

Thank you madam chair and all committee members for taking the time to hear from your constituents about this important issue.

My name is Meghan Johnson and I'm the Chair of a statewide child and youth advocacy coalition called Voices for Alaska's Children and Youth or VACY. VACY consist of representatives from various public and non-profit organizations in Alaska caring for children in youth on issues pertaining to mental and physical health, education, protection and overall wellness.

On behalf of VACY members and the approximately 18,000 uninsured children and youth VACY organizations serve, it is time Alaskan's step up to the plate and ensure universal, continuous, affordable, effective, preventative and sustainable health care for all Alaskan children, birth – 18.

Universal, continuous, affordable, effective, preventative and sustainable are recommendations made by The National Academy of Sciences' [Institute of Medicine \(IOM\)](#) and their call for a system of universal health care by 2010.

There is no time like the present to prepare for Alaskan's future. Lets not be the last state to make change. Alaska has multiple employment opportunities in the works and what appears to be a primary concern of the Palin administration to have a savings and means to sustain Alaska's future. I would think that having strong healthy reliable workforce is part of the equation. This means health care for children and youth.

It is part of Maslow's basic leave of human needs: Health and Safety. If you don't have access to this level you can not move to meeting social, self esteem and self-actualization needs that help us all become successful. Fortunately we are not living in a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, but at times it feels as though we are, especially when such debate has occurred over what should be a human right not a privilege.

There will always be minimum wage jobs. Yes, it would be great that everyone was able to obtain and retain jobs with livable wages that had health care attached, but the US economy and politics at present appears to be moving toward elimination of a middle class; either by loosing a select few to higher income while the majority are moving into poverty because the prospects of the American dream, house, job, children, and health are becoming less and less attainable.

The current Senate Bill 212 and a similar House bill 140 would greatly support the future of Alaska. We are talking about supporting families who make under \$50,000 a year for a family of 4 (approximately). They are working, they are productive and they are giving back to society, but they need to stay healthy so they can continue their efforts. Not only do they need to continue for their own personal integrity but retention and recruitment costs in Alaska are ludicrous. We need to put Alaska first and build a sustainable, quality, and healthy workforce.  
Healthy = Sustainable = Quality

I urge all of you to consider the trickle effect of not supporting children's health insurance. Please vote yes in support of SB 212.

On Behalf of Voices for Alaska's Children and Youth (VACY) I thank you all for our time.