

HB

128

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128</SUBJECT><COMM>HEDC28</COMM></TARGET>

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT KAWASAKI

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HB128

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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 128 "Pre-Kindergarten School Programs/Plans"

"An Act relating to the establishment of pre-kindergarten programs and providing for an effective date."

Alaska remains one of the only states that does not provide pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) education to children on a statewide basis. Children who participate in early education programs earn more money as adults, enter the job market in much larger numbers, obtain a college education in higher numbers, remain off of public assistance and are more likely to stay out of jail.

Alaska has a responsibility to provide the best education possible for its children. Currently, outside of a few school district classrooms, the state only provides pre-K education through Head Start programs and through the Best Beginnings partnership. Head Start is underfunded and only available to the poorest students. Due to underfunding, the Alaska Head Start Association estimates that more than 50% of the children who qualify cannot receive Head Start education. Providing early public education is a crucial stepping stone to brightening the future of young Alaskans.

A study by the National Institute for Early Education research in 2004 found that children who attended state-funded pre-K programs demonstrated a 31% greater improvement in vocabulary and 44% greater in math than those who did not participate. Young children who receive high quality early education do better in school academically and are more likely to stay in school, graduate and go on to attend college.

The beneficial impact of early education also extends to the economy. Every dollar invested in high quality pre-K programs saves Alaskans from paying for remedial and special education and public assistance. An ongoing study of 40 year old adults in Michigan who participated in the 1962 Perry Pre-school Project found that adults with pre-K were more likely to be employed and earned a 33% higher average income than their peers who did not receive state funded early education.

Additionally, a study prepared for the University of Alaska Southeast, states that 87% of Alaska residents think it is important for state government to provide financial support for early education and child care.



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