



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



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

February 8, 2018

Representative Jennifer Johnston
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 430
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Johnston,

As the Superintendent of Anchorage School District (ASD), I am writing in strong support of House Bill 224.

For many years, ASD has accessed the extensive experience and expertise of retired employees and educators by allowing for temporary and part-time employment opportunities. Nevertheless, our efforts to capitalize on such a talented and veteran workforce have been severely limited without a provision to allow for the unrestricted re-employment of retirees such as would be allowed by HB 224.

As I understand the proposed Bill, districts would be permitted to essentially enter into an at-will employment agreement with a retired teacher or administrator so long as that individual has been retired for three months. Current protections and benefits such as tenure, sick leave, and retirement would not be offered or required as the nature of the employment relationship with a retired individual is so different. Though some of these limitations are not clearly identified in the proposed bill, we would support their explicit restriction as well as ensuring that the benefits of HB 224 exist well into the future by also allowing the rehire of retirees under the new defined contribution plan. However, it is our interpretation that the State, under HB 224, would benefit from the District's continuation to pay the supplemental 12.56% for rehired retirees for the purpose of decreasing unfunded pension liability.

I want to assure you that the re-employment of retired teachers is not pursued in ASD to avoid the hire of new teachers. Retirees fill gaps when properly certified staff cannot be hired in hard to fill areas, they provide temporary or short term expertise for special projects or initiatives, and they give needed support during high demand times of the year such as during summer months, the start of the school year, or during assessment

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Anchorage School Board Tam Agosti-Gisler, President

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Kathleen Plunkett, Clerk

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Andy Holleman

Superintendent Dr. Deena Bishop

February 8, 2018
Representative Jennifer Johnston
Alaska House of Representatives
Page 2

periods. ASD is encouraged by the possibility of being able to hire retired teachers rather than contract agencies to more effectively and efficiently fill these needs.

One of the most attractive aspects of HB 224 is the potential savings our district could experience. Again, because certain costs would not need to be provided to retirees, there are significant savings that could be re-directed back to the classroom environment or even used to hire other new classroom teachers.

On behalf of the Anchorage School Board, we recognize the fiscal realities which you are facing and appreciate your willingness to provide school districts with increased flexibility and discretion in a time of constricting resources. ASD embraces innovation and supports creative solutions. We are encouraged by the concept proposed in HB 224 and see that it has the potential to offer great benefits to our district. I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my support for your work.

Respectfully,



Deena M. Bishop, Ed.D.
Superintendent

cc: Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Dan Ortiz
Anchorage School Board

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Scott MacManus <smacmanus@agsd.us>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2017 2:22 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: Support of HB224

Dear Representative Johnston,

I am writing in support of HB 224, Reemployment of Retired teachers and Admin.

Alaska and my school district are facing a serious problem when it comes to the recruitment and retention of certificated educators. As you can see in the ACSA 2017 Joint Position Statements, the ACSA supports provisions that allow schools to place retired teachers who are both qualified and experienced back in classrooms. As the Superintendent of Alaska Gateway School District, I support it as well, and see HB224 of a part of the solution to addressing a shortage of quality teachers. This year, I have attended two different job fairs, and have not been able to hire a single new staff member...finding This while we do have a number of retired staff in my district who would be and willing but who can not work without risking loss of income.

Thank you for your continued support of education and educating Alaska's children.

Scott MacManus, Superintendent
Alaska Gateway School District
(907)883-5151

"The more you know, the more you can imagine"

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Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Tim Bauer <tbauer@aisdk12.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 3:46 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Subject: Support of HB224

Representative Johnston,

I am writing you to voice my full support of HB224. I know there are a lot of difficult decisions you are making, but I see HB224 as a win-win for all districts in Alaska and will help provide benefits to all of our students long term.

Thank you for your time,

--

Tim Bauer
Superintendent
Annette Island School District
(907) 886-6332 extension 2261

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Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Jack Walsh <jwalsh@craigschools.com>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 7:09 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: Support for HB224 from Craig

Dear Representative Johnston,

I wanted to let you know that I believe HB224, which would allow for the reemployment of retired teachers and administrators to help districts fill vacancies, is a necessary tool to help meet school district personnel needs. For years districts have had to address emergency, part time, and temporary needs and without this type of support, it makes it hard to fill. What's interesting is that I can hire a retired teacher from any other state with no Alaskan experience or knowledge in their background. Why shouldn't I be able to tap this incredible resource?

By opening up our options to include that talented group of former school teachers and school leaders, who come with a skill set and experience that few have, and a real interest in Alaska's children and young adults is a real win-win. Districts get quality employees for openings, and often these people are already familiar with the community and school, or the region, and they know state standards and so many other important components of the work. These are people who know Alaska well and call it home.

I recognize there is a concern about the so-called 'double dipping', and yet it is something the US Military and so many other agencies use to help meet the challenges that they face. What many fail to recognize, is that the greater number of these hires have historically served during family emergencies and illnesses, situations where employees find conditions are not what they had expected and want out of their contract, or when you see sudden increases in a student population and you need to make a last minute hire. It is school needs and student needs that drive these decisions, not what a retired teacher or former employee feels they need.

I would hope that you and your committee give this due consideration and support this bill. Thanks for your time with this matter. Have a great week. Jack

--

Jack Walsh, Superintendent
Craig City School District
PO Box 800
Craig, AK 99921

Office (907) 826-3274
Fax (907) 826-3322
Cell (907) 654-3971

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Dan Polta <danpolta@dbsd.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2017 11:07 AM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: Support of HB224

Dear Representative Jennifer Johnston

This letter is in support of HB224 Teacher Retire/Rehire.

Passing this bill is an easy cost effective way to increase the number of available teachers to serve our students in Alaska. Additionally, this could provide for lower employment costs by rehiring retired teachers who are still able to receive retirement benefits. Teachers rehired under this provision would be experienced Alaskan educators. As such they are well positioned to serve the educational needs of our children and already understand the local and cultural environment in our schools. This bill also has the potential positive on the individual retired teacher. He or she could make a decision to re-enter teaching and increase his/her overall personal earnings. I feel these benefits to our school districts, our students, and to our teachers makes this bill one you should support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dan Polta
Superintendent
Denali Borough School District
P.O. Box 280
Healy, AK, 99743
1 (907) 683-2278
danpolta@dbsd.org

Nurturing, empowering and inspiring today's student to positively shape tomorrow's world

Southwest Region School District
P.O. Box 90
Dillingham, AK 99576

April 18, 2017

Alaska State Legislature
Attn: Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
State Capitol
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

Southwest Region School District is in support of the changes proposed in HB 224 "An Act relating to reemployment of persons who retire under the teachers' retirement system." The District continues to struggle with the declining number of candidates who seek employment within the teaching profession in Alaska. This legislation will help to provide additional candidates for consideration who are already versed and have previously found success in teaching and living in Alaska.

In order to obtain the greatest number of potential candidates, please consider making additional changes to the proposed language within Sec. 14.20.136. Reemployment of member of teachers' retirement system, a) of this section unless the member has been retired for at least, (2) three months OR six months OR nine months [one year] if the member is less than 62 years of age. The age of a retired member should not be a factor for a member who retired under NORMAL retirement. However, a waiting period of less than one 365-day period would provide for more individuals to be available mid-year when recruiting efforts come up against increased shortages in the pool of candidates.

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring that the Public Educational System within Alaska remains strong.

Sincerely yours,



David J. Piazza
Superintendent

CC: Representative Jennifer Johnston
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Adam Wool
Representative Chris Birch
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Gary Knopp
ACSA – Lisa Skiles Parady

Robert Ervine

From: Danny Frazier <dfrazier@dlgasd.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 1:26 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: HB224

Representative Johnston,

I am writing to show my support for HB224, it would be a tremendous help for school districts. I have at least three employees that would be able to retire and then come back to work at a lower salary. The district gains an experienced teacher for a beginning teacher salary. The teacher makes retirement plus beginning salary. Everyone wins.

An excellent education for every student every day.

Danny Frazier, Superintendent
Dillingham City School District
Box 170
Dillingham, Alaska 99576
dfrazier@dlgasd.org

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PS Before printing this email or any attachments, think about your responsibility and commitment to the environment.

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Karen Gaborik <karen.gaborik@k12northstar.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 5:13 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: Support for HB224

Dear Representative Johnston,

I am writing in support of HB224, the bill for Reemployment of Retired Teachers and Administrators. It is well known that Alaska is suffering a severe shortage of teachers. For the first time in my memory this year in Fairbanks we've had regular classroom teacher vacancies for significant portions of the school year. These vacancies result in classes being eliminated (at the secondary level) or in attempts by Human Resources to fill those positions temporarily with substitute teachers. In many cases substitute teachers are not certified or otherwise qualified to teach particular courses or classes for long periods of time. Additionally, substitutes are often rotated through positions due to their inability to fill a long-term vacancy.

The ability to recruit and hire retired teachers and administrators would go far to fill vacant positions and to ensure qualified teachers are instructing our students. Many teachers, after being retired for a year or two, realize they would like to return to teaching full time if they had the opportunity to do so. Please make this a possibility for school districts.

Best Regards,

Karen Gaborik

Karen Gaborik, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

karen.gaborik@k12northstar.org

907-452-2000

"Inspire people to do the things that inspire them."

—Simon Sinek

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Tony Habra <ahabra@hbsd.net>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 9:36 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: HB 224

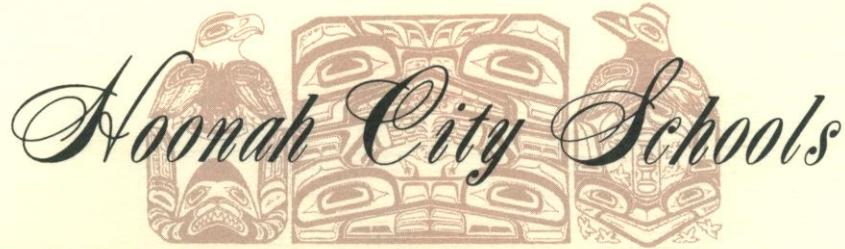
Good evening Rep. Johnson,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 224. Across the country there is a shortage of certified educators and Alaska is not immune to this national crisis. This is especially true in rural Alaska.

House Bill 224 will not solve this issue, but it will go along way to help us make sure that they are qualified educators teaching our children. The more isolated the community, the more difficult it is to make certain that our students receive the best possible education. That starts with the person in the front of the classroom. Too often it can become the matter of a warm body, and that is not fair to our students.

Our students deserve every opportunity we can afford them, and it is they who will be best served by passing HB 224. Thank you for all you can do to help this bill move forward.

Tony Habra, Superintendent Haines Borough School District ahabra@hbsd.net
907-314-2055



P.O. Box 157 366 Garteeni Hwy. Hoonah, Alaska 99829 (907) 945-3611 Fax (907) 945-3492

16 April 2017

RE: A letter in support of HB224

This letter is written in strong support of HB224 a bill that is long overdue. Alaska's ability to educate its youth, in fiscally tough times, depends on encouraging and keeping the support of master teachers, principals, and superintendents who understand educational needs in Alaska. Not everyone wishes to do this however those that do should be held in high regard.

My name is Dr. PJ Ford Slack and I have been a principal, Alaska State Special Education Director, Activities Director, a special education teacher, the Director of Teaching and Learning Support, and a Superintendent. I have worked in Alaska 20 years and am a Tier II educator. Currently, I am an emergency superintendent in a small district in SE Alaska. This district has had over 12 superintendents in the past 20 years. It's budget and education program speak to that lack of consistent leadership. Bringing in outside superintendents to this district has added to the lack of academic growth for students who attend this culturally centered school. This school district has amazing potential however it needs experienced leadership and experienced Alaska teachers to work with new teachers to achieve a comprehensive learning program.

When I was an educational professor in the State College System of Minnesota many of my teacher education students and administrative students headed to the Alaska job fair. This year at the job fair there were more hiring personnel then applicants. Alaska is no longer the state to come and establish an educational life. Our retirement system and wages for the cost of living here does not draw from the lower 48 as it once did.

Further, Alaska's regulations punish experienced Alaska educators if they would like to help a district post-retirement. That is a dilemma for me and others. I don't want to take my Alaska educational knowledge outside the state however if I retire that is what it looks like I may need to do. That is problematic to this state as we all look to educate our most valuable resource, our children, with less. For example, the state of Oregon, who has undergone continuous fiscal upheaval maintains a list of administrators who are willing to go into districts that need emergency support. Why can't Alaska's AASB or ASA maintain such a list? The reason is simple, retired educators must follow an increasingly tough set of restrictions to be able to help a district.

I applaud you all for supporting this bill and moving it forward. It is part of the equation in these lean times in our state.

Don't overlook your retired educators as a resource!!!

Thank you for all you do for schools and our students.

Dr. PJ Ford Slack, Superintendent Hoonah

Robert Ervine

From: Miller, Mark <mark.miller@juneauschools.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 1:04 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston; Robert Ervine; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Stephanie Gilardi
Cc: Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Adam Wool; Rep. Chris Birch; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Gary Knopp; Lisa Parady
Subject: In support of HB 224

Representative Johnston:

Thank you for introducing HB 224- the so called "retire-rehire" bill. I would like to go on record as supporting this bill for a number of reasons.

1. In many Alaskan Native cultures Elders are seen as key to passing on knowledge. While I don't necessarily think there is a direct parallel, the fact of the matter is teachers and administrators who have years of experience and historical knowledge can be an invaluable resource to a school district and its community. To waste this resource because a person has turned 62 and is collecting a retirement owed to them by the state seems short sighted and foolish.
2. Children born today in many parts of the U.S. have an average life expectancy of 100 years! The baby boomers who are retiring now are likely to live at least another 30 years. This is a huge portion of our population that still has at least a third of their lives to go. This bill has the potential to stem the "brain drain" we are experiencing as many of our best and brightest leave education.
3. The talent pool for teachers and administrators in education is evaporating. Our youth are not going into teaching as they have in the past. Positions go unfilled every year, or are simply band-aided with long term substitutes. Encouraging retired professionals to keep working with Alaska's children while we work systemically to solve the problem would be very helpful.

Again, thank you for introducing the bill. I am in full support of the bill. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Mark Miller, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Juneau School District

City and Borough of Juneau
10014 Crazy Horse Dr.
Juneau, AK 99801
907.523.1702

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: McDonald, Stewart <smcdonald01@kibsd.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 4:48 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: Please Support HB224

April 17, 2017

Dear Honorable Representative Jennifer Johnston,

I am writing to support HB 224. Filling vacant positions in remote parts of Alaska is becoming more difficult every year. This bill is a realistic tool to help address teacher recruitment and retention in rural Alaska. Please do what you can to move this bill forward and see that it is passed.

Sincerely,

Stewart McDonald

Kodiak Island Borough School District
722 Mill Bay Road
Kodiak, AK 99615
(907) 942-5068

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Ty Mase <tmase@lpsd.com>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 3:08 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Adam Wool; Rep. Chris Birch; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Gary Knopp
Cc: Robert Ervine; Stephanie Gilardi
Subject: HB224

To Whom It May Concern:

This e-mail is in support of HB224, Reemployment of Retired Teachers and Administrators. As you are probably aware, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find quality educators to fill classroom positions in remote Alaska. For whatever reason, interest in teaching in Bush Alaska is waning and many recruiting trips to the lower 48 are unproductive.

One of the most important things we can do is to put excellent educators in our classrooms. Please help us do this by supporting HB224. This bill not only allows districts to widen our pool of applicants, it also allows us to get creative and hire half time educators/administrators, saving thousands.

Your support in this matter is much appreciated! This is a bill that could immediately make a difference!

Thank you,

Ty Mase, Superintendent

Lake and Peninsula School District



LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 • Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411 Fax: (907) 591-2449

www.loweryukon.org

Edgar Hoelscher

Chairman

Dr. Rob Picou

Superintendent

April 18, 2017

Representative Johnston
State Capital Room 430
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Johnston,

Thank you very much for making time to meet with me on April 10th. This testimony is in support of HB 224 for the following reasons:

1. All of Alaska, but in particular rural Alaska, is facing a serious crisis with teacher and principal recruitment.

The Lower Yukon School District has 29 vacancies this year. We typically experience a 30% teacher turnover rate. In conversations with my colleagues in the Northwest Arctic School District and the Bering Strait School District, I have learned they are experiencing the same crisis with teacher and principal recruitment.

2. We currently have retirees from other states who are filling critical positions.

I am unsure of the exact numbers, but anecdotally I can say there are a fair number of retirees from other states working in Alaska. In fact, I just spoke to two retired teachers from Arkansas this week. It only seems fair that we afford the same opportunity to Alaskans who have dedicated their entire careers to Alaska's children and who wish to work after retirement. In addition, their lifetime of experience in Alaska makes them infinitely more qualified to be successful in Alaska.

3. Job Fairs have been to say the least less than productive.

At a recent job fair, I looked out on the floor and counted exactly 23 candidates. The HR director for LYSD just returned from a job fair in Portland where he interviewed 4 candidates. There is a very real possibility that many districts in rural Alaska will start the school year with vacancies in critical positions.

CHILDREN FIRST

Alakanuk Emmonak Hooper Bay Kotlik Marshall Mt. Village Pilot Station Russian Mission Scammon Bay Sheldon Point

For these reasons, I can support HB 224 and believe it is the right legislation during this time of critical teacher and administrator shortages in Alaska. Thank you for your courage in support of Alaska's children.

Sincerely,

Rob Picou, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Lower Yukon School District

Nenana City School District
PO Box 10 Nenana, AK 99760
Phone: (907) 832-5464
"A Community of Opportunity - Preparing Students for Life"

April 17, 2017

Representative Jennifer Johnston
State Capitol Room 430
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: HB 224 "An Act relating to reemployment of persons who retire under the teachers' retirement system."

Dear Representative Johnston,

As a small, rural school district superintendent, I would like to express my personal support and the full support of the Nenana City School District regarding the passage of HB 224. A quality education for our students is dependent effective educators. Alaska's teacher shortage makes the need for alternative qualifications necessary, including the reemployment of Alaska certified professionals who have retired under the teacher retirement system.

Thank you for sponsoring this bill. Please let me know if there is anything further I can do to support its passage.

Sincerely,



Eric Gebhart
Superintendent

"The Nenana City School District will provide an innovative education through the utilization of tools and techniques that engage students in relevant activities that promote personalized learning, problem-solving, engaged citizenship, and teamwork."

Robert Ervine

From: Dan Carstens <DCarstens@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 2:00 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: HB 224

Representative Johnston,

I am writing to express my support of HB 224. I have been in my role as a principal for 12 years now and have seen both an abundance and a shortage of teachers when we post positions. Currently we are seeing a shortage, especially in the area of special education. There could be many reasons for this, maybe it is because there are not as many people going into education or because the time frame in which we have to post our positions and hire new staff. Whatever the reason is, it is our reality and something we work through every year no matter if we reside on or off the road system.

HB 224 would allow us to rehire teachers who have a desire to get back into the teaching field. These teachers who come back to the profession have the biggest hearts for our kids and provide a genuine and caring learning environment. They are high quality educators and many times continue to reside in the communities where they retired from. In short, they are what's right for kids.

I appreciate you introducing this bill and know that I whole heartedly support your efforts.

Regards,

Dan Carstens

Principal

Nikiski Middle/High School

AASSP President-Elect



“Don’t let anyone steal your excellence.” – Jimmy Casas



Nome Public Schools

P.O. Box 131 • Nome, Alaska • 99762 • (907) 443-2231 • Fax 443-5144
Shawn Arnold, Superintendent
907-443-6191 • sarnold@nomeschools.com

To: Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

From: Shawn Arnold, Superintendent

Date: April 18, 2017

RE: Letter of Support House Bill 224

I am writing to you in support of House Bill 224, "An Act relating to reemployment of persons who retire under the teachers' retirement 2 system," which will be heard today in the House State Affairs Committee.

Current laws place deterrents on teachers who retire and want to re-enter their position or a similar one in a school district. Teachers retirements mean school districts lose years of experience and invaluable community connections. Given the current teacher shortage across Alaska, districts need innovative ways to keep as many teachers as possible and retired teachers need an additional monetary incentive to get back on the bus. This bill would be a way to keep teachers in Alaska instead of having them retire and leaving to teach in another state. If they could have an incentive to stay on, draw a salary and retirement wage while not having to officially retire, that might get some people to stay. This change might also help convince some retired teachers who are on the fence to return to fill the gaps in special education and other subjects, even if just for a year or two. We are going to need all doors to stay open while the University of Alaska system works on getting more people into the system. Providing a tool to encourage retired educators to return to work would be an asset for any district in Alaska.

Thank you for allowing me to express my thoughts and I would hope that you support House Bill 224. Should you wish I would be pleased to discuss these issues further at your convenience.


Shawn Arnold
Superintendent



NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ambler · Buckland · Deering · Kiana · Kivalina · Kobuk · Kotzebue · Noatak · Noorvik · Selawik · Shungnak
PO Box 51 · Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 · Phone (907) 442-1800

May 07, 2017

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

For the record, I am Dr. Annmarie O'Brien, Superintendent of Northwest Arctic Borough School District. We have 2017 students in 12 schools in 11 villages. None of our villages are accessible by roads. I have been employed in Northwest Arctic for 17 years, six as a Director, eight years as assistant superintendent, and now I am in my 3rd year as Superintendent.

This message is a request to all Legislators to approve, before the end of this session, HB No. 224. "An Act relating to reemployment of persons who retire under the teachers' retirement system."

Rural Alaska, especially Western Alaska, is in a crisis because of the shortage of qualified staff to teach our students. For the first time in all my years with NWABSD, school opened without full staffing. As we recruit for the 2017-18 school year, the situation is worse. Now, after months of recruiting, we are still in need of over 30 staff to fill current needs. As parents and grandparents, I know this situation would be unacceptable to your family.

As you all know Alaska's University system graduates a fraction of the teachers needed to fill open positions throughout the state. As a result, this district goes through great expense to recruit in the lower 48.

We maintain our quality instruction through offering distance delivery and our Magnet School boarding program, but it is not enough. Qualified and experienced staff are needed and this bill would encourage them to apply.

HB No. 224 has NO fiscal impact to the State of Alaska. In fact, it will favorably impact district finances by reducing costs associated with recruitment efforts in the lower 48.

I am appealing to all members of the Legislature to assist districts struggling with maintaining qualified staff for the students in rural Alaska. Please approve HB No. 224 before the end of the FY'17 session.

If you have any questions, please call me at 907-442-1802 or email: aobrien@nwarctic.org.

Thank you.

Dr. Annmarie O'Brien

MISSION: To provide a learning environment that inspires and challenges students and employees to excel
VISION: To graduate all students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a successful future

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Therese Ashton <tashton@aktdcsd.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2017 2:45 PM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Subject: HB224

Dear Representative Jennifer Johnston,

Thank you for your work within the legislative process this year. These are tough times with a lot to consider. I thank the House members for focusing on keeping the fiscal crisis as their main priority.

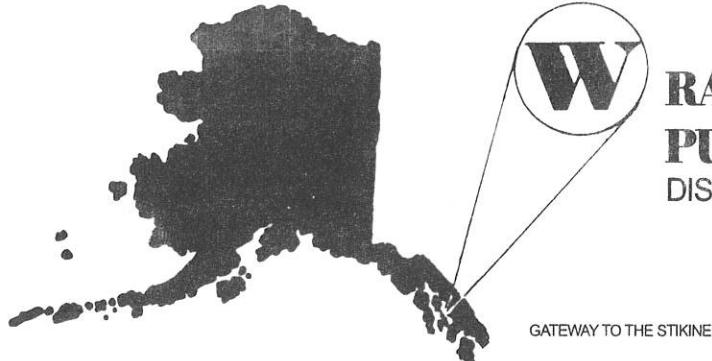
As a superintendent of a small rural school I support the passage of HB224. Part of being fiscally responsible in the district is to find creative ways to provide the education we want for our students. Passing HB224 is one way to open up opportunities that give us ways to fill our positions that are difficult to fill.

This year we were without a primary teacher until February because our options were limited. Our intermediate teacher had more than double the student ratio for his class and had to teach K-4 students without prior prep time based on the unique situation we found ourselves in at the beginning of the year. We did have a retired teacher we could have hired for the position had HB224 been in place.

Thank you for your consideration,

Thérèse Ashton
Superintendent/Principal
Tanana City School District
Maudrey Sommer School
907-366-7203

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**RANGELL
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
DISTRICT OFFICE

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WRANGELL ALASKA 99929
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April 19, 2017

Honorable Representative Dan Ortiz
State Capitol Room
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Ortiz:

I am writing you in support of HB 224. As the Superintendent of Wrangell Public Schools, this bill would allow small districts such as ours to hire retired teachers to fill very important instructional positions during a time when the candidate pool is quite limited.

Under the provisions of HB 224, districts would be allowed to make such hires in a cost effective manner while simultaneously searching for the best candidate to fill the position over the long-term. HB 224 also appeals to the retiree because they do not need to fear the loss of their retirement benefit. It is really a win-win for both the school district and the retiree.

The importance of HB 224 is immeasurable as we look to improve the educational landscape within our great state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick Mayer
Superintendent

PM:kjp

Rep. Jennifer Johnston

From: Kerry Boyd <kboyd@yksd.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2017 9:25 AM
To: Rep. Jennifer Johnston
Cc: Robert Ervine
Subject: HOUSE BILL NO. 224 Support

Dear Representative Johnston,

Yukon Koyukuk School District is in support of House Bill 224! This bill would provide more flexibility to school district and it would also recognize the quality of teachers we have in our own state. Thank you for putting this forth.

Kerry Boyd, Superintendent

Yukon Koyukuk School District
4762 Old Airport Way
Fairbanks, AK, 99709
907-374-9416

Good Morning Members of the State Affairs Committee,
I am writing in support of HB224 and asking that the committee do what they can to consider the bill and move that along for consideration by other committees and the full legislature's consideration. This bill, which would allow the rehire of retired teachers and administrators is a tool that is much needed to address the challenges we have in Alaska to fill positions in our most remote, and even our largest urban districts.

As someone who has worked in Alaskan schools for more than 30 years and been responsible for hiring staff in Kodiak, Bristol Bay, and Craig for the past 23 years, I can tell you that this task is becoming more difficult and we are being forced to make compromises and decisions that are not always in the best interests of students, a school, or a community. Across the state this year, as in others, schools opened with vacant positions and often those positions were in areas like special education where the needs are great and the services performed by qualified individuals is required by both state and federal law.

In Craig we were forced to hire one teacher for a special ed position this year after securing an emergency waiver and certificate. Don't misunderstand me, we found a talented, veteran teacher but he had no training in special education and will pick that up on the job and through a university program he began this summer. This is a far cry from what I had hoped we could do for the students in our high school.

I appreciate all that you are doing this session to help support the students, families, schools, and communities of Alaska. I understand we have significant challenges as a state in a variety of areas, not just education. I know you are being careful and intentional in what you do I think the same is true for school districts.

Our state constitution requires that we provide support for a quality education system to serve our young people. This investment is essential to the future of the state and every community within the state. This is not a new issue or concern. We have addressed this in the past with bills that have long since sunset, and still the need continues. I hope you will consider this in committee and move it forward for others' consideration and discussion. Thank you for your time and all the good things you do for all Alaskans. Respectfully, Jack Walsh

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Jack Walsh, Superintendent
Craig City School District
PO Box 800
Craig, AK 99921