it was \$683,000.

[3:45:44 PM](#)

ANDREE MCLEOD, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), wondered if she could provide her testimony to the entire Senate Finance Committee.

[3:46:19 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Fairclough encouraged Ms. McLeod to provide her testimony. She announced that the testimony was recorded, so all members would have access to her statement.

Ms. McLeod expressed frustration regarding the Senate Finance Committee attendance.

Vice-Chair Fairclough asked Ms. McLeod if she would rather testify the following day. Ms. McLeod agreed to provide her statement the following day.

[3:48:17 PM](#)

JOHN CREWS, BOARD MEMBER, ALASKA VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL CENTER (AVTEC), ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for AVTEC. He stressed that the addition of \$200,000 that had been cut from the AVTEC budget was critical to the function of AVTEC. He explained that, over time, AVTEC had worked hard to control and cut its cost through improvements in building, heating, and cooling systems. He stressed that there was a constant wall of lack of adequate funding partnered with less than adequate buildings. He stated that \$200,000 would help fund positions that were critical to preparations.

[3:51:16 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Fairclough stated that Senator Hoffman and Co-Chair Meyer were away from the Capitol on State business. Senator Dunleavy and Co-Chair Kelly had committee responsibilities outside of the room; and Senator Bishop was meeting with his constituents. She remarked that all testimony was recorded, and all committee members were respectful to the public testimony.

[3:52:38 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:56:53 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Vice-Chair Fairclough relayed that the legislative session was ongoing and that other committees were currently underway. She reported that Senator Olson had been in the Senate Judiciary Committee and was currently speaking with constituents. She relayed that Senator Hoffman was away from the committee on state business and that Co-Chair

Meyer was in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO) taking testimony. She furthered that Senator Bishop was attending the Senate Resources Committee meeting, of which both she and Senator Bishop were members. She shared that Senator Dunleavy had just returned from a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting.

[3:58:25 PM](#)

LOUIS A. BENCARDINO, SELF, SEWARD (via teleconference), testified in support of restoring funding to the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC). He related that the AVTEC facility had been growing over the years and was one of the best facilities of its type that he knew of. He stated that AVTEC was responsible for its students and that the funding would help it meet that responsibility. He relayed that the loss in funding would shorten AVTEC's training season by five days, leave five positions vacant, and would result in a five percent reduction in the training program budget. He concluded that AVTEC served people all over the state and that he had never heard anyone say anything bad about the facility. He hoped that the committee would listen to the testimony because it was important.

Vice-Chair Fairclough inquired if there was anyone in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO) that still wanted to testify. Co-Chair Meyer responded that Andree McLeod was present to testify and that he would prefer that she testify today.

ANDREE MCLEOD, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that all of her information was at home and that she would rather testify the following day with all the exact information in front of her.

Vice-Chair Fairclough stated that if Ms. McLeod called the offnet number, the committee would welcome the testimony the following day.

[4:03:51 PM](#)

CHRISTINA PICHOTTA, SELF, SEWARD (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Parents as Teachers program. She related that the Seward Parents as Teachers program represented 16 families, 23 children, and 1 expectant mother. She discussed her duties as an in-home

visitor for Parents as Teachers. She related that Parents as Teachers helped families understand early childhood development and how the parents could assist their child in cultivating preschool readiness skills. She pointed out that the Parents as Teachers program focused on language, communication, intellectual abilities, as well as social, emotional, and physical development. She pointed out that Seward only had one licensed private preschool. She discussed the types of family structures that she worked with through her capacity with Parents as Teachers. She concluded that without state funding, the families that Parents as Teachers served would not get the encouragement to help the next generation of Alaskans achieve their goals through a successful future.

[4:06:31 PM](#)

WILLARD DUNHAM, SELF, SEWARD (via teleconference), spoke in support of restoring funding to the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC). He stated that he had been involved with AVTEC since its inception in 1969. He discussed the growth at AVTEC and related that had it received a \$200,000 cut that would result in a shortened training year, the loss of 5 positions, and a 5 percent decrease in the training programs' budgets. He stated that the cuts would not be helpful to the growth that AVTEC was experiencing. He offered that the committee should assist AVTEC in growing to provide qualified workers for state projects. He pointed out that 90 percent to 95 percent of AVTEC's graduates were placed in jobs around the state. He concluded that this was not the time to reduce a program that was as useful and needed as AVTEC.

[4:09:03 PM](#)

SCOT WHEAT, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's recommended programs, particularly the Centers for Independent Living and other preventative social supports. He related that significant financial and social savings were achieved through preventative programs. He relayed that Alaska's rate of suicide, violence, alcoholism were too high and had serious financial consequences. He urged for the continued support of positive, preventative programs that resulted in savings in the long-term.

[4:10:35 PM](#)

RON LONG, SELF, SEWARD (via teleconference), spoke in support of restoring funding to the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC). He related that he had been a tugboat captain and an AVTEC student and that AVTEC meant a great deal to industry in Alaska. He discussed the drilling rig "Noble Discovery" and its trip on a semi-submersible vessel to Asia; he related that the rig had been welded down by AVTEC graduates. He stated that the prior day, there had been a meeting at AVTEC between students, industry representatives, the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, and others regarding potential improvements to AVTEC's programs that would use the existing infrastructures to incorporate ice training and other modules within the marine programs to further AVTEC's goals of pursuing infrastructure and development in the coastal areas of the state. He urged that the \$200,000 in funding needed to be restored.

4:12:32 PM

LOLITA BRACHE, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of restoring funding to the Parents as Teachers program, Best Beginnings, the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), and adult education in general. She stated that an "ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure." She related that when parents had skills to take care of their children, it went a long way towards preventing child neglect and abuse. She offered that some adverse childhood experiences caused long-term problems. She reiterated the importance of prevention and offered that without prevention support for Alaska's families, the state would end up with children who had difficulties in school and parents who did not know how to advocate for their children. She stated that she helped people get their GEDs and that the individuals in her GED program came from dysfunctional families, had unnoticed learning disabilities, and did not have anyone advocating for them to stay in school. She urged the importance of building strong families in Alaska.

4:15:52 PM

RICK MALLEY, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Centers for Independent Living. He related that the Centers for Independent Living were consumer directed, which meant that elders and people with

disabilities chose what assistance they needed in order to stay in their homes and communities. He shared that the state saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in long-term care services costs when someone was enabled to stay in their own home. He related that the Kenai Peninsula Independent Living Center had 11 staff that served over 657 consumers in a service area that covered the entire Kenai Peninsula, including outreach in Kodiak, Cordova, Valdez, and Glennallen. He concluded that the funding would enable the Kenai Peninsula Independent Living Center to continue serving the populations that it currently served. He hoped the funding for the Centers for Independent Living would remain intact through the Conference Committee Process.

[4:17:16 PM](#)

KIM BURROWS, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of the increment for Centers for Independent Living and advocated for the restoration of funding to the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC). She related that keeping the disabled and elderly in their communities saved the state hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. She believed that resources should not be cut from AVTEC because it served the needs of Alaskans from all walks of life. She thanked the Senate Finance Committee members who stayed to hear the public testimony.

[4:18:16 PM](#)

HAL SMITH, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), expressed appreciation for the restoration of funding for the Trauma Care Fund and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's recommended programs. He shared that he had been practicing emergency medicine in Alaska for over 35 years and that he had witnessed the improvements in trauma care over that time. He discussed the rigorous process through which South Peninsula Hospital had been designated as a Level 4 trauma facility. He offered that as a result of the new the designation, the hospital had been the recipients of funding that allowed it to improve its trauma preparedness and delivery of trauma care. He stated that the trauma fund had been instrumental in standardizing trauma care around the state and hoped that the restoration of the funding would prevail through the Conference Committee process; he felt that it would be shortsighted to eliminate the funding.

4:20:00 PM

LIZ DOWNING, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), expressed appreciation for the restoration of funding for education related items and particularly testified in support of funding for the University of Alaska, the Digital Learning Initiative, the Alaska Learning Network, and the Tudor.com program. She stated that she served a role with the Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) in education technology and shared that KPC had done a tremendous job in creating opportunities through distance education and technology. She offered that the Digital Learning Initiative, the Alaska Learning Network, and the Tudor.com program were critical for the success of the state's students. She pointed out that Alaska had the ability, resources, and talent to create the best education system in the country. She stated that the Association of Alaska School Boards had brought 21st Century technology to Alaska through the Digital Learning Initiative. She relayed the advantage of using technology in education and particularly discussed how the use of iPads enhanced learning "far beyond" the use of traditional text books. She concluded that investing heavily in education would pay dividends to the economy and the social wellness of the state in the short-term and the long-term.

4:23:19 PM

JOYANNA GEISLER, DIRECTOR, KENAI PENINSULA INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER, CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, HOMER (via teleconference), expressed appreciation for the restoration of funding for the Centers for Independent Living. She related that there were four Centers for Independent Living in Alaska that provided assistance to over 4,000 Alaskans with disabilities. She stated that the centers provided services to people of all ages and disabilities in order to help people remain in their homes and stay independent. She shared that the Centers for Independent Living had received an increment for \$200,000 the prior year, but pointed out that the funding had been for a statewide provision. She thanked the committee for the \$100,000 increment in FY14. She offered that the Kenai Peninsula Independent Living Center had a large service area and provided adequate services to 32 communities on the Kenai Peninsula; however, the 18 communities in Valdez and Cordova areas would benefit from the \$100,000 increment if it was left in the budget.

4:25:33 PM

AT EASE

4:31:02 PM

RECONVENED

4:31:27 PM

Co-Chair Kelly related that written testimony was archived and was accessible to the committee's members. He discussed the following meeting's agenda.

4:32:02 PM

CS HB 65 (FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CS HB 66 (FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

4:32:05 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.