

ANCHORAGE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

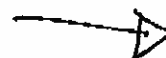
Email: Anchorage_LIO@akleg.gov 907-269-0111/ phone, 907-269-0229/fax

WRITTEN TESTIMONYNAME: Alison AriansREPRESENTING: selfBILL#/ SUBJECT: HJR 1
COMMITTEE &HEARING DATE: 7 February 2014

Thank you for taking my testimony. Sometimes when I've listened to the debate on this bill, I've wondered whether it's really worth arguing about. "So what," I think. If people want to risk sending their kids to unaccredited schools that might spring up to take advantage of their state-sourced funds, well, that's not my problem. Lots of people have had bad experiences in the Lower 48, with unscrupulous school owners taking off with their money, or just not educating their children properly. But my child will be safe in our public school system. Why should I bother weighing in?

The reason is that I have listened to what teachers have to say about this bill. I am not a teacher, nor have I ever been a member of the NEA. But I have great respect for the teachers in our schools. They are doing a wonderful job educating our children.

Some legislators seem to feel that teachers' testimony on this resolution is worthless. But teachers are the



very people we should be asking about this bill.
Let's acknowledge teachers' expertise. If we were
instituting a change in oil policy, of course we would
ask the oil companies their opinions.

When I listen to what the teachers are saying,
I hear a resounding NO on this resolution.
Will this resolution have a negative impact on
the kids with plenty of parental involvement
and economic resources? That's not clear.
What is clear is the negative impact on the
kids without it. Lots of kids don't have the
option of having mom or dad driving them
around town to a school other than a neighborhood
school. And if resources are led from those very
neighborhood schools educating our poorest
students, they are shortchanged even more.

Please be responsive to what our public school
teachers have to say.

Thank you.

House Committee on Education
February 7, 2014
Public Testimony

My name is Joe Boyle. I'm the president of the Mat-Su Education Association and the father of two Wasilla High School graduates. I am speaking in opposition to HJR1.

Our goal as stakeholders in public education is to provide a quality education to every child.

We need to provide that education to every child because the health and prosperity of our republic depends on it.

✓ When Horace man and others advocated for universal, public education in the 19th century, their intent was to unify our increasingly diverse population. And it worked! When I was a little boy reciting my lessons about George Washington, I had no idea that my relatives came to this country long after the Revolution. George Washington was the father of my country, and it didn't matter when my ancestors arrived on these shores.

Even today, it's a wonderful thing to hear little boys and girls, some with distinct accents, talking about our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution as if they were there when they were written.

✓ That's what public schools do. They continue to unify our ever more diverse people. Because of public schools we celebrate our diversity and our unity at the same time. This is one of the things that make our country exceptional—it's not that common around the world—and we have public education to thank for it.

I don't know why some people want to weaken and dilute universal, public education, but I know if they succeed, our children and grandchildren will regret it and ask us why?

I support public schools; I support the idea of a people united; I don't support the dividing and sorting of American children, and I don't support HJR1.



Alaska State Legislature

Please enter into the record my testimony to the

ERDIA 2014 House Education

Committee name

Committee on House Joint Resolution #1

dated 2/7/14

Bill/Subject

Today I am representing 9yr old, 4th grade student, Dillon of Palmer and 5yr old, pre school student Hunter of Talkeetna. I am a resident of Palmer for the past 31yrs, USAF retired, small business owner and employee of the MSBSD for 17yrs. I choose to live in the Mat-Su 31yrs ago because of the school district. A decision I never have regretted. I am excited about the choices that Dillon & Hunter have as they move through their Mat-Su K-12 education. My concern is this, while asking to support HJR #1, we have not heard one word about inflation proofing public schools. So districts can at a minimum maintain their current outstanding programs. I strongly appose this resolution so Dillons & Hunters public education choices do not erode during their K-12 journey.

Signed:

Thank you for your time

Testifier

ERNIE KIRBY

CEA / SELF

Representing (Optional)

Address

Phone number



Alaska State Legislature

Please enter into the record my testimony to the

Education Committee - House

Committee name

Committee on

HJR 1

Bill/Subject

, dated 7 Feb 2014

I'm writing to complete my testimony.

My primary concern @ HJR #1 is its vagueness and lack of accountability. With this potential re-allocation of state resources how will these expenditures be monitored? Who will oversee the curriculum? Will the teachers be certified? Administrators? How will budgets and expenditures be monitored? What discipline protocols be determined? How will student admission requests be handled? Will these students be eligible for buses? I am very concerned about the lack of accountability.

Our country was founded on the cry "No Taxation without representation." From my perspective this Amendment would jeopardize the public's right to monitor these public expenditures.

Signed:

Stephen J. O'Brien
Testifier

Self
Representing (Optional)

1155 Woodstock Dr. Palmer
Address

907-350-3281

Phone number

LIO Mat-Su

From: glennlyn@mlaonline.net
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 9:08 PM
To: LIO Mat-Su
Subject: Public Testimony for HJR1

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

This is public testimony for HJR1, the Constitutional Amendment/Voucher Bill.

Not too long ago, Governor Parnell held an educational symposium consisting of educators from all over the world to explore what factors enable students to be most successful. It turns out that Finland has fabulous results with its public schools. Some of those factors include: Finland has one of the lowest childhood poverty rates in the world; they have universal preschool; they have a national health care system; they have small public school class sizes-under 20 students per class; and, they have highly paid teachers in their public education system.

So, with this data, what has the Governor and Legislature done?

Flat funded education, which has resulted in increased class sizes and reduced programs, which has the most impact on the most vulnerable. All the while saying that until I (the Governor) see increases in results (test scores) public education will not receive increased funding. Well, I think the Public Schools in Alaska are doing a great job, in spite of the Governor and Legislature's lack of funding. Public schools take ALL students and give those students a quality education. Public school teachers need to be credentialed, pass highly qualified tests, be evaluated by their administrator on a yearly basis, and have their students' test scores published.

Now, with scarce public dollars, the Governor and Legislature are advocating that those scarce public dollars be given to religious institutions wrapped in the guise of "choice" and "competition". Well, those private school teachers do not need to be credentialed. They don't even need to be high school graduates. Those private schools do not need to be accredited. Those private schools do not need to teach science. Those private schools can teach whatever they want. And they can take any student they want. Then if that student happens to be a troublemaker, be learning disabled, or gasp-turn out to be gay, that student can be expelled, and be returned to the public school.

If you think the neediest, most vulnerable student would be accepted to a private religious school, you have not done your research. The base student allocation that is currently paid for a public school child would not be sufficient to cover tuition, so the parents who already have their child in a private school would be subsidized. And, who would pay for books, uniforms, transportation for that vulnerable student. All of which are above and beyond tuition.

The makers of our Alaska Constitution had a vision for our state, and part of that vision was a strong public education for each child. I am against using public dollars for private schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Kracke
Mat-Su resident
Republican

LIO Mat-Su

From: jennifer dunn hoeger <jennydunn@gsi.net>
Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 7:35 AM
To: LIO Mat-Su; House Education
Subject: Public testimony regarding HJR1

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

This is public testimony regarding HJR1.

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HJR1. Changing the Constitution is serious business and I believe its writers had it right when they disallowed public dollars to go to private or religious schools. The Legislature's own research shows that school vouchers could cost tax payers as much as \$100 million per year. This is money that would be taken away from public schools. Furthermore, there is no research that shows that voucher programs improve school performance or student success. Thank you for your consideration.

Jenny Hoeger
Palmer, AK

LIO Mat-Su

From: prudence@mtaonline.net
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:19 PM
To: LIO Mat-Su
Subject: Written testimony on HJR #1

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

This is written testimony regarding HJR #1. I am a teacher working in the Mat-Su Valley, where I have been employed for over 20 years. And yes, before anyone needs to ask, I am a member of NEA, and I see that as a good thing—not because unions protect bad teachers or because teachers are afraid of reform or because teachers do not believe in choice.

Teachers know that bad teachers are bad for all of us, and we believe in a healthy evaluation system that works to help teachers improve where necessary and find other employment career when necessary.

Teachers not only believe in reform, we are the only people practicing reform, every day, unlike politicians who like to talk about reform but don't know what it means. Reform means teachers working with students and parents to provide the best education possible. Reform means examining, reflecting on, and changing practice based on research and careful study, not blindly adopting the latest buzzword that comes down the pike. Reform means long hours after school, on weekends, and during vacations learning about our subject areas and gathering new techniques to help our students.

Teachers believe in choice. The Mat-Su Valley has 20 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, 9 high schools, and 11 schools the district categorizes as "non-traditional." These include a school designed for the Old Believer community, a Spanish immersion school, a Waldorf-model school, and several home school programs, among many others. Listed among the 9 high schools are two alternative programs, a K-12 school, a 7-12 school, a Career/Technical school, and four traditional high schools. These rich choices for parents and students offer myriad educational opportunities, all within the scope of the public school system.

Private schools exist in the Valley as well, and are funded by tuition payments and endowments. Amending the Alaska State Constitution to funnel money away from the public schools and into private schools will actually diminish choice, as the district would no longer be able to support the many options that exist for our students. Any district in the state can look to Mat-Su for effective ways to offer choice if they desire to do so; removing even more funding from those public schools can only reduce the opportunities available to students.

One need look no further than the states that have adopted privately-funded charter schools to see how ineffective they have been—these schools have proven to be spectacularly ineffective and inefficient at providing quality education to students in states like Wisconsin and Texas. In fact, in Texas just recently, a very well-funded charter school has just announced its closure at the end of this school year because it cost more than the district's public schools yet produced poorer academic results.

Please recognize HJR #1 for what it is: an attempt to undermine Alaska's constitution and to bring private corporations into the public school arena where they can bleed money from students who need it and funnel it into their own pockets while dividing our communities into "haves" and "have nots." Please do not allow that to happen; please show Alaskans that you are not for sale.

Prudence Plunkett

Alaskan Educator

907-315-9285

LIO Mat-Su

From: Forstner <forstner@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 9:12 PM
To: LIO Mat-Su
Subject: Public testimony in opposition to HJR1, Friday, February 7
Importance: High
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please accept this email message as testimony in opposition for HJR1.

I am Emily Forstner, a 30 year resident of the State of Alaska, a mother of two children educated in the brick and mortar schools of the Mat-Su, and a 32 year veteran teacher. Yes, I am a member of the local MSEA; but my opposition to this bill- both currently as well as last year- is not associated with my association dues. I disagree vehemently with this bill all on my own.

I disagree fiscally with the inadequate research and fiscal projection of the cost of this amendment. The unknown balance due, as well as the evasion of such information, is concerning in these uncertain times of budget constraints. I disagree socially for the obvious inequities this bill creates for our poor and less able.

But, most importantly, I disagree because even though, and in spite of, the incredible changes our society has undergone in the last 25 years with the information freeway, the fundamental need to separate church from state has not changed. This amendment erodes that notion in the name of free market and competition. It is based on the illusion that education is akin to choosing a breakfast cereal.

Please, I beg of you. No. I pray of thee. Stop this madness. Do not go forward in trying to bring forward as a ballot initiative to amend this fundamental belief in our constitution. Lead us all in rolling up your sleeves and facing the challenges of a changing public school system without challenging our core belief of a freedom that has never been for profit.

Thank you for your attention,
Emily Forstner
forstner@mtaonline.net

PO Box 3942
Palmer, AK 99645
907-355-6469

LIO Mat-Su

From: dianneak@mtaonline.net
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 5:58 PM
To: LIO Mat-Su
Subject: HJR1

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please do not pass HJR1. The results of this bill will simply be to allow big corporations to dip into the public tax revenue stream for their own benefit. Let's improve the schools we have; let's not spread our tax dollars so thin that nothing can be accomplished to help our kids learn

LIO Mat-Su

From: dianneak@mtaonline.net
Sent: Thursday, February 06, 2014 6 00 PM
To: LIO Mat-Su
Subject: HJR1

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please do not pass HJR1. The results of this bill will simply be to allow big corporations to dip into the public tax revenue stream for their own benefit. Let's improve the schools we have; let's not spread our tax dollars so thin that nothing can be accomplished to help our kids learn.

Dianne K. Wagner
Mat-Su
3361 N. Inspiration Loop
Wasilla, AK 99654