

eComments
Ordinance 2020-19

Bridget Clark

Location:

Submitted At: 11:46pm 05-19-20

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Assembly,

Good evening. My name is Bridget Clark and I am president of the Alaska Adult Education Association. I am also a parent of three former Jumpstart students, and an adult education instructor at Kenai Peninsula College in Soldotna.

I am writing to urge you to support Kenai Peninsula College's request for \$849,848 in funding for next year. In these uncertain economic times, it is imperative that we all watch our spending and make sure we are getting the most "bang for our buck" as the saying goes. The money the borough allocates to Kenai Peninsula College most certainly does that. This money improves the lives of many diverse groups on the peninsula, from our high school students to our economically disadvantaged workers. According to the Kenai Peninsula Economic District website, 2017 ACS survey, 7.4 percent of peninsula residents over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or GED. These are the people who come to the Learning Center at KPC for help when they need to apply for a better job, one that will enable them to move off public assistance and into the workforce. As my supervisor always says, the hardest part for our students' journey towards the GED is that first step, walking into the Learning Center. We help them prepare for the GED exam and we celebrate with them when they pass. We help them with resumes, job training, and the "soft skills" employers desire. Our students gain confidence in their own abilities and begin to see what is possible. Adult educators change lives. Our students go on to seek more training and better jobs, which translates into a more stable economic environment for them and their families. According to COABE, the Coalition on Adult Basic Education, an individual with a high school diploma or equivalent earns almost \$10,000 more than a nongraduate. In addition, for every dollar spent on adult education, "a community receives \$60 back in increased income, property taxes, and savings on welfare and legal system expenses" (COABE, Congressional Justification (2019). Career, Technical, and Adult Education Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request. U.S. Department of Education). Therefore, the money the borough allocates to KPC returns to the community in form of a higher skilled, financially stable workforce. This is "more bang for the buck."

I am also the parent of three JumpStart students. Two of them were the valedictorians of Ninilchik School. JumpStart enabled them to begin taking college courses at a discounted rate, which was a huge benefit to our family during a period of financial stress. One is a student of veterinary medicine at University Alaska Fairbanks, another child is graduating in December from University of Alaska Southeast with a dual degree in biology and environmental science, and in August, she will be joined by her brother, a marine biology major. Thanks to the JumpStart program, these young people and others like them are able to get a start on highly sought-after careers that Alaska needs right now. Funding for JumpStart at KPC is an investment in our young people and in the future of our communities. This how we as a community know that we are getting more "bang for our buck."

Thank you for your time.

Bridget M. Clark

Anchor Point

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Shawn Story

Location:

Submitted At: 9:53pm 05-19-20

My name is Shawn Story and I am located at the Kachemak Bay Campus Adult Education Program. My position is primarily funded through borough funding. With my position the Alaska Adult Education program is able to provide various services and classes to the surrounding communities around Homer.

For example, one of the projects I focused on this school year was to provide evening classes in Voznesenka for the Russian Old Believer communities at the Head of the Bay. I taught classes every Tuesday night from 3:30 - 6:00 at the local school. I had a regular group of six women who all grew up in South America and English is not their native language. I have one student in particular, Agripina, who moved to Kachemak Selo from Brazil less than a year ago. She is at the beginning stages of learning English and navigating the community. Now due to COVID-19 I meet with Agripina twice a week in the evenings via Zoom to work on speaking, listening, reading, and writing through various contexts. For example, right now we are working on driver's education so she can take the driving test at the DMV when they reopen this summer to get her driver's license here in the US.

Ivan is another student of mine. He is an elder who has lived in Kachemak Selo for 10 years and has never had the opportunity to acquire English well enough to successfully navigate the community without a translator. We worked on basic English language skills such as buying food from Safeway, going to a doctor's office, dropping off mail at the post office, and other basic everyday skills.

Anastasia was one of my students who lives in Voznesenka with her husband and 3 children. She was focused on receiving her US citizenship. The process of working with the Department of Homeland Security, filling out the mountain of legal paperwork, participating in several hour-long face-to-face interviews, and completing a test about the US government and American history is not an easy task, let alone doing it all in another language. The KPB funding allowed me to be there for Anastasia and guide her through every step of the process and help her practice for the Citizenship exam. I was very proud when she went to Anchorage this spring and was inaugurated as a US citizen, a goal she has had for over 3 years.

Overall this borough funding allows me to have an unquantifiable impact on our local communities not only the Old Believer villages at the Head of the Bay but also in Nikolaevsk, Anchor Point and across the bay to Seldovia, Nanwalek, and Port Graham. My position as an Adult Education Instructor at KBC helps meet individual needs of folks with our free classes and services. The AAE program helps numerous community members live better lives, become citizens, and get not only better jobs but also start a career.

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Gareth Chesley

Location:

Submitted At: 1:07am 05-16-20

This is an eComment in support of Ordinance 2020-19. I am thankful for the indispensable support that the Kenai Peninsula Borough has provided to the Kenai Peninsula College for many years and strongly favor the continuation of this support. One element of this support is the Jumpstart program. As a lifelong peninsula resident and former Jumpstart student I can personally attest to the value of this program and the positive impact that it has on students lives as they move into higher education. Additionally, the borough's generous support of KPC makes possible many additional services which impact a significant proportion of our greater community. In these uncertain times it is more important than ever to support and educate our community.

Jeff Meyers

Location:

Submitted At: 7:11pm 05-15-20

This is an eComment in support of Ordinance 2020-19. Having lived on the Kenai Peninsula for four years, I have realized the importance of Kenai Peninsula College to our communities throughout. In the trying economic and social times of Covid and low oil prices having an informed, knowledgeable, and equipped society is as important as it has ever been. These are the leaders who are going to be making hard decisions in the coming years.

Likewise, economic studies show that higher education is an excellent ROI in the present and future. The students, staff, and faculty of Kenai Peninsula College are renters, homeowners, shoppers, tax payers, and investors in infrastructure that make our economy run. For these reasons, I will once again state my absolute support for Kenia Peninsula College and its students and employees.