



February 20, 2009

Senator Bettye Davis
State of Alaska
State Capital
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Davis:

NEA-Alaska supports SB 102, a raise in the age of compulsory school attendance to eighteen for Alaska's children. Truancy and dropout rates are too high and we believe every effort should be made to encourage our youth to become as fully educated as possible. Raising the age of mandatory school attendance may serve to keep students in school longer than they now stay. If this bill causes even one child to complete their education it will be worthwhile.

Further, the annual Delegate Assembly of members in January 2009 passed a resolution which states:

NEA-Alaska believes the Legislature should establish penalties for non-compliance with Alaska's compulsory attendance laws.

It is our belief that a law with no teeth serves little purpose. Alaska's school employees work hard to offer our children opportunities which prepare them for life. We cannot fulfill the promise of a high quality education for Alaska's children if they are not in our classrooms.

Thank you for sponsoring this piece of legislation and the work you do on behalf of Alaska's future.

Respectfully,

Barb Angaiak, President

From: Friedman_Jeff [Friedman_Jeff@asdk12.org]
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2009 7:16 PM
To: Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Gary Stevens
Cc: Don Burrell; Thomas Obermeyer; Comeau_Carol; Siegfried_Robin; Sen. Lesil McGuire
Subject: SB 102

Dear Senator Elton and Education Committee Members:

I am writing in support of SB 102, a bill to raise the compulsory age of school attendance.

The Anchorage School Board has consistently supported raising the age of school attendance to 18 years of age or graduation with a high school diploma, which ever comes first. This bill would accomplish that. While raising the school age would not prevent all students from dropping out, it would change the minds of some students. Over the years, we have heard of students whose parents tell them to leave school and get a job because the family needs the money and school is not required once they turn 16. We also hear of students who convince their parents that they should be permitted to stop going to school after they turn 16 because the current law says it is okay.

It is not okay for a 16 or 17 year old to stop going to school if they do not have a diploma. A high school diploma has become too important in today's society. We need to take all reasonable steps to reduce the number of students who leave school before graduating, and this is one of those steps. It is not the entire solution, but it is one piece of the solution.

The second part of this bill addresses procedures to reduce truancy. The Anchorage School Board has not yet had an opportunity to take a position on this issue, but I am confident that the Board would be interested in looking at ways to reduce truancy. I have personally noticed one thing in this portion of the bill that I want to bring to your attention.

The proposed definition of truancy says it is an unexcused absence without the prior knowledge and consent of the parent or guardian. From talking to teachers, it seems that a significant problem is that some parents routinely give their children permission to be absent from school. Because they have permission, they could not be considered truant under this bill. From an educational point of view, I don't think it would matter whether a student misses class with or without parental permission. The problem is missing too many instructional days. I don't know how best to address this, but I thought I would bring it to your attention.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge you to support raising the compulsory age for school attendance.

Jeff Friedman

Anchorage School Board
1534 D St
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-742-4699 (home)
friedman_jeff@asdk12.org

From: Comeau_Carol [Comeau_Carol@asdk12.org]
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2009 10:47 PM
To: Don Burrell; Friedman_Jeff; Roberts_Macon; Peggycowan@jsd.k12.ak.us; fishing@alaska.com; Barb.Angaiak@neaalaska.org; scrawford@aasb.org; crose@aasb.org
Cc: Thomas Obermeyer
Subject: RE: SB 102: RAISE COMP. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE/TRUANCY

Thanks very much, Donald. We will testify, or send in testimony. Carol

Carol Comeau, Superintendent
Anchorage School District
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504
Phone: 907-742-4312 Fax: 907-742-4318
comeau_carol@asdk12.org

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."
Nelson Mandela

From: Don Burrell [mailto:Don_Burrell@legis.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2009 6:20 PM
To: Comeau_Carol; Friedman_Jeff; Roberts_Macon; Peggycowan@jsd.k12.ak.us; fishing@alaska.com; Barb.Angaiak@neaalaska.org; scrawford@aasb.org; crose@aasb.org
Cc: Thomas Obermeyer
Subject: SB 102: RAISE COMP. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE/TRUANCY

Good evening.

On behalf of Senator Davis, I am notifying you that Senate Bill 102: Raise Compulsory School Attendance Age/Truancy bill is being heard this Monday morning at 8 am in the Senate Education Committee. We are requesting your testimony in support of this bill, and in addition, hope that you will spread the word to other members of your board or association regarding this bill's first hearing this session in the Senate Education committee on Monday, February 23rd at 8am.

The teleconference number is 1-888-295-4546. If you are unable to testify during the meeting, you can also email your testimony to Senator Davis's email: Senator_Bettye_Davis@legis.state.ak.us.

Thank you.

Don Burrell Jr.
Legislative Aide
Office of Senator Bettye Davis
State Capitol Building, Rm. 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801
P 907-465-3822
F 907-465-3756
don_burrell@legis.state.ak.us