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SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE Senators Kevin Meyer & Joe Thomas, Co-Chairs

Senate Bill 194

Although the record demonstrates some recent improvements, the Department's imposition of the initial improvement plans, its manner of selection of coaches, and other actions were undertaken with insufficient input from the districts thereby negatively impacting the likelihood of prompt and significant improvement in student achievement.
--Moore vs. The State of Alaska (2009)

In 2008 the Legislature voted to insert intervention guidelines into state statute, partly as a result of the court case in Moore vs. the State Alaska. These guidelines provided the basic framework for school interventions by the Department of Education and Early Development.

Since that time the Department of Education and Early Development has intervened in five school districts. Three of those districts are still in intervention status. This has been a learning time for the Department of Education and Early Development as well as the intervention school districts. One of the things consistently pointed out in the three interim rulings of the Moore case is that there is a disconnect between the hard work of the Department and the real needs of the intervention districts.

SB 194 sets forth a collaborative process that occurs before intervention. It respects the concept of local authority by providing that local groups interact with school boards and the Department. It sets out audit procedures that take into account the economic and social conditions of the district as well as the academic performance of schools within the district. It establishes district superintendent cohorts for mutual support, and includes community leaders, parents, teachers, principals and school board members in the process of improving education in communities.

In many ways, SB 194 is not an "intervention" bill—it is a bill to make interventions unnecessary. The process laid out in the bill—identifying districts, providing extensive audits, setting up local school governance councils, and district superintendent cohorts—is designed to deal with as many problems as possible without having to resort to an intervention.

We urge your support of SB 194.