



February 26, 2018

Senator Peter Micciche  
State Capitol Room 508  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Micciche,

NEA-Alaska is committed to ensuring that students have qualified teachers and support staff from day one of each school year. As currently drafted, Senate Bill 185 can provide some short term relief to school districts facing an educator recruitment and retention crisis.

This school year as students returned to the classroom, there were at least 250 unfilled positions across Alaska. We heard from Superintendents that this year at the Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair there were hardly any applicants. Alaska used to be a place where top-notch educators competed for positions. Sadly, that is no longer the case.

NEA-Alaska believes that the permanent fix addressing the broader recruitment and retention crisis we are facing needs to include the following elements:

- Early funding to ensure that we retain our brightest and best teachers and that we are able to recruit new employees earlier in the year
- Adequate and predictable funding for our schools
- Fixing the retirement system to provide meaningful retirement security with a defined benefit component not presently available to educators hired after 2006
- Making sure that salary and benefits are competitive to attract teachers to Alaska
- Promoting the teaching profession in Alaska to encourage more Alaskan high school students and those in other professions to consider entering the profession
- Providing good mentoring programs and quality professional development to retain quality educators

In order to make sure that every kid in Alaska has a teacher who can do an outstanding job, we must recruit and support people who love kids. Our retired teachers have spent their careers inspiring students and committed to student learning. NEA-Alaska supports the proposal in Senate Bill 185 to allow our retired educators to collect the pension they have earned, while returning to the classroom to provide stop-gap relief to ensure student success. We will continue to monitor this bill as it moves through the process and react if necessary to any potential changes.

Sincerely,

Tim Parker  
President, NEA-Alaska