



# Voices for Alaska's Children and Youth

February 12, 2008

Dear Members of the Alaska State Senate,

Voices for Alaska's Children and Youth (VACY) is a statewide coalition compiled of numerous organizations representing early care and education, health care, youth development, hunger and poverty, advocacy, child abuse and neglect, businesses, faith based and non-profit agencies. VACY creates awareness and advocates for effective public policy on behalf of Alaska's children, youth and their families.

VACY is writing this letter in support of **SB170- Well Baby Exams** to ensure the long term physical and mental health of young children. Why are Well Baby Exams important:

- The brain development between birth and age three is the most active time every in a humans life.
- Trillion of synaptic connections are being made everyday, building the foundations for all later life.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 10 exams prior to a child's second birthday to prevent later more costly health care, educational cost but primarily to ensure all children grow up strong and healthy.

#### **Success of Well Baby Exams:**

- Well Baby exams not only monitor a child's physical health, but they are also screen for cognitive and social emotional development.
- In Alaska, The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant is facilitating a project called ABCD. Local pediatrician offices are providing regular developmental and social emotional screening during Well Baby Exams.
- This is an enhancement of the federally mandated Child Find requirements, and is successfully identifying children with cognitive and/ or social emotional concerns and referring them to early intervention services.

If well baby exams are not covered by insurance, more people will not participate in preventative health care and potentials cognitive, emotional and physical delays will go undetected.

Early identification and education are critical factors in reducing long term health cost and most importantly enhancing the physical and mental health of our children. Well-Baby exams are an effective solution to many rising health care cost because they prevent illness in the long run.

Please support **SB170- Well Baby exams** for the future of Alaska's children.

Thank you for your time  
VACY Chair  
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