

Your Name: Anna Meredith

Your Email: anna@kbfpc.org

Subject: Public Comment in opposition to the Mayor's veto of school district funding

Message:

Greetings Mayor and Council members,

I write today in opposition to the Mayor's FY19 Budget Line Item Veto. This budget cut would affect our students directly and as the Youth Program Manager of the R.E.C. Room- of the only teen resource center in Homer- I believe this seemingly minimal cut would have expansive effects on youth. In addition to offering mental health services to young people directly, I have seen the effects of having a mental health counselor present has on the entire school staff. Having staff members on board to help teens with social and emotional learning skills and crisis enables admin, teachers, and support staff to better fulfill their own tasks and works towards creating a greater learning environment overall.

Additionally, from serving on the leadership team with the Southern Kenai Peninsula Resilience Coalition, my own education has advanced in learning that supporting families as a whole to be resilient in our communities often means starting with ensuring that youth under 5 years old and their parents have access to mental health connections in addition to other basic needs and social services.

Please consider the extent to which mental health counselors support the whole child's resilience, or ability to thrive, and our schools are one of the safe places where youth can count on safe adults who can offer them the help they may need.

Thank you,
Anna Meredith
Youth Program Manager
Kachemak Bay Family Planning Clinic

Your Name: Connor Schmidt

Your Email: recroom@kbfpc.org

Subject: \$652 Funding Veto

Message:

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern for the slashing of mental health funding in the Kenai Peninsula School District. My name is Connor Schmidt and I work as the Peer Program Coordinator at Kachemak Bay Family Planning Clinic's R.E.C. Room. We work with kids in 10

different schools across the peninsula, teaching sexual wellness, healthy relationships, substance misuse prevention, and resilience building. Through our work, we often refer students that are struggling to their school's mental health counselor(s). Teens are facing more and more pressures in their daily lives and we need to be building systems to support teens through difficulties.

Many mental illnesses, specifically schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and bipolar disorder, all begin to arise in the mid to late teens through the early twenties and schools need to be vigilant in helping our youth navigate these challenges. Mental health counselors may be some of the only individuals a teen has access to as many don't have safe adults in their lives that are able to dedicate the time to providing the targeted support needed.

Let's keep our as youth supported as they can be.

Your Name: Kyla Dammann

Your Email: outreach@kbfp.org

Subject: Mayor's FY19 Budget Line Item Veto School District Operations \$652,609

Message:

I am writing to express my concern for cutting funding for mental health in the school district.

As someone who works directly with teens at the R.E.C. Room here in Homer, I have seen how huge the impact of mental health counselors in the school is in the day-to-day lives of young people in this town. It is critical that we build systems that support our young people, the people who will inherit the world from us. Mental health is central to this.

I work directly with young people that experience a variety of mental health challenges, each of which has directly expressed their overwhelming appreciation for the mental health counselors in the schools. Young people spend the majority of their time in schools during the school year. With mental health counselors in the schools, the inevitable and regular challenges that young people experience are easily addressed. Mental health counselors give young people the tools they need to work through challenges in a healthy way, something that not only sets them up to lead healthy lives individually but benefits our community as a whole. Some of the young people I work with have sought the support of school counselors when they were feeling suicidal, struggling with depression, struggling with addiction, or did not feel safe in their homes. Without mental health counselors in schools I worry about how these young folks (many being low-income) are going to access support.

Please keep our young people in mind.

Thank you,
Kyla Dammann

From: LaDawn Druce [mailto:ladawn_druce@hotmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, July 05, 2018 9:39 AM

To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk <G_Notify_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>

Subject: Comments on Mayoral Veto of KPBSD Funding

Good Morning President Ogle and Members of the Assembly,

I am writing concerning the \$652,000.00 proposed cut to the KPBSD.

My intent is to be at the meeting tomorrow, but I wanted to make certain you had these comments in the event I cannot be there.

I am a retired teacher from our school district. Prior to retiring I served as an itinerant counselor for three years. I loved being a school counselor. It was always a hope that our district would have elementary counselors. We are the only large school district in the state without counselors in our K-6 schools.

When I was getting my Masters in Education in 2000, a professor said, "If you really want to impact a child's life, work in an elementary school."

I hope I was able to positively impact students at the high school level in my 25 years of teacher and counseling, but we all know that so much of a person's "being" is formed much earlier than middle or high school.

These funds being proposed to be eliminated have been earmarked to provide three elementary itinerant counselors a clinical psychologist and a school safety specialist.

It goes without saying these are all important positions in keeping our children safe.

No longer can any community or school in our country say, "I never thought this would happen here."

This important step of restoring these funds would begin the process of making these counseling positions a part of our district and KPBSD continuing to support these much needed resources in future budgets.

Please consider not supporting this veto.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Sincerely,

LaDawn Druce

38240 Robinson Loop Rd

Sterling

Your Name: Kyra Wagner

Your Email: KyraKoe@gmail.com

Subject: Counselors in the schools

Message:

I have been the debate coach for Homer High for 14 years. Watching the generations of kids go through, I have to say that times are changing. Kids' social network structure is changing (thank you social media) and adults often aren't aware, understanding or equipped to address their kids' emotional needs. Since 2009 I have been involved with MAPP of the Southern Kenai Peninsula collecting information about our community and identifying health needs. Number 1 issue is Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the resiliency factors needed to counteract them. ACEs have long term effects on a person's health, but ACEs were identified as the biggest overall detriment to the health of our community overall. One of the biggest resiliency factors for children is to have connection with a caring adult. So when funding for counselors in the schools is cut, we acerbate the problem for years to come. Every connection counts and every moment counts. Please put funding for more school counselors in the KPBSD budget now so that we aren't facing the weight of a poor decision after our children have grown.

Your Name: Hannah Gustafson

Your Email: hannahinak@gmail.com

Subject: Overriding veto tonight

Message:

I wish I could attend this evening's meeting in person, but summer is in full swing and I am out of town. I am sending this email to request that you please vote to override Mayor Pierce's veto of \$652k for our K-12 schools. Please secure this funding intended to provide for itinerant counselors and a clinical psychologist. This budget came from hours of hard work on the part of many, please respect that process and the results of it.

I am a reader and a life-long learner. When I become immersed in something, I dig deep and learn as much as possible, reflecting on how that particular thing shows up in my life and my community. Since becoming a mother I have learned so much about the importance of children's early years. I have learned how toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have a lasting impact on children and their developing brains. How brain changes affect impulse control and behavior. How stress affects immune and digestive systems. How all of this manifests in children's emotional and physical health. I have also learned of the power of one caring adult. That one person can be the light in the life of a child who may not have the healthiest and happiest home environment.

As a parent, this information has influenced the way I respond to my children. As a community member, this information has changed the way I interact with all the children I come into contact with. As a concerned citizen this information creates a sense of responsibility and urgency in providing for our most vulnerable population – our children, especially those children affected by toxic stress and trauma. Those children who find safety and support in school when they do not have it at home. A warm-hearted teacher is often that one caring adult that makes all of the difference in a child's life. But we must support our teachers. They are not mental health professionals. They need those professionals on their team. We must support our teachers, our children, and the future of our communities. I urge you to keep all of this in mind when you vote this evening.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for your service to our communities. If you are interested in learning more about these issues and their solutions, feel free to contact me. I am passionate about this and there is a myriad of resources and solutions, both locally and statewide.