

P.O. Box 90791  
Anchorage, AK 99509-0791  
www.CEAAC.net  
907-242-2151  
director@ceaac.net

# Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children

March 5, 2015

The Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As Alaska's only non-profit organization focused solely on struggling schools and at-risk students, and representing the majority of rural districts and families, the Anchorage School District, and tribal and professional organizations, CEAAC's position on the fiscal issues facing the state rightly has been sought by many legislators. This letter outlines our thoughts on your budget difficulties, education funding, and the all-important pre-kindergarten programs supported by state dollars. We have also provided, for legislators' use, our recent white paper, "Pre-Kindergarten: The Key to Saving Failing Schools," and our report, "Educator Quality and Quantity," which you will be hearing much more about. Links to these documents are at the end of this letter.

CEAAC recognizes the crisis faced by Alaska this year and for coming years, but also recognizes that the state has a constitutional obligation to adequately fund education in Alaska. Like any resource-dependent state, Alaska is always at the whim of commodity prices. Fortunately, our leaders have provided for the difficult years ahead by setting aside significant savings that allow us to meet our constitutional commitments. With this knowledge, we for the most part support the education budget proposed by Governor Walker.

The Governor's budget offers cuts that recognize the financial crisis we face, but retains programs critical to improving student academic success and providing a meaningful educational experience for Alaska's children. While CEAAC has prioritized the programs encompassed in the Moore and Kasayulie settlements, we also believe the comprehensive educational experience must be addressed from pre-kindergarten through the post-secondary level.

The budget proposed by Governor Walker and Commissioner Hanley preserves crucial activities such as pre-k and related early childhood programs, such as Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers and Head Start,

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programs that are critical to student success. His budget preserves learning tools such as AkLN, K-3 and statewide literacy, Live Homework Help and On-line with Libraries. This budget recognizes that STEM learning and broadband access are critical to student success in our rapidly changing technological environment. It recognizes the success of efforts to build better teachers through the statewide mentoring program.

These programs help address historic flaws in our system. For many years CEAAC pursued solutions to these problems through the Moore litigation. We are delighted to have partners in Governor Walker and Commissioner Hanley to address the problems of struggling schools cooperatively, and these programs are examples of that cooperation.

Finally, while we support restoring funds in the Operating Budget to the Governor's proposed levels, we do not support reductions to core funding. In the special session last year, the legislature made a promise to Alaska's students that education would no longer be relegated to the back burner, even in times of crisis. The state needs to honor that promise and fund the BSA at agreed levels and meaningfully seek ways to improve those funding streams. Alaska's children did not create this crisis. But, if they are to eventually lead Alaska through future crises, we must ensure that they are fully prepared.

Sincerely,



Charles Wohlforth  
Executive Director

Links:

[Pre-Kindergarten: The Key to Saving Failing Schools](http://ceaac.net/documents/CEAAC_PreK_Report_Feb2015_LowRes.pdf)

([http://ceaac.net/documents/CEAAC\\_PreK\\_Report\\_Feb2015\\_LowRes.pdf](http://ceaac.net/documents/CEAAC_PreK_Report_Feb2015_LowRes.pdf))

[Educator Quality and Quantity](http://ceaac.net/documents/EQQ_Report_Feb27FINAL.pdf)

([http://ceaac.net/documents/EQQ\\_Report\\_Feb27FINAL.pdf](http://ceaac.net/documents/EQQ_Report_Feb27FINAL.pdf))