



Alaska State Legislature

Representative Les Gara

Representative Geran Tarr

733 W. 4th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

December 5, 2013

Governor Sean Parnell
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell,

We are writing to ask that you implement the results of the Hornby, Zeller and Associates workload study that was published in 2012. As we each know, Office of Children's Services staff are vastly overworked given their numbers, the difficulty of the child abuse investigations they do, and the growing number of foster youth, which number nearly 2,000 today, up from about 1,700 a few years ago.

The study identified a cost-effective way to allow front line social workers the ability to do their jobs in a way that protects the children they are charged to protect, and to connect with foster families and address their questions and needs so we don't lose foster families due to frustration. Failing to act will cost us more in prosecutor, jail, correctional officer, public defender, court, and welfare costs. Implementing the study's recommendations will produce more foster youth who successfully complete high school, career training/college, and who enter the workforce with no need of state assistance when they become adults.

Instead of hiring more social workers, the commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services has indicated it would be more cost effective to hire lower cost support staff to free social workers from excess paperwork so they can get out in the field to do their work with children and families. This would also allow the timely processing of foster parent license applications helping solve the foster parent shortage problem Alaska faces.

The Hornby, Zeller and Associates Workload Study said that could be done with the hiring of 41 support positions, and 13 Community Care Licensing specialists. That recommendation has not been implemented to date, and we hope you will implement it in your upcoming budget. Certainly we need to find waste in the budget. But at the same time, we need to protect youth who have no responsible parents, who face difficult lives and obstacles through no fault of their own.

We hope you agree, and that we can work together on this. The study is clear, has been commended by the Department in public testimony, and should be implemented to protect Alaska's children.

Thank you for your consideration.

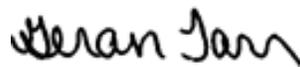
Best Regards,

Handwritten signature of Les Gara in black ink.

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cc: Commissioner Bill Streur
Division Director Christy Lawton