

Senate Ed Committee Testimony 3/14/14 – SB100

Lon Garrison, President – Sitka School Board

GOOD AFTERNOON SENATOR STEVENS AND THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE. MY NAME IS LON GARRISON, I AM PRESIDENT OF THE SITKA SCHOOL BOARD AND I AM A PAST PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS.

MY TESTIMONY THIS AFTERNOON IS IN SUPPORT OF SB100

THIS BILL IS ONE OF THE FEW BILLS I HAVE SEEN PUT FORWARD THAT REALLY SUPPORTS THE NOTION OF EDUCATION INNOVATION AND IN MY OPINION PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO IMPLEMENT SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE THAT WILL ENGAGE STUDENTS AND ALLOW US TO SEE A RISE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHICS.

THE SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS METHODICALLY AND PURPOSEFULLY INVESTED ITS ARRA FUNDS (STIMULIS FUNDS) IN RECONSTRUCTING ITS DECREPID, ANTIQUATED AND NON-FUNCTIONING TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS. OUR GOAL HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO ENABLE OUR TEACHERS AND STAFF TO INTEGRATE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO PROVIDE A RELEVANT 21ST CENTURY LEARNING EXPERIENCE. THIS WILL BEST PREPARE OUR STUDENTS FOR TODAY'S JOBS AND THOSE JOBS IN THE FUTURE WE CANNOT FORESEE.

THE PERSONALIZED OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM IS EXACTLY WHAT THE SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT IS READY FOR AND NEEDS. THE ABILITY TO PUT A DIGITAL DEVICE IN EACH STUDENT'S HANDS and TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING IS UNPARALLELED. STUDENTS AND TEACHERS WILL HAVE THE ABILITY ACCESS AND UTILIZE WEB BASED RESOURCES, DIGITAL TEXTBOOKS, DIGITAL REPOSITORIES (iTUNES University) AND OVER 95,000 APPS.

THE SITKA SCHOOL BOARD HAS MADE IT ONE OF OUR TOP BOARD GOALS TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR STUDENTS OF LOW ECONOMIC STATUS. WE KNOW DIGITAL

LEARNING IS ONE WAY WE CAN ACHIEVE THIS GOAL AND WE STAND READY TO JUMP AT THE CHANCE.

SB100 ALSO LOOKS AT OTHER IMPORTANT WAYS TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION INNOVATION. THE **INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LEARNING GRANT** HELPS TO INCENTIVISE NEW TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS. IT PROMOTES AND ENCOURAGES COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AMONG SCHOOL DISTRICTS, COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES AND HIGHER EDUCATION.

THE SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS A STRONG HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM THAT SERVES A SPECIFIC SET OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS. THE PROPOSAL IN SB100 PROMOTES THE IDEA OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS AND FOCUSES ON STUDENT OUTCOME. IT ASSURES LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL OVERSIGHT THROUGH CERTIFIED TEACHER SUPERVISION AND APPROVED ILP's. THIS PORTION OF THE BILL PROVIDES PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS THE OPPORTINUTY TO OBTAIN NON-SECULAR RESOURCES AT THE BEST POSSIBLE PRICES TO THE BENEFIT OF THE DISTRICT AND THE STUDENT.

SB100 ALSO WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR DISTRICT SHOULD WE BE ABLE TO ACCOUNT FOR EACH HOMESCHOOL STUDENT AS A FULL (100%) STUDENT OF THE DISTRICT. RAISING THE BSA MULTIPLIER FROM .80 TO 1.0 WILL SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO SUPPORT OUR HOMESCHOOL/CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAM MORE FULLY AND OFFER OUR COMMUNITY A VALUABLE AND EFFECTIVE CHOICE OF EDUCATION DELIVERY.

THEREFORE, I ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECOMMEND WITHOUT RESERVATION THE PASSGE OF SB100 FROM YOUR COMMITTEE. IT TRULY CAN PROVIDE DISTRICTS WITH OPPORTUNITY TO BE INNOVATIVE AND COST EFFECTIVE. I BELIEVE IT GIVES US THE GREATEST CHANCE FOR IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO HEAR THE PUBLIC ON THIS INNOVATIVE, IMPORTANT BILL.

Lon Garrison

President, Sitka School Board