

105 Cascade Creek Road
Sitka, Alaska 99835
February 27, 2011

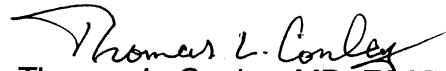
The Honorable Joe Thomas
Alaska Senate
Co-Chair Senate Education
State Capitol, Room 514
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Thomas

I am writing to urge endorsement of SB 84 by the Education Committee and its forwarding to Finance and eventually the Senate floor. Like virtually all Alaska School Districts we in Sitka are facing major budget shortfalls this year. On a budget of just under \$17 million, needed to simply maintain the present program, we are facing a deficit of \$1.3 million. Without relief we are facing significant layoffs of teachers and significant increases in pupil-teacher ratios and possible deletion of whole academic programs. SB 84 by increasing the BSA by \$110 for FY 2011-12 will help though not solve the problem especially when coupled with the proposal to create categorical funding for Vocational Education. Though we in the educational community have always been somewhat leery of categorical funding, we recognize that dollars going into the 20% Block Grant for Special ED, ESL, Gifted & Talented, & Vocational ED are being siphoned off almost exclusively by Special ED due to federal mandates and leaving Vocational Education seriously short funded; this at a time when its importance is being increasingly recognized.

Thank you to you personally and the committee as a whole for introducing the legislation. It has our strong support.

Sincerely,


Thomas L. Conley, MD, FAAP
Sitka School Board Member



Klawock City School District

P.O. Box 9 Klawock, Alaska 99925 907-755-2220 Fax: 907-755-2913

Richard E. Carlson
Superintendent

Jim Holien
K -12 Principal

February 25, 2011

Senator Joe Thomas
State Capital Room 514
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Thomas:

On behalf of the Board of Education and Administration of the Klawock City School District, I would like to express our support for SB 84.

The passage of SB 84 would address three major concerns of our school district namely increasing the BSA, forward funding, and funding for vocational education.

As a small rural school district we are especially vulnerable to rising "fixed" costs. We are particularly concerned about the cost of energy. We have been recently told by our supplier to expect significant increases in the cost of heating fuel, propane, and gasoline. Clearly world events have a direct impact on our energy budget. In addition, insurance costs continue to increase. We realize that Klawock is not unique in this situation. However, due to the size of our budget (generally less than \$3 million) we have an especially difficult time absorbing these costs.

SB 84 also affords us the opportunity to do a better job of sound financial planning. Knowing the Base Student Allocation for the next three years provides school districts with needed information to strategically plan programs, budgets, and staffing, providing for a more efficiently run school district.

For years the Klawock City School District has struggled to keep a quality vocational education program alive. Fortunately due to dedicated staff, creative funding, and the commitment of the Board of Education, our students have been able to enjoy an excellent, though small program. SB 84 provides us with the opportunity to expand our program by increasing course offerings while staying committed to excellence.

SB 84 is an excellent piece of legislation that will decrease the financial burden caused by rising prices, allow for better planning of programs and resources, and allow students opportunities to participate in quality vocational education programs that will help them transition from secondary school to post-secondary training and the Alaska workforce. Therefore, we fully support SB 84.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Carlson
Superintendent

MEETING TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES TODAY
www.klawockschool.com

Unalaska City School District

Senator Joe Thomas
State Capitol Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801

February 22, 2011

Dear Senator Thomas,

I am writing on behalf of the Unalaska City School District (UCSD) Board of Education in support of Senate Bill 84. SB 84 provides a modest increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for each of the next three fiscal years and funding for a separate grant program within the foundation formula for high school vocational education. This bill allows school districts to plan their budgets and programs for at least the next three years with greater certainty.

Knowing the education funding outlook for the next three years will enable UCSD to plan for the implementation of additional high school courses needed to meet the eligibility requirements for the Governor's Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) program. Specifically, the District seeks to hire an additional high school teacher so that students have access to the rigorous core curriculum required for eligibility for the APS.

The vocational education funding component of SB 84 will enable UCSD to build capacity within its Career and Technical Education programs. UCSD would utilize the additional vocational education funding to upgrade equipment, technology, and shop and classroom facilities. The District would expand its Tech Prep Program to include career paths other than welding, which is the only Tech Prep program presently offered through a partnership with UAF.

Like many school districts throughout the state, UCSD is faced with significant budgetary challenges due to rapidly rising health insurance and utilities costs. The increases to education funding proposed in SB 84 would allow UCSD to meet these rising costs and implement programs that fulfill the Governor and legislature's mandates to keep students in school, provide rigorous curriculum, and prepare students to enter Alaska's workforce.

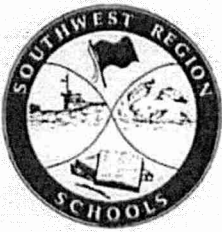
Sincerely,



John P. Conwell, Superintendent

Cc: Senator Lyman Hoffman
Representative Bryce Edgmon
AASB

P.O. Box 570, Unalaska, Alaska 99685 • (907) 581-3151 • Fax (907) 581-3152 • www.ucsd.net
John P. Conwell, Superintendent • Glenn Cole, Principal • Lorrie D. Scoles, Principal



Southwest Region School District

P.O. Box 90
574 Kenny Wren Road
Dillingham, AK 99576

(907) 842-5287 • Phone
(907) 842-5428 • Fax

Aleknagik

Clark's Point

Ekwok

Koliganek

Manokotak

New Stuyahok

Togiak

Twin Hills

February 22, 2011

Senator Joe Thomas
State Capitol Room 514
Juneau AK, 99801
Sen.Joe.Thomas@legis.state.ak.us

Dear Senator Thomas,

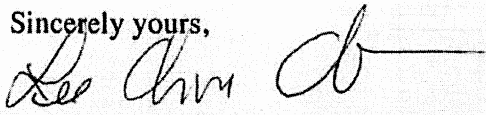
Southwest Region School District (SWRS)D, as well as other school districts across the State, is in need of a funding mechanism that allows for a proactive approach to annual budgeting, as well as one that provides adequate funding to meet the needs necessary to educate each of our 634 students. Thank you for your sponsorship of Senate Bill 84 that will raise the Base Student Allocation (BSA) gradually over the next three years. SWRSD also concurs with the Bill's effort to establish a separate grant program within the foundation formula to provide support of high school vocational education.

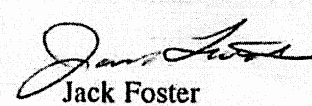
By creating a forward funding mechanism, SWRSD is able to anticipate future budget allocations during the budget planning process. As with any process that requires stakeholder input, the knowledge of the actual amount of the BSA allows the District to more accurately anticipate its revenues so that each community may provide comment on a more complete proposed budget. This also allows staffing patterns to be set well before the recruitment and selection process so that personnel resources may be more accurately identified.

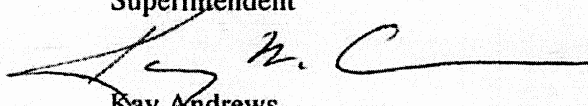
The additional funds that are provided in SB84 will help to cover the continually rising costs of insurance and energy. As these non-instructional items' costs continue to rise, our instructional program is impacted either through shortages in staff or the reduction in teaching materials in the classroom.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

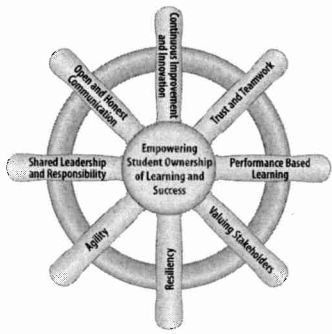

Lee Ann Andrew
Director of Administrative Services


Jack Foster
Superintendent


Kay Andrews
School Board President

djp

Cc: Senator Lyman Hoffman, Representative Bryce Edgmon, SWRS School Board,
AASB-Carl Rose



Chugach School District

9312 Vanguard Drive, Suite 100

Anchorage, AK 99507-5355

(907) 522-7400 Phone

(907) 522-3399 Fax

chugachschools.com

The Honorable Joe Thomas
State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801

February 24, 2011

Dear Senator Thomas,

I am writing in your support for your important education-funding proposal, Senate Bill 84. I would encourage action on this important legislation raising the BSA from the current \$5,680 per student to \$5,790 in July 2011, and then to \$5,905 in 2012 and to \$6,025 in 2013. The increases will be affordable to the state and important to the quality and stability of public education. It will help stabilize the ability of school districts to plan for the future rather than guessing from year to year.

I also support the portion of Senate Bill 84 that proposes the state fund a separate grant program within the foundation formula for high school vocational education. This is an investment that will help keep students in school and be prepared for Alaska jobs upon graduation from high school.

Sincerely,

Charlene Arneson, President
Chugach School District Board of Education

CC: Senator Joe Thomas, co-chair, Education Committee



Whittier Community School
(907) 472-2575

Tatitlek Community School
(907) 325-2252

Chenega Bay Community School
(907) 573-5123

Valdez Extension
(907) 835-5528

Anchorage Extension
(907) 522-7400

Fairbanks Extension
(907) 457-2545



Sen. Joe Thomas

From: William Mcleod [wmcleod@dlgsd.org]
Sent: Wednesday, February 23, 2011 4:07 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Cc: Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; dcsd@dlgsd.org
Subject: Support for SB84

Honorable Sen. Joe Thomas,

As superintendent of DCSD, I am asking for your support to increase the funding for Alaskan schools. As an educator I sincerely appreciate the past funding efforts from our state legislature and hope you continue to assist us. I know you are aware of the ever increasing costs in locations like Dillingham for such items as fuel for energy, rising insurance costs, the need to offer competitive compensation to attract and retain rural teachers, and things as simple as the cost of a loaf of bread. More importantly is the need we have to improve the academic performance of our kids. As a district faced with not meeting AYP, being a level 5 designated school, and recognizing we need to do a better job of meeting the SBA's of the Alaska standards we have begun major initiatives for improvement. We are moving to a standards based instructional program implementing research based best practices for our district. This year we have implemented the DEED recommended model for a universal screening assessment-Measured Academic Performance program, Response to Intervention, curriculum alignment to ensure we are teaching the AK Standards in all assessed areas, and volunteered as one of 16 school district participating in the new school improvement process known by the acronym of STEPP. One result of our efforts has been the identification that we need an additional reading specialist to help our teachers and kids with interventions for success. Without some increase in funding we will not be able to make even this modest effort to help our staff and kids. We are showing gains in our students using the processes I have noted and feel confident that your investment in the kids of Dillingham will not be wasted. We are showing positive results and with a little more help we can move our students ever closer to meeting the standards of Alaska.

Respectfully,

Bill McLeod,
Superintendent of Schools DCSD



Anchorage School District

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99504-3135
(907) 742-4000

SCHOOL BOARD

John Steiner
President

Crystal Kennedy
Vice President

Kathleen Plunkett
Treasurer

Jeannie Mackie
Clerk

Jeff Friedman

Pat Higgins

Don Smith

SUPERINTENDENT

Carol Comeau

February 23, 2011

Senator Kevin Meyer
Majority Leader
State Capitol, Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Joe Thomas
State Capitol, Room 514
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senators Meyer and Thomas:

On behalf of the Anchorage School District, I want to thank you for co-sponsoring Senate Bill 84. This legislation would insure that the Anchorage School District, and all other districts in the State, would be able to plan responsibly for the next three years, and would allow us to make much needed improvements to our Career and Technical/Vocational Education Programs. I applaud your leadership on this important issue.

The past three years of advance planning for education has allowed the Anchorage School District to advance their efforts in meeting our goal of graduating more of our high school students with a diploma, and reducing the drop-out rate. The efforts of the Joint Education Funding Task Force (JEFTF), chaired by Representative Mike Hawker and Senator Bert Stedman, have made a significant difference in our ability to plan ahead and we are grateful to the legislature and the governor for successful implementation of the three-year forward funding. Even with those significant increases, the Anchorage School District still had a \$12 million budget gap in the general fund to maintain current programs, pay for negotiated salary and benefit increases, pay for increased utility and fuel costs. The gap was NOT necessitated by our use of the ARRA (federal stimulus funds), but rather the ongoing general fund costs.

We still have a long way to go to insure that our students are college and/or career ready when they leave the Anchorage School District. We are very appreciative of the legislature's strong support for increases to the Base Student Allocation (BSA), the Intensive Needs Factor, and to pupil transportation. We are also supportive of the phased-in Area Cost Differential for all districts, even though Anchorage does not receive any funding under this part of the education formula. The increases to the Intensive Needs factor has allowed the ASD to use our general fund resources for non-special education students and programs for the first time; we are very grateful for that as many of our over 900+ Intensive Needs students require extra-ordinary services to meet the requirements of their Individual Educational Plans (IEP's).

We support Senate Bill 84's three year increases to the BSA as a way to assist districts in meeting the costs of inflation, fuel and energy cost increases, and to



Anchorage School District

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99504-3135
(907) 742-4000

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SUPERINTENDENT

Carol Comeau

allow us to retain important programs and staff who are key to increasing our graduation rate over time. We believe the proposed increases are reasonable for the State of Alaska in support of quality education. We know that we must increase the rigor of our course offerings in order to meet the challenges of the Alaska Performance Scholarship; we have a graduation task force reviewing our requirements and soliciting input in where to make needed changes. The additional funding will allow us to retain our effective teachers while keeping class sizes reasonable so our students receive quality education.

The Anchorage School District is also increasing our Career and Technical/Vocational Education offerings in order to better meet the needs of our non-college going student population. We have made great strides in this area at all of our comprehensive high schools, as well as at the King Career Center. We have strong partnerships with Alaska General Contractors, Alaska Works, and CITC at our Construction Academy at the King Career Center. We have incorporated upgrades to our high schools and middle schools in order to offer more CTE courses at home schools, as well as the King Career Center in our upcoming school bond election. Having additional funding to support the necessary teacher positions and the professional development required will go a long way to meeting the needs of our students in this vital area of 21st century education so all of our students are eligible for the Alaska Performance Scholarship for either college and/or career and technical training.

Again, I thank you for your leadership in bringing Senate Bill 84 forward. I urge the Senate Education Committee to hold hearings on the legislation and move it forward to Senate Finance and then hopefully to the floor for a vote of the Senate. At that point, I hope that a similar bill will have worked its way through the House for passage and eventual reconciliation in a joint conference committee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at comeau_carol@asdk12.org or 907-742-4312.

Sincerely yours,

Carol Comeau
Superintendent

cc School Board members
Anchorage legislators
Governor Sean Parnell
Commissioner of DEED, Mike Hanley
Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA
Carl Rose, Executive Director, AASB

Sen. Joe Thomas

From: Sammy Crawford [scrawfor@alaska.net]
Sent: Friday, February 25, 2011 2:42 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Cc: Dave Jones
Subject: Support for SB 84

Subject: Support for SB 84

Dear Senator Thomas,

I want to offer my strong support for Senate Bill 84, an important education funding proposal. This legislation would make a huge difference to our district for the following reasons:

1. It allows us to plan three years in advance, 2. it allows us to hire and retain the best teachers with certain funding, 3. it will allow us to keep programmatic staffing including our interventionists who work with children to make sure they meet the benchmarks by third grade, and 4. would allow us to continue our vocational ed programs and add to our successful construction academies.

Our district, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, has worked diligently to cut unnecessary costs. We have an energy incentive plan at each school in the district where students and staff work to decrease energy costs. We have rebid our copy contract to reduce paper copy costs. We took a tough look at our budget and eliminated unnecessary budgeted funds from several different areas. We still have no full time librarians in any of our 44 schools as a result of cost cutting measures in the past several years.

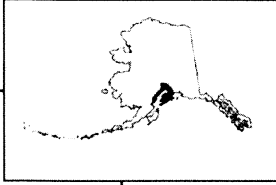
Our district is currently looking at a deficit of \$3.5 million for next year - about 42 teachers.

We really appreciate your sponsorship of SB 84.

Sincerely,

Sammy Crawford

Kenai Peninsula Borough School Board



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

Dr. Steve Atwater, Superintendent of Schools
148 North Binkley Street Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7553
Phone (907) 714-8888 Fax (907) 262-9132

March 1, 2011

Senator Kevin Meyer
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Building
Room 103
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Senator Joe Thomas
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Building
Room 514
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Meyer and Senator Thomas,

I am writing on behalf of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) to comment on Senate Bill 84; thank you for your part in sponsoring this legislation. The KPBSD strongly supports passage of this bill and encourages the legislature to give it priority status so that it is considered well before the end of the legislative session. Our urgency for this consideration is due to the timing of our issuance of contracts.

KPBSD prides itself on being fiscally prudent and financially efficient. During the state's previous education fiscal plan that increased the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$100 each year, we made significant improvements to our students' learning opportunities. We used this new money to expand our vocational offerings, add interventionists to help our struggling students and increase the number of counselors to help students from dropping out. We are preparing a brochure that highlights the positive effect of our improvements; I will share this with you when I am Juneau next week.

KPBSD's FY12 budget is based on rolling forward our existing level of service. With the BSA at its current level and our borough's contribution holding steady, we expect that our FY12 revenue will be 3.5 million dollars less than our budgeted expenditures. The proposed increase to the BSA that is included in SB84 will approximately cut this deficit in half.

Senator Meyer and Senator Thomas
March 1, 2011
Page 2.

I look forward to sharing the mentioned brochure with you and thank you for considering this encouragement to pass SB84.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Atwater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Atwater" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Atwater, Ph.D.
Superintendent

cc: Kenai Peninsula Legislative Delegation

Sen. Joe Thomas

From: Tana Wood [ftwood@wildak.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2011 12:07 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Cc: aasb@aasb.org
Subject: SB84

Thank you for your support of education and the future of Alaska kids. As President of Delta Greely School Board, REAA #15, I urge passage of **SB84**. Not only will it provide much needed stability for planning and development purposes, it addresses the much needed support of High School vocational education. As we watch the dramatically increasing oil prices and other basic costs of operating a school, an increased BSA with the 3 year formula could not come at a more critical time. We strongly support this very vital legislation.

Thank you!

Tana Wood

Sen. Joe Thomas

From: Doris Robbins [drobbins@gci.net]
Sent: Sunday, February 20, 2011 11:22 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Cc: Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: SB 84 VOC ED FUNDING/BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

RE: Senate Bill 84 VOC ED FUNDING/BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

Senator Thomas,

Thank you for supporting adequate funding for education. Cutting funding should not be a reaction when student performance does not instantly jump the next year after adequate funding is made available. Because there was more funding last year does not make up for all the compounded lack of resources over the years.

Children are not like cars: You can't pour more "gasoline" in one year and have that jumpstart the stalled vehicle. These little human "vehicles" have to have years of fertilizer, watering and proper pruning which builds on each year until the "plant" is mature and bears fruit.

It is not so different from plants that start out healthy and are later neglected. It is even better if you start working with "the little plants" at a very early start just after they can stand, say at about 3 or 4 years. Even if you give them a good first start, they will wither when you withhold adequate support (funds). They may never completely pull out of their withering just because you invest more dollars one year. They may instead forever bear the marks of neglect.

Look at the little stunted trees along the windswept areas of highway. You can see some that struggled to get through a hard period and survived and some have fallen. Think also of the trees in areas where they always had good growing in a rich soil and protected area. They stand proud and tall. That is not so different from our school children.

Please make sure the education funding level stays at the highest level possible. Also make sure that all children have the kind of education that meets their needs.

A good portion of children need to have Vocational Education. In fact, I am one who believes that all children need to have broad exposure to all kinds of learning. All children need to know how to do basic vocational and home economics skills that will aid them in taking care of themselves and their homes in the future. Some will discover that is an area where they do their best work and others will have some very useful skills that they will find handy all their lives.

Sincerely,

Doris Robbins

1281 Overhill Dr.
Fairbanks AK 99709-6753
(907) 374-0597

Sen. Joe Thomas

From: Kennedy_Crystal [Kennedy_Crystal@asdk12.org]
Sent: Friday, March 04, 2011 1:38 PM
To: Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Joe Thomas
Cc: crose@asb.org; jreeves@asb.org
Subject: Support for SB84

Dear Chairman Meyer and Chairman Thomas,

Thank you very much for your introduction of SB 84. As the Vice President of the Anchorage School Board and the President of the Association of Alaska School Boards, I can testify to the fact that the increases to the BSA in SB84 will be of great benefit to the Anchorage School District as well as the other school districts in our state.

This week the Anchorage School Board passed a Six Year Fiscal Plan. Two projections in the plan show that if revenues to our district remain status quo or are increased by \$100 to the BSA and by one and a half percent from our local tax base, the Anchorage School District will have a \$54 - \$101 million gap within six years in order to continue to deliver the services to our students that we currently do. Please keep in mind that Anchorage does not benefit from any implementation of the Cost Differential factor but must rely on an increase to the BSA for any relief to the effects of inflation on our educational programs.

Both from the perspective of the Anchorage School District and that of the Association of Alaska School Boards, the addition in SB 84 of targeted funding for vocational programs would be well received. The Association of Alaska School Boards has a resolution crafted and supported by our membership that promotes separate funding outside of the block grant that can be specifically focused on technical/ vocational improvements in our districts. Over the past few years the Anchorage School District has made significant strides in providing greater technical/vocational opportunities to our students and many districts are making similar efforts geared toward helping our students become more prepared for careers and post-secondary education. It is important to continue to improve and expand in our vocational offerings in all of Alaska's school districts and this bill will be very valuable toward that end.

The Anchorage School District has a graduation rate of 70% and has a drop out rate that has been under the 4% mark for the past several years. We have worked diligently to make those improvements and will continue to do so. Passage of SB 84 with the increases to the BSA and the vocational funding program will go a long way toward helping us meet those educational goals and allow our students to be more successful.

Thank you again!

Crystal Kennedy

Crystal Kennedy
Anchorage School Board member
907-696-2624

Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO)
3145 Pioneer Avenue
Juneau, AK 99801
907-500-9086
alasbo@gci.net

February 21, 2011

Alaska State Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Joe Thomas and the Honorable Kevin Meyer, Co-Chairs

Senators,

We are writing in support of a new multi-year plan to increase the base student allocation (BSA) in the K-12 foundation funding formula. This type of multi-year plan appears in **SB 84 – Base Student Allocation Increase and High School Vocational Education Funding**.

The Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) represents school business professionals from across the state, many of whom are responsible for budgeting and financial planning for their districts.

The multi-year increases to the Base Student Allocation applied during the years FY09-FY11 had a profound effect on the focus of the budget dialogue in school districts across the state. Instead of concern primarily about budget cuts to keep our heads above water, stakeholders participating in the budget process were able to plan instructional programs over a multi-year period. Although education is a long-term project, we can see that these efforts are already beginning to bear fruit, to the benefit of Alaskan students.

ALASBO members also know very well that school districts need regular funding increases to function effectively, in order to keep up with the increases in health insurance, energy, wages, benefits and other costs that are a reality in our current economy.

We believe that a multi-year funding plan for the BSA is one of the most effective actions the Legislature can take to promote continued improvement to the quality of instruction across the state. We'd like to see our districts focus on instructional planning, rather than the debilitating distraction of pink slips and the uncertainty of cuts to promising programs each spring.

We urge your support for a new multi-year funding plan for the Base Student Allocation. Please contact ALASBO Executive Director Amy Lujan using the contact information above if we can provide further assistance to your efforts.

Sincerely,



Luke D. Fulp
ALASBO President