

**Rep. Lynn Gattis**

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**From:** rpbrooks12@gmail.com on behalf of Regan Brooks <regansheltonbrooks@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 11:42 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Harriet Drummond  
**Subject:** Testimony regarding charter school funding and BSA

Dear Representatives Gattis and Drummond.

I am a parent, a former public school teacher, and a concerned citizen. I live in Anchorage and have two children, one who attends preschool and another who attends Aquarian Charter School.

Although one of my children attends a charter school, I believe in supporting ALL public schools and feel strongly that any proposed charter school funding changes should not affect other schools' funding. Yes, I do want to support my child's school and yes, I do believe in charter schools and want them to thrive. However, I also believe that we need to look for funding solutions that do not divert funds from already strained neighborhoods schools in order to support charter schools.

Increasing the BSA is one such solution and will help all schools, charter and non-charter alike. With this in mind, I ask that you work to raise --and inflation-proof-- the BSA. The modest increases proposed under HR 278 do not allow the BSA to stay even with inflation and are inadequate to the point that many teachers will soon lose their jobs. Please do not let this happen.

All of Alaska's children deserve great schools.

Please help ensure that they have them by, at the very least, inflation-proofing the BSA.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my requests. Please note that I would like to have this email recorded as testimony.

Sincerely,

Regan Brooks

2316 Douglas Drive

Anchorage, AK

99517

**Rep. Lynn Gattis**

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**From:** Joey Eski <jeski@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:57 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Lora Reinbold; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak;  
Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond  
**Cc:** Joey Eski  
**Subject:** Please support Alaska's charter schools

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislative Committee,

My name is Joey Eski, I am the lucky mother of three Alaskan children who attend Aquarian Charter School. Please accept this letter on behalf of myself and many members of the Aquarian community. The families of Aquarian know how very fortunate we are to have this incredible **public** school choice and we are committed to the growth and sustainability of Alaska's charter schools. We ask you to please join us in supporting **public** charter schools and to help make **public** charter school choice possible for all Alaskan children.

## **Open Letter to Legislators**

February 5, 2014

Dear Honorable Legislators:

We are all your constituents: parents, students, teachers, administrators, and business leaders who either reside or educate our children in your district. We are Democrats and Republicans. We are Independents. We are from all your neighborhoods. We are Native, Caucasian, African and Asian – and everything in between. We are Alaskans. And we need your help.

There are 27 public charter schools throughout the entire State of Alaska representing roughly 5,000 students or 5% of the total student population. Each public charter school received approval and opened in a local school district to meet a very specific need in the public school system. For instance, the Alaska Native Charter School honors the cultures, traditions, and languages of Alaska Natives; Rilke Schule German School of Arts and Sciences is a German Immersion Charter School which, as its name reflects, immerses students in that foreign language and culture; Eagle Academy in Eagle River offers an academically challenging program requiring mastery of performance standards with an emphasis on Math and Language Arts; Soldotna Montessori

Charter School prepares students to become citizens with a global perspective and to enrich their academics and social awareness within a Montessori environment; and Watershed Charter School in Fairbanks combines stimulating classroom science lessons with outdoor explorations and studies with direct connection to its community. There are more.

In each case, the demand is there to provide more public school choice. The wait lists are long and the parents are determined to gain entrance into these public schools. As one example, our school, Aquarian Charter School, in Anchorage, has a wait list of roughly 800 students for 380 total slots. And yet while the state's charter schools are so successful, we are struggling to pay our bills and to grow our programs to meet the parental demand. The funding of Alaska's charter schools is inequitable compared to area neighborhood schools. In fact, the state's charter schools receive a fraction of the neighborhood school funding. As it stands, unless you are a Title 1 school or receive outside funding assistance, charter schools receive the Base Student Allocation (adjusted for enrollment factors) and that is it. Federal dollars, additional state monies, and nearly all local tax dollars are withheld from charter schools. For instance, when the state granted the state's schools additional dollars to offset energy costs, Anchorage's charter schools did not receive a dime despite paying their own utilities.

In addition to roughly half the funding, the state's charter schools, at least in Anchorage, also carry additional funding burdens, including rent, maintenance, utilities, principal and teachers' salaries and benefits, textbooks, etc. (In some cases, charter schools pay rent for schools the district already owns and which were once condemned and vacated.)

Finally, charter schools must pay a state-mandated indirect cost back to the district; this year that figure will be nearly 5%. There is no way for our charter schools to expand as the rent alone eats away at any opportunity to save. (Rent equals tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. The actual amount varies within districts and even schools.)

We are putting forward the following five requests or minor changes to Alaska's charter school system: (1) appropriations of dollars to existing capital line items for equitable charter school funding, including a per pupil facilities allowance, (2) re-instatement of a competitive state-funded grant program for facilities, (3) legislating changes requiring funding to follow the student through the local school districts so that students receive every single dollar they deserve from the federal, state and local governments, (4) a reasonable state-mandated cap on the indirect fees paid to the local school districts, and (5) an exemption for properties housing public charters schools from local

property taxes. Essentially we ask that the funds generated by charter school students follow the students to the charter school they attend, and we ask that relief provided to traditional schools also be received by charter schools. We are not asking for more than our counterparts receive. We are simply asking for our equitable share.

We do not wish to be on our own and operating outside of the local school district purview. We want union teachers because recruiting a talented pool of educators is tough in Alaska. We like the rigorous standards our local districts mandate versus the more lax standards of the state. And we appreciate the diversity of an organically grown school rather than a state-driven education system. But as we move forward in the funding discussion, we must support the current choice we have in education and strive to grow this successful program before we add additional programs. We are advocating for the strengthening of the public school choice options you have so wisely instituted and supported through state law.

If there is one thing which unites the state's charter schools it is the inequity in funding. That differentiation exists school to school and district to district. Let's unite around education and find common ground in equitably funding the choice we have right now in our school districts.

We invite you to join us to discuss the issue when you return to your districts. Budgetary constraints prevent us from traveling to Juneau. We know you understand.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Joey Eski  
7940 Ingram Street  
Anchorage, AK 99502

## **Rep. Lynn Gattis**

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**From:** Meghan Steenburgh <megsteenburgh@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:41 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Benjamin Nageak; Rep. Lora Reinbold;  
Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Harriet Drummond  
**Subject:** Please strengthen and support HB 278 for equitable charter school funding

February 6, 2014

Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

Please let me begin by thanking Representative Gattis for her untiring efforts to strengthen the state's charter schools. Governor Parnell, thank you for strengthening those efforts with HB 278.

And thank you all for taking the time to read this letter. As an Alaskan mother of three, charter school funding is incredibly important to my family and me.

My husband and I are the proud parents of a first grader at Aquarian Charter School, a public school in the Anchorage School District. You obviously know our issues, but we respectfully ask that you please keep us in mind as you represent us in Juneau.

The debate over public funding of our schools is foremost this session. And we hope that you know how much we appreciate your attention to this issue, especially equitable funding for the state's charter schools.

As you know, Aquarian Charter School is a public school. We gained access to the charter school through the lottery system. We feel the individualized instruction for our child exceeds the opportunities of our neighborhood school, and better prepares her to receive the strongest elementary education.

However, the funding for the charter schools versus the neighborhood and alternative / optional schools is inequitable. We receive the Base Student Allocation (adjusted for enrollment factors). From the adjusted BSA, Aquarian Charter pays nearly 5% back to the school district for mandated indirect costs and then pays for additional costs including rent, teachers' salaries and benefits, maintenance, and phone lines, to name a few items.

As you will note, we receive fewer dollars than our neighborhood and alternative / optional counterparts. We receive little (if any) federal dollars, no state transportation dollars, and no grant monies. That means that we fund operations with \$7,800 for each student versus \$15,000 to \$18,000 for a neighborhood school student (according to media reports).

That is why we are now so encouraged to hear proposals which address more equitable funding for Alaska's *public* charter schools. HB 278 gives us hope, and we ask that a per pupil facilities allowance also be included to help charter schools like Aquarian as well as a state mandate that local, state, and federal dollars follow the student to the public school of his / her choice.

Please make sure that during this education debate, you remain vigilant about the state's inequitable funding concerning our public charter schools. We are your constituents; these are our children.

Thank you for your time.

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Sincerely,

Meghan Steenburgh

7920 Ingram Street

Anchorage, AK 99502

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7920 Ingram Street

Anchorage, AK 99502

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## **Rep. Lynn Gattis**

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**From:** Hilikka Bold <hilikka55@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:16 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis  
**Subject:** Education (please record this as testimony)

To Representative Lynn Gattis,

I am concerned about the direction of education in the state of Alaska.

I have two children, who attend Aquarian Charter School in Anchorage. I am grateful for the quality education that they are receiving.

I am also a product of Alaska public schools, as I grew up in Fairbanks.

However, I am not writing to you as a parent or as a student. I am writing as a concerned citizen. I believe that education is important for everyone, vital to democracy, essential for our society. Education is not just for my children, but for the scientists, professionals, lawmakers and teachers that will lead us into the future. Schools should be well funded and teachers fairly compensated for the important work that they do. The BSA should reflect the current cost of quality education, and at the very least, be "inflation-proof".

I know that charter schools, and Aquarian in particular, would benefit from increased funding. However, I certainly do not support diverting funds away from neighborhood schools in order to strengthen charter schools.

I have read through House Bill HB 278, and attempted to understand its ramifications. Frankly, I find it complex and confusing. Therefore, I would like to communicate to you what is most important to me.

- 1) Improved funding for public schools.
- 2) General support for the charter school option.
- 3) Funding should NOT be diverted away from non-charter schools.

We have an obligation to ensure that all Alaska's students have access to quality education, with the funding concentrated in those areas that need it the most.

Sincerely, Hilikka Bold  
3901 Borland Drive, Anchorage, AK 99517  
Please record this email as testimony.

## Rep. Lynn Gattis

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**From:** karen bronga <bronga\_karen@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 10:15 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis  
**Subject:** Yep, I'm an NEA member

Not that this should make a difference in how you listen to me. I am a teacher and currently serve students K-6 at two different elementary schools. I am proud of the work that we do at these schools despite the lack of respect teachers are often shown and the challenges with ever needier students showing up at our doors. It is mind boggling that our state could think spending public dollars for parents who can well afford to send their students to private school, would benefit our public schools. School vouchers or parental choice scholarship programs take away money and diverts attention, energy, and resources for efforts to reduce class size, enhance teacher quality, provide every student with books and computers, and provide a safe and orderly setting at all of our public schools. The fact that throwing a bone at the BSA is being tied to this passing is appalling.

We already see a have and have not in our schools, with optional and charter students having more involved parents who donate more to the school and make the commitment to transport their students. Like a Private/voucher school they get to limit their enrollments and class sizes. Not so for my schools. Our optional schools already are discriminative in admissions as parents have to commit to a number of volunteer hours at school each week. Many working families can't do this. Private/voucher schools are historically discriminative in their admission.

Optional students who are failing to do well in school are often encouraged to go to "a more appropriate setting" ie. my school. Likewise, private/voucher schools may refuse admission to special needs students. Do you know the percent of students in private school who are special needs? How about minorities compared to public school. There is something very wrong with this picture. Private/voucher schools may and have hired teachers that are neither certified nor qualified.

My own children attended East Anchorage Public schools are graduated with honors, one successfully completed college at UAA and was hired as an engineer at BP. The other two are also studying engineering. Proud, hard working public educators got them to this place.

The discussion you should be having is how to fully fund the BSA not steal from public schools.

Rep Gattis, Reinbold

This is my testimony on HB 278

Section AS14.03.075 repealed and replaced

Why should we keep the exit exam? It is after all costing us time and money.  
Basically there are 7 reasons

1. No poll has been done,
2. The scores in Writing and Math continue to fall
3. Gains in graduation rates have not increased exit exam success
4. The state Board has failed it's mission
5. The trend if it follows last years graduates will be that the class of 2020 will not achieve the 90/90 goals of United way in any of the three areas.
6. The resolution by the board mentions the HSQE test measures basic skills, the original intent.
7. This is the only legislation setting an educational floor as suggested under the Moore decision, unless the Legislature sets an education floor other than the HSQE then the Moore decision should be considered as a threatened by removing the only definition of what a high school student should be able to demonstrate.

David Nees  
2542 Curlew circle

1)  
Alaskans Support Keeping Exit Exam |  
February 25th, 2010  
Poll Shows Alaskans Support Keeping Exit Exam by 3-1 Margin

Juneau -- A recent Dittman public opinion poll commissioned by Sen. Con Bunde, R-Anchorage, shows that 74 percent of Alaskans support keeping the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, also known as the exit exam. Currently there is a bill in the Legislature that would repeal the exit exam. Bunde, who authored the original exit exam language when it was passed into law in 1997, said the Dittman poll results clearly indicate that the public still supports the exam as a way to ensure that possessing a high school diploma means graduates can demonstrate basic competency in reading, writing and arithmetic. "Currently in the Senate, there is, in my view, a misguided effort to do away with the high school graduation qualifying exam. This poll shows that three-quarters of the people of Alaska do not want it to go away," Bunde said. "That's a pretty substantial level of support." Bunde said the idea to do away with the test is rooted in a well-intended push by some groups representing students who have had a difficult time passing the exam. "Last year there were 8,008 graduates who passed the exit exam and received a high school diploma. At the same time there were 270 high school seniors who were unable to pass the exit exam, and therefore received a certificate of attendance," Bunde said. "So, the question is, should we dilute the value of the diploma for the thousands who passed it just to accommodate the few who do not? I don't think we should, and clearly, almost three-quarters of the Alaska public don't think we should, either." The Dittman poll was conducted February 9-22, 2010. The bill to repeal the exit exam, SB 109, recently passed out of the Senate Education and the Community and Regional Affairs committees and is currently sitting in the Senate Finance Committee.

2)  
HSQE TEN YEARS ON

**READING**

Year	proficient	not proficient	tested	participation
2000	74.6%	25.4%	10,217	81.0%
2001	65.9%	34.1%	10,110	82.1%
<b>RENORMED+++++ Renormed+++++</b>				
2002	70.4%	29.6%	10,147	83.1%
2003	69.7%	30.3%	9,841	90.5%
2004	70.1%	29.9%	10,187	91.9%
2005	69.1%	30.9%	10,210	91.4%
2006	73.7%	26.3%	10,389	92.7%
2007	90.9%	9.1%	10,040	93.5% <i>*best year</i>
2008	85.2%	14.8%	9,990	94.2%
2009	90.0%	10.0%	9,708	93.7%
2010	84.2%	15.8%	9,504	93.9%
2011	83.4%	16.6%	9,258	93.9%
2012	84.2%	15.8%	9,094	95.8%
2013	83.5%	16.5%	9,130	95.5%

## Writing

2000	47.6%	52.4%	10,217	80.7%
2001	46.7%	53.3%	10,110	85.4%
<b>RENORMED+++++ RENORMED+++++</b>				
2002	84.7%	15.3%	10,147	83.9%
2003	83.4%	16.6%	9,841	90.2%
2004	86.2%	13.8%	10,187	91.4%
2005	84.1%	15.9%	10,210	90.8%
2006	89.9%	10.1%	10,389	92.0% <i>*best year</i>
2007	81.2%	18.8%	10,040	93.5%
2008	76.3%	23.7%	9,990	94.4%
2009	78.8%	21.2%	9,708	94.5%
2010	74.3%	25.7%	9,504	94.1%
2011	71.1%	28.9%	9,258	94.2%
2012	74.4%	25.6%	9,094	96.0%
2013	71.8%	28.2%	9,130	95.5%

## Math

Spring 2000	33.3%	66.7%	10,217	80.0%
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Spring 2001	44.0%	56.0%	10,110	85.5%
<b>RENORMED+++++RENORMED+++++</b>				
2002	64.0%	36.0%	10,147	83.9%
2003	70.2%	29.8%	9,841	89.8%
2004	66.7%	33.3%	10,187	92.6%
2005	71.9%	28.1%	10,210	91.7%
2006	77.1%	22.9%	10,389	92.4%
2007	80.6%	19.4%	10,040	93.4%*best year
2008	76.3%	23.7%	9,990	93.9%
2009	80.2%	19.8%	9,708	94.1%
2010	77.2%	22.8%	9,504	94.0%
2011	76.9%	23.1%	9,258	93.5%
2012	77.5%	22.5%	9,094	95.7%
2013	76.5%	23.5%	9,130	95.3%

3)

Seven years of Graduation rates

School Year Graduation Rate\* Graduate Count

2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.6%	7,855
2009	67.5%	8,008
2010	67.4%	8,245
=====		
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.4%	7,987**

4)

Mission of the State Board of Education & Early Development

To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.

5)

10<sup>th</sup> grade HSQE 2013 last year vs cat 9 grade 5

Cat 9 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 2006	<b>24.1%</b>	26.2%	24.6%	25.0%(75.8%)		
READING 2013	<b>NP 16.5%</b>		proficient	83.5%	9,130	95.5%
+++++						
Cat 9 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 2006	<b>18.5%</b>		25.1%	32.5% 23.9%(81.5%)		
WRITING 2013	<b>NP 28.2%</b>		Proficient	71.8	9,130	95.5%
+++++						
Cat 9 5 <sup>th</sup> grade 2006	<b>18.7%</b>		27.5%	32.3% 21.5%(81.3%)		
MATH 2013	<b>NP 23.5%</b>		Proficient	76.5	9,130	95.3%

Prediction using last years growth

Cat 9 grade 5 2013 vs HSQE 2020

Reading	<b>19.3%</b>		25.5%	28.7% 26.6% (80.7%)		
2020 HSQE	<b>NP 11.5%</b>		Proficient	85.3%		
+++++						
Writing	<b>26.1%</b>		25.7%	23.3% 24.9% ((73.9%)		
2020 HSQE	<b>NP 35.8%</b>		Proficient	64.2%		
+++++						
Math	<b>20.8%</b>		24.2%	26.4% 28.5%(79.2%)		
2020 HSQE	<b>NP25.6%</b>		Proficient	74.4%		

**RESOLUTION OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

**In Support of the Repeal of Alaska's Competency Examination Requirement**

**Resolution 01-2014**

WHEREAS, Alaska law presently requires secondary students to pass a competency examination (also referred to as an "exit exam" or the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam or "HSGQE") in order to receive a high school diploma,

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 139, SB 111, House Bill 220 and HB 278, all presently in front of the Alaska Legislature, would repeal the competency examination requirement,

WHEREAS, the competency examination, fully implemented in 2004, is a test of basic skills,

WHEREAS, the competency examination is not an appropriate means of measuring college and career readiness,

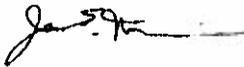
WHEREAS, the Department of Education & Early Development has, in the years since the enactment of the competency evaluation, developed a system of statewide assessments that allows both the Department and school districts to accurately measure academic competency and growth,

WHEREAS, the administration of the competency evaluation results in a significant loss of instructional time for students and teachers,

WHEREAS, the administration of the competency evaluation costs in excess of two million dollars annually,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the State Board of Education & Early Development respectfully requests that the Alaska Legislature repeal the statutory competency examination requirement.

PASSED BY UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE January 27, 2014.



Jim Merriner, Chair  
On behalf of the State Board of Education

**Rep. Lynn Gattis**

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**From:** David Nees <davidneesak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 06, 2014 9:28 PM  
**To:** Rep. Lynn Gattis; Rep. Lora Reinbold  
**Subject:** HB 278 Testimony  
**Attachments:** HSQE TEN YEARS ON[1].docx

Just in case I over sleep,  
I have enclosed my testimony on HB 278, Competency exam.  
Please forward to all members of committee.

I hope to be at the LIO tomorrow.

Regards  
David Nees