



Position Statement on SB 57 Charter School Funding

In 1995, AASB supported the creation of charter schools in statute. Over the years, school boards have subsidized and otherwise assisted local charter schools in providing Alaska families with a viable choice in public education.

AASB encourages the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.450 as outlined in SB 57 to establish a more equitable means of funding charter schools.

School boards find themselves caught between local citizen initiatives to create choices within public schools and an inadequate funding stream in statutes that require supplemental funding from local districts.

Joe Hardenbrook

From: Lisa Leeper [lleeper@nomeschools.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 22, 2009 9:02 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: Support for SB 57

Dear Senator Thomas,

I teach at Anvil City Science Academy in Nome. I hope that you will consider the following points in order to help SB 57 pass this stage with the Finance Committee in order that it may be heard by all and voted upon.

Respectfully,
Lisa Leeper
Teacher, Anvil City Science Academy

- Charter schools are public schools that provide valuable education options to Alaska families.
- The existing school funding law results in charter schools that enroll fewer than 150 students receiving 30% to 45% less state funding than neighborhood schools of their same size.
- Inequitable funding limits communities' ability to create and sustain these schools.
- There is a dramatic decrease in funding (\$500,000 - \$700,000 loss) when a charter school's enrollment drops from 150 students to 149, which creates a financial crisis for both the school and its host district.
- Senate Bill 57 solves the funding problem in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner.
- SB 57 funds charter schools with fewer than 150 students at the same per-student rate as neighborhood schools with 400 students.
- SB 57 contains a one-year, hold-harmless provision for charter schools that are either in their first year of operation or had more than 150 students the previous year, reducing the financial damage to their district.
- SB 57 will allow school districts to carry out the intent of the legislature in creating the charter school law, by increasing quality education options available to Alaska families.
- SB 57 is supported by the Alaska Association of School Boards, and superintendents and parents of charter school students from across the state. The bill has been co-sponsored by Senators Thomas, Stevens, Elton, and Davis.

Joe Hardenbrook

From: nsfhi@gci.net on behalf of Coach Hank and Asaaluk Irelan [nsfhi@gci.net]
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2009 9:29 AM
To: Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: Re: SB 57

ACSA Parents and Supporters,

Dear Senate Finance Committee members:

Below are talking points given to me by an excellent teacher and administrator of Nome's Anvil City Science Academy (ACSA); however, I would like to add that having been a part of ACSA since its inception that it has provided exceptional instruction for our students, it has led the way in many areas now adopted by the other parts of the Nome Public School system.

Also, ACSA has done this with less money then the other parts of the school system. With a leaking roof, windows blowing in during storms, help from parents and an excellent staff ACSA has maintained quality in its education. This shows what a local team can do, students, parents, teachers and staff. We would like to have the legislature join this successful concept and pass SB57.

Thanks,

Hank Irelan
Nome, Alaska

PS. After four years of ACSA my Freshman son at Nome Beltz High School (cross my fingers that it continues) has made straight A's for the first semester. Please help continue this legacy for future students of Nome.

Here are some talking points for any e-mails, phone calls, or letters.

- Charter schools are public schools that provide valuable education options to Alaska families.
- The existing school funding law results in charter schools that enroll fewer than 150 students receiving 30% to 45% less state funding than neighborhood schools of their same size.
- Inequitable funding limits communities' ability to create and sustain these schools.
- Charter schools may have fewer than 150 students because:
 - Community factors result in an unexpected and temporary dip below 150
 - A new school may have difficulty reaching 150 in its first year

- The targeted student population the school is designed to help is not sufficiently large (e.g., at-risk middle schoolers)
 - A charter school with more than 150 would have an adverse impact on the community's neighborhood schools
 - A small school size is critical to the success of the program.
- There is a dramatic decrease in funding (\$500,000 - \$700,000 loss) when a charter school's enrollment drops from 150 students to 149, which creates a financial crisis for both the school and its host district.
 - Senate Bill 57 solves the funding problem in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner.
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Joe Hardenbrook

From: Vickie Erickson [mitchvicky@gci.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2009 9:46 AM
To: Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Johnny Ellis
Cc: Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: SB 57

Dear Senators,

I would like to thank all of you in your past support of for schools in Alaska, especially those that are small in numbers and therefore needing more support when it comes to funding issues. I am requesting your support for the passage of SB 57.

Charter Schools allow parents, community members, and teachers to be in charge of developing unique educational programs and to be involved in decision making for school policies. As a parent of three Charter School children and two more that will soon be in Charter schools, it means a lot to me to be involved in school policies and the operations of our school. Our educational process is very flexible, which provides for the needs of our children and parents alike.

The Anvil City Science Academy has been in operation for eleven years now, it was created by parents, teachers, and many community members who were interested in a family oriented school characterized by high academic standards and a well-rounded curriculum, with an emphasis in science and math. The Science Academy serves 5th through 8th grade students who come to the school with a wide variety of backgrounds, learning styles, experiences, and needs. We are able to address the individual differences and learning styles, and creativity we see an increase in learning and creativity for all students. Our students at this time are involved in a salmon habitate restoration project grant from the Department of the Interior, and are working with Charlie Lean of Norton Sound Economic Development Company ,because of this project the Academy students were nominated and won the "Spirit of Youth" award in the catagory of Science . Another project that is noteworthy is the Artist in Schools project in which students are interviewing Nome residents in preparation for writing a play about the last 50 years in Nome.

Anvil City Science Academy has 44 students, with two and half certified teachers, no support personnel. This gives the school the needed flexibility to provide opportunities to the studetns to go beyond the traditional classroom walls in order to utilize community and environmental resources. In addition, in a small community such as Nome, a program like ACSA cann't reach a student count of 150 students, without having an adverse affect on the other public schools in the district. Therefore, a smaller program like ACSA is beneficial to the community by providing an alternative education program, while minimizing the possible impact on other schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Erickson

Joe Hardenbrook

From: payroll@ci.nome.ak.us on behalf of Dana Handeland [dhandeland@nomealaska.org]
Sent: Monday, February 23, 2009 1:04 PM
To: Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: Supporter of SB 57

Senate Finance Committee:

I am a parent of a current charter school student in Nome, Anvil City Science Academy as well as a graduate of the program who is now thriving at Mt Edgecumbe High School.

I have been an avid supporter of Charter Schools in Alaska because they offer alternative educational models. What does this mean to Alaskan children? Options!

Charter schools across the state have demonstrated their worth: Test score achievement, community involvement, unique educational projects, and an optional educational model targeted directly to the student.

Unfortunately, the method of funding charter schools with enrollment under 150 needs to be revised. After many years of working with the State to recognize this imperfection in the funding formula, at last SB 57 appears to address a permanent fix to this funding penalty.

By nature not all regions in Alaska can meet an enrollment quota of 150+ in a charter school without creating an adverse affect on the local communities schools. Anvil City Science Academy is an excellent example of this regional dilemma. Our charter school is capped at 44 students by the district. This unfortunately creates a waiting list of students wishing to participate in our program that cannot be accommodated.

SB 57 will provide the necessary language to allow charter schools under 150 to continue what they do best, educate. It will provide relief to the annual threat of funding shortages charter schools under 150 face.

Please help create the necessary momentum to make SB 57 law.

Thank you for putting Alaskan children first!

Sincerely,

Dana Handeland
Anvil City Science Academy, APC

Catherine Reardon

From: amcooney@gci.net on behalf of Alison and Mike Cooney [amcooney@gci.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2009 8:25 AM
To: Sen. Bert Stedman
Subject: SB 57

Dear Senator Stedman,

I am a parent of a child that attends the Juneau Community Charter School (JCCS). I have been on the JCCS Fundraising Committee since my daughter started kindergarten three years ago. The Fundraising Committees challenge for the past couple of years has been to try to find fundraisers that bring in money, but don't require families to work a part-time job to do it. That in itself is a difficult task with all of the different types of fundraising that occurs in Juneau. The Juneau community as a whole is continually asked to support various organizations through numerous fundraising events. JCCS families are already selling raffle tickets and fundraising for extracurricular activities.

JCCS's draft five year budget analysis is showing that in a couple of years our school will be faced with a yearly operational deficit that could reach up to \$30,000. To try to raise that amount of money year after year to keep the school operating is a daunting task (and as the Fundraising Coordinator, quite stressful). This is a public school. We want to fundraise for school trips, special programs and extra school supplies like the other public schools. Please support SB 57.

Respectfully,
Alison Cooney