August 12, 2018

Dear Juneau Assembly Member,

I am writing to encourage you to make Best Starts a non-binding ballot proposition on the October 2 municipal election. Juneau provides many valuable services—buses, recreation, libraries, schools—and these help make a citizen and family friendly community. Except for childcare. Even families willing to pay $700 to $1000 a month for childcare cannot find it in Juneau. This lack is a serious problem for a majority of families with young children in Juneau; it causes them to look for other cities in which to live, places without this major drawback. Best Starts addresses this long-time Juneau problem.

The Best Starts approach also offers a huge return on investment, estimated at hundreds of new jobs, millions in new wages, and millions in new spending. It allows families with young children to work, put down roots for themselves and their children, making these families Juneau citizens who buy homes, pay taxes, and contribute to the community in order to sustain and improve it.

But the greatest value of Best Starts is its plan to help Juneau's young children prepare for a successful life in school and beyond. Through Best Starts, appropriate curriculums and teacher training address early learning for young children during their most important, formative period of brain development. The result is that they are ready to succeed in school, academically and socially. Evidence shows numerous effects: from better school experiences for all students (including teachers) to increased graduation rates, to increased college entrances, to successful careers, to mature parents, to good citizenship. The chance of achieving all of these potential outcomes is dramatically increased by addressing young minds when the windows of their ability to learn are wide open.

Studies, findings, and economic reports have been provided the Assembly. Juneau needs and deserves the opportunity to consider Best Starts as a reality
through the proposed ballot proposition. The community then can explore, consider, and decide upon its worth. Juneau needs and deserves the opportunity to consider Best Starts as an advisory ballot proposition. It addresses a solution to a long-standing need, adds to Juneau's economy, and presents a proven way for young children to begin and sustain success in life.

Please support this advisory ballot measure. Juneau needs and deserves the opportunity to consider it.

Sincerely,

Art Petersen (UAS Faculty Member, retired)