

DISTRICT OFFICE  
**BERING STRAIT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

P.O. BOX 225  
UNALAKLEET, ALASKA 99684-0225  
(907) 624-3611  
(907) 624-3099 FAX  
<http://www.bssd.org>

**March 8, 2018**

**Alaska State Legislature  
House Finance Committee**

**Re: HB212, Co-Sponsors Representatives Foster, Westlake**

House Finance Committee

The Bering Strait School District is **in support of HB212** as currently written.

This bill has been discussed by the Bering Strait School District's administration. Due to our school district being faced with mounting major maintenance projects in the foreseeable future it had been determined that the passage of HB212 would be advantageous for our district.

Sincerely,



Bobby Bolen  
Bering Strait School District, Superintendant  
907 624-3611  
[bbolen@bssd.org](mailto:bbolen@bssd.org)



Gary Eckenweiler  
Bering Strait School District, Director of facilities  
907 624-4249  
[geckenweiler@bssd.org](mailto:geckenweiler@bssd.org)

BREVIK MISSION

DIOMEDE

ELIM

GAMBELL

GOLOVIN

KOYUK

SAINT MICHAEL

SAVOONGA

SHAKTOOLIK

SHISHMAREF

STEBBINS

TELLER

UNALAKLEET

WALES

WHITE MOUNTAIN

SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL BOARD

RESOLUTION NO. 15-05

A RESOLUTION REGARDING DEFERRED FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

WHEREAS, the Southwest Region School District (SWRSD) is a Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) and operates schools facilities in seven remote Alaskan communities;

WHEREAS, the Southwest Region School District currently operates school facilities worth over \$103 million dollars for the benefit of the children of the district and on behalf of the State of Alaska;

WHEREAS, the vast majority of funding for operation and maintenance of these facilities is provided by the State of Alaska under the Alaska Public School Funding Program;

WHEREAS, the SWRS Board of Education believes that periodic major maintenance funding, beyond the basic operations and preventative maintenance funds provided under the Alaska Public School Funding Program, is necessary for the continued operation of adequate and safe schools,

WHEREAS, the FY16 Alaska education Capital Improvement Project: Major Maintenance Grant Funds has over \$196 million dollars in unfunded projects;

WHEREAS, the Southwest Region School District currently has over \$4,400,000 in deferred critical major maintenance project needs and;

WHEREAS, annual CIP updates are required at significant cost and priorities are set, but the Alaska Legislature has not allocated funding for these purposes since 2011;

WHEREAS, continued deferral of these major maintenance project needs across the state will result in the deterioration of school facilities over time, leave facilities out of compliance with state building and safety codes, and create an unsafe and inadequate learning environment for students.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest Region School District urges the Legislature to fully fund the Capital Improvement Projects: Major Maintenance Grant Fund.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL DISTRICT THIS 16<sup>th</sup> DAY OF December, 2014:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Southwest Region Schools

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, Southwest Region Schools

12-16-14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
12/16/14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Good morning. My name is Sarah Sledge. I am the executive director of the Coalition for Education Equity, a statewide organization representing Alaska school districts, organizations, and individuals concerned about the quality and breadth of educational opportunities available to Alaska's children.

Formerly known as Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children, or CEAAC, we advocated for education reform at the legislative level while fighting the Kasayulie and Moore lawsuits, which were settled in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

Pertinent to today's discussion of House Bill 212 is the Kasayulie vs State of Alaska lawsuit, which was filed in 1997 regarding the method of funding capital projects for education. At the time the lawsuit was filed, many of the physical facilities within plaintiff school districts were in dire need of replacement and/or major maintenance, exhibiting widespread deterioration, physical dangers, structural deficiencies, inability to satisfy relevant code requirements, and a lack of sufficient instructional space. Additionally, as REAAs, these school districts didn't (and still don't) have taxable real property or the legal authority to raise capital funds through a local capital tax levy or bond issue. At the same time, most municipal school districts had bonding capacity sufficient to raise capital funds and also had access to state funding for capital projects through the state's debt reimbursement program. This resulted in disparities between facilities in plaintiff school districts and those in districts with the ability to pass local bond issues to raise the necessary capital for facilities funding, major maintenance and renovation.

In 1999, the court found that the State's history and practice in funding construction of rural school facilities violated its obligations under the Education and Equal Protection Clauses of the Alaska Constitution and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. CEAAC and the State of Alaska reached a settlement in the lawsuit in 2011. Prior to the settlement, CEAAC worked with legislators in 2010 to win passage of Senate Bill 237, which directs 24% of funds allocated to bond debt reimbursement to REAA schools on the Department of Education and Early Development's CIP list. This established a systematic mechanism for identifying funding amounts for rural school construction and was expanded to include small municipal districts in 2013.

When SB 237 was drafted and moving through the legislative process, there was discussion about including language in the bill that would permit the fund to be used for both school construction and major maintenance projects. However, the need for school construction was great, and so it was given priority. While several school construction projects remain on the CIP list, many have been completed and there is now a significant backlog of major maintenance projects in our REAA and small municipal school districts.

As a result, we again find ourselves in the situation of seeing deterioration of school facilities creating unsafe or uncomfortable environments, environments that

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interfere with or impede the ability of students to learn, or, at the very least, increased costs for maintenance. We are also concerned that continued deferment of major maintenance will necessitate a larger number of school construction projects in the future, at great cost to our state.

House Bill 212 seeks to allow the REAA and small municipal school district fund to be used for major maintenance in addition to school construction. We believe this bill follows the intent of the Kasayulie case, seeking to achieve parity in funding between areas that have bonding capacity and those that do not. The Coalition for Education Equity supports House Bill 212.

Thank you.

Sarah Sledge  
Executive Director

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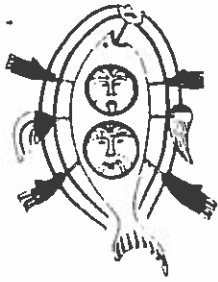
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KASHUNAMIUT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
985 KSD WAY  
CHEVAK, AK 99563

Phone (907) 858-7713  
Fax (907) 858-7328

December 19, 2017

Senator Tom Begich  
State Capitol Building, Room 419  
Juneau, AK 99801-2529

Dear Senator Begich,

Thank you so much for your unwavering support for education during the 2017 Legislative Session and Special Sessions.

I am writing to tell you about a situation happening here in the Kashunamiut School District and I suspect in many other rural school districts. Although we are a one-site district and quite poor we know that ensuring that our teachers have a safe and comfortable living space is a major factor in teacher retention. We are now at a place where our ability to maintain our teacher housing is being jeopardized.

We are doubling up for some teachers which is problematic for many of our staff. This is troublesome only in that our enrollment is growing, we want very much to add programs and opportunities for students but we don't have housing for more staff. We have canvassed our community to find a local rental and have come up with nothing. We have also offered to fix homes in return for a multi-year lease. We had no takers.

Beyond that, our current housing is aging. Our units were installed by local carpenters who did not have the expertise to effectively install them so that the "settling" effects of the dirt ground and tundra could be minimized. As you know, the permafrost line is getting lower amplifying this problem. Our buildings are now settling to such a degree that the water and sewer lines are being compromised. Unless we address this through the work of an engineer and better pilings to stop the settling we are flirting with disaster. This work alone will require funding up to as much as 4,000,000.00 dollars (see letter from Hillside Landscaping).

At this time we cannot afford to build housing units so that we can add educational programs nor can we address the deterioration of our current units.

I know that we are not the only district in Western Alaska facing these challenges.

Some solutions could include:

- A two or three-year CIP program for teaching housing remodel, repair and/or acquisition
- A separate CIP program for REAA's that allows for housing projects
- Broadening the terms of the Kasayulie settlement from just building schools to housing projects
- A one-time appropriation to REAA's solely for the purpose of building and repairing teacher housing to encourage teacher retention

Perhaps in planning for the 2018 legislative session you would consider legislation to address this serious situation occurring in rural Alaska.

I am writing to many legislators regarding this issue to facilitate conversation.

We would love to have you visit Chevak as you prepare for the new session so that you can see first hand our situation.

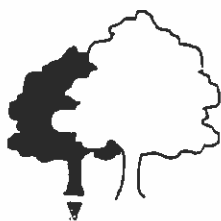
Thank you for your consideration and thoughts on this serious problem.

Respectfully,



Norma Holmgaard, Superintendent

Cc. Kashunamiut School District Regional School Board



## Hillside Landscaping & Excavating, Inc.

August 15, 2017

Superintendent Norma Holmgaard  
Kashunaminut School District  
985 KSD Way  
Chevack, Alaska 99563

RE: 12 School Buildings and Fuel Tank Farm

Dear Norma Holmgaard,

This is a rough proposal addressing the settling problems you are having with the 12 school buildings and the 5 fuel tanks.

I propose that we use piling and steel beams to support the buildings and tanks that are dangerously close to falling. This should be done before it's too late. I have made some rough estimates for shipping and correcting the settling problems that are occurring in Chevack, Alaska. Without any engineer's specs on products, my estimate is coming in at about \$4,000,000.00 to complete the project.

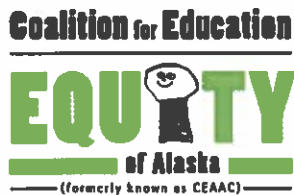
Sincerely,

Samuel C. Dickinson, President

Hillside Landscaping & Excavating, Inc.

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8551 Mentra Circle • Anchorage, Ak. 99518 • Phone ( 907 ) 522-4457 • Fax ( 907 ) 349-0146



**Coalition for Education Equity** is a member-based nonprofit organization founded in 1996 as Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (or CEAAC), dedicated to ensuring all Alaska children have a meaningful opportunity to be educated. As CEAAC, we worked to address inadequacies in Alaska schools through the courts and legislative activity. Today, as **Coalition for Education Equity**, we represent Alaska school districts, organizations, and individuals concerned about the quality and breadth of educational opportunities available to Alaska's children. We continue to advocate for equity and adequacy in education across Alaska and use research, policy development, and partnerships to find and advance solutions to performance issues in our schools, while still protecting the gains made through litigation.

**We believe:**

- ▶ Our state must ensure adequate investment in Alaska's public education system and public schools. We seek to ensure that education funding sources are reliable and adequate, and that funding decisions are made in a timely manner that enables school districts to plan efficiently and responsibly.
- ▶ Pre-elementary programs are essential to ensuring our children are ready for kindergarten and improving school performance. We seek to sustain and expand pre-elementary programs so that all Alaska's children have a strong foundation when they start kindergarten.
- ▶ Recruiting and retaining quality teachers has a significant impact on student outcomes, and teachers who are prepared in Alaska are much more likely to stay. We seek to reduce the challenges that lead to teacher turnover and expand the practices that lead great teachers to stay.
- ▶ Broadband access is an equity issue for our schools. Improving broadband access for our communities and schools opens up opportunities for expanded curricular choices and access to high quality instruction, extending the benefit of great teachers.
- ▶ Keeping small schools open is vital to our communities and enables our children to obtain an education while being supported by their connection to their family, community, and culture.
- ▶ Equitable, reliable funding of school construction and major maintenance will reduce deterioration of schools, save the state millions of dollars in future full school replacement costs, and ensure all Alaska children have safe facilities in which to learn.

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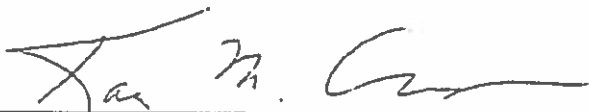
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