**Subject:** **Charter School Legislation**

Hello Representative Gattis,

This is Todd Hindman,  principal/teacher at Anvil City Science Academy in Nome, Alaska.  ACSA is a public charter school in its 16th year of operation that serves the needs of 5th through 8th grade students.  The success of ACSA is due to its students,  a group of supportive parents, and a dedicated, stable staff.  Together, they have been able to establish a thriving educational program that I am extremely proud of.  The Alaska Department of Education & Development recognized ACSA as a 2013 Reward School.  ACSA was one of the 31 schools in Alaska that are rated highest-performing, one of 37 schools that are rated high progress schools, and one of 19 schools that are being recognized in both categories.

Like most charter schools, we have faced many challenges including funding and facility issues.  I have thanked Governor Parnell for his proposed legislation, HB 278 and SB 139, that addresses the challenge of funding for charter schools.  Several years ago, I worked with other charter schools to pass SB 57 which sought to bring equity in the funding of charter schools with a student population of less than 150.  The passage of that legislation certainly did make a difference.  Since ACSA only operates on state funding, we continue to face financial challenges.  I have personally made the decision to take on the duties of support personnel, in order to save funding for class supplies and activities.  With the governor's proposed legislation, I hope that we will be able to have a budget that is more flexible and will allow our small staff to focus more of its time and energy on the classroom.  I also support his call for an appeal process for charters that may be denied by a school district.  Having this piece in place is yet another way to ensure that more charter schools can develop and yet still be held accountable to a school district and the state.

I am also happy to see other charter school legislation being proposed.  Senator Gardner's proposed legislation would also help with some of  the other challenges public charter schools face.  The idea of being able to of set up a charter school within an existing school in an intriguing idea that I think should be pursued. It may help spur an increase of charters operating in the state, especially in areas with schools that are struggling.  The proposed 10% increase in BSA for charter schools would help with facility issues like rent and utilities costs.  Other facility issues could be helped by allowing charter schools to access state and federal grants.

I think the legislation that Governor Parnell and Senator Gardner have provided is a first step in strengthening the existing charter schools statutes.   The current statutes do a good job of holding our charter schools accountable to a local governing body. But at the same time, they provide the needed flexibility for innovative educational programs to develop and thrive.  I hope that you will be able to support all of these efforts to make our existing and future charter schools as strong as possible.

It is my firm belief  that professional educators and parents can make a difference in our public school system when they work together.  I am proud to be a part of the public school system in Alaska and I am thankful to everyone who supports our public schools.  Together we can all make a difference in children's lives.

I will be in Juneau on Tuesday, March 11th and 25th if you would like me to stop by and talk about my challenges / experiences at ACSA.

Thanks,

Todd Hindman

Principal / Teacher

Anvil City Science Academy

Hello Representative Wilson,

Gloria O’Neill asked me to follow up with you to answer some of your questions about the education tax credit that arose on Monday during the Education Committee hearing.  I listened with interest to the discussion after the committee hearing was over, but unfortunately wasn’t able to be online for the hearing itself.   I noted that you had several questions about how we are able to place Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) teachers into the Anchorage School District (ASD). This unique model is the result of over a decade of partnership between CITC and the ASD.  CITC has, until recently, received core federal funds through the Alaska Native Education Equity Program to offer small class, culture based core content classes within the school district in a “school within a school” type of model.  91% of our students graduated last year in the two high schools where we currently operate.  Because of the reduction in federal funding, the education tax credit is key to supplementing our funding to continue this excellent program.  Last year, we added a residential component to our in-school and after school programs because lack of stable housing has been a significant barrier to success for our students over the years.  The residential component is also in partnership with the ASD, who made the application for the residential stipend to defray some of the costs we incur to operate the program.  This is an example of a public/private partnership that is working well to offer significant new opportunities to our students.  The expansion of the education tax credit to support building other residential programs would also greatly enhance the various regions’ ability to respond to student need according to the requirements of that region.

You also asked about whether the Alaska Native corporations are for-profit or not-for-profit.  As the Commissioner explained, some are for-profit and some are not-for-profit.  CITC is a not-for-profit corporation, while CIRI is for-profit.  Similarly, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida and Sealaska Heritage Institute are not-for-profit, while Sealaska Corporation is for-profit.   Only certain types of taxes (Alaska Corporate Income Tax (AS 43.20.011); Fisheries Business Tax (AS 43.75.015); Fishery Resource Landing Tax (AS 43.77.010); Insurance Premium Tax/Title Insurance Premium Tax (AS 21.89.070); Mining License Tax (AS 42.65.0101); Oil and Gas Production and Transportation Tax (AS 43.56.010); Oil and Gas Property Tax (AS 43.55.011) are subject to the tax credit, not all types of taxes.  Only for-profit corporations are eligible for these tax credits, and they apply only for donations to not-for-profit corporations for certain types of programs (Alaska Native cultural or heritage programs and educational support programs for public school staff and students in grades K-12, universities, colleges and state-run vocational education programs).  We have been able to raise over $100,000 from corporations to support our education programs that are making a huge impact on our students.

The education tax credit has become a critical tool, not only for funding, but for engaging corporations in improving outcomes for our youth.  We greatly appreciate your support.  Please let me know if I can answer any other questions or provide more information.

Best,Lisa

***Lisa Rieger***