



# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Please enter into the record my testimony to the

HFIN

Committee on

HB 278

Committee Name

Dated

3/19/2014

Bill / Subject

I'm a proud parent of one son who graduated from North Pole High School. The teachers in the school district are doing a great job of providing students with a good education and equipping students with the necessary skills to be productive members of society. I urge you to please increase the BSA by \$400.00 so that class sizes be maintained at an adequate level and students receive individualized attention from teachers. Our district is not broken. The graduation rate continues to grow and our dropout rate continues to shrink. Continuing cuts or even flat funding when taking into account factors like increased health and energy costs are going to erode our success. Please let us work together for a solution for the state that does not penalize districts, like ours, that are doing well. In conclusion, please show support for our students so that they can receive a quality education in order to be successful in the 21st century.

SIGNED:

Testifier

Michelle Thomas

Representing

644 Ouida Way Apt. 2 North Pole, AK

Address / Phone Number

99705

## Helen Phillips

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**From:** Wendy Ranney <wranney@cordovasd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 12:31 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Sen. Gary Stevens  
**Subject:** HB 278

I would like to submit the following letter as written testimony:

Dear House Finance Committee;

Thank you for your service to Alaska.

And for your continued interest in taking input from Alaskans in the decision making processes.

I am writing to you as a parent and as an employee of a public school.

I have three students currently enrolled in the Cordova Public Schools, one in Elementary School and two in High School. In fact, my twin seniors make up 10% of this years graduating class. I work in the school every day and watch our teachers and administration struggle, due to lack of funding, to provide the services that our children need.

I'm writing to ask you to work with your colleagues to please pass legislation to increase the Base Student Allocation and help fund broadband across the state.

In regards to the Base Student Allocation please bring the level up to what it would have been if the BSA had been increased in tandem with inflation since 2011 and look at how to inflation proof the BSA going forward. What is being called "flat funding" by some is actually a dramatic decrease in public school funding, since costs have increased for health care, energy, technology, and insurance. Additionally schools are incurring increased costs associated with implementing the new Alaska Standards. \$404 would need to be added to the BSA this year to catch up with inflation from the past four years. Adding \$250 to the BSA this year will prevent programs and teachers from being cut.

Assisting with the costs of obtaining and maintaining adequate broadband speed will free up dollars for the classroom while making sure that schools can take advantage of all the educational and research resources technology offers. Please pass SB82/HB 179. Broadband access ensures that, in a small rural community, we can offer the advanced courses our students can need to pursue post secondary goals in a cost effective way.

I understand that oil revenues have decreased, and you are feeling the pressure to cut spending. I also know that education funding has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. However, these increased costs are related to capital spending, legislative grants, and paying off the pension fund for retired teachers. These increased costs did not go toward funding teachers in the classrooms.

Cordova Schools have worked hard to meet the goals set by the legislature over the past four years. We have increased our graduation rate (92%) decreased the drop out rate (1.2%), and reduced our administrative and utility costs. We have implemented innovative programming to increase our curriculum offerings and expand choice for our students.

Without an increase in the BSA our ability to maintain these effective programs is at risk. Please, help us put our resources into educating our young people—by targeting our base student allocation for an increase and funding broadband. A well-educated cohort of graduating seniors is going to be ready to take on jobs in our workforce. If they decide to go Outside to college, they are more likely to come back if our schools are top-notch. Why would they want to raise a family in a state that doesn't support its public schools?

Even though our oil revenue is declining, Alaska still has plenty of capital. Please, let's put some of these financial assets back into our most important resource: our children. Please, let's make funding our public schools a top priority, and pass legislation to inflation-proof the base student allocation. We will all benefit from a well-educated community.

Our Elementary School has a wonderful Library facility, but only due to volunteer efforts in set up, maintenance and operation. There has never been money budgeted into our library. There is just none to spare. This is just one service that is in need of the State not only providing the status quo but actually aggressively supporting the needs of our children.

Thank you very much for your consideration and your time.

Sincerely,

Wendy A. Ranney

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*Wendy A. Ranney  
Principals Secretary / Librarian  
Mt. Eccles Elementary School  
P.O. Box 1330  
Cordova, AK 99574  
(907) 424-3236  
(907) 424-5215 Fax*

"There are many ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

**Jacqueline Kennedy**  
Former First Lady of the United States

## Helen Phillips

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**From:** LIO Anchorage  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 12:30 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** FW: Today's public hearing on HB278

**From:** Michelle Coombs [<mailto:michelle.coombs@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 11:34 AM  
**To:** Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Stoltze  
**Cc:** LIO Anchorage  
**Subject:** Today's public hearing on HB278

Dear Representatives,

While I can't attend today's hearing in person, I am writing because public education in Alaska is very important to me. I have been alarmed in recent years to see that the base student allocation has barely kept up with inflation. **I support of a BSA increase of \$400 or more**, instead of the \$85 (\$201 over three years) that is currently proposed in the Governor's education bill. It is very shortsighted to shortchange Alaska's students by not providing them with the quality education they deserve. As a parent with a child in an Anchorage public school, I see a lot of hard work by the school's teachers and staff, already doing the same (or more!) with less. The cuts that the Anchorage School District are proposing to accommodate the budget shortfalls are just going to make things tougher.

Please do the right thing and increase the BSA by a reasonable amount!

Thank you,  
Michelle Coombs  
1434 West 11th Ave  
Anchorage

## Helen Phillips

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**From:** House Finance  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:06 AM  
**To:** House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** FW: HB278

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**From:** LIO Anchorage  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 8:10 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** FW: HB278

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**From:** DanaLyn Dalrymple [<mailto:danalyn@matsulaw.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 11:22 AM  
**To:** LIO Anchorage; Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Stoltze  
**Subject:** HB278

I am unable to attend the public hearing this afternoon to testify in favor of increasing the BSA to \$400. I am frustrated that our legislature continues to view an increase in funding of education as burden without proper attention to the benefits and reduced social costs of a better educated population. Education, like transportation and safety, should not be a partisan issue.

Having had children in the Mat-Su School District at all levels, and also a student at University of Alaska, I want to see education as THE priority for the governor and legislature. We need to fund it and benefit from it by keeping our educated students in Alaska to grow the economy; educate our people to reduce spending on prisons, criminal justice, and social services; and attract talent from other states based on the quality of our education system. This takes money. The legislature and governor have not done enough. Alaska has the resources to spend on education and it is disgraceful that it hasn't done so and that year after year this battle rages on.

Thank you,

DanaLyn Dalrymple

Attorney

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Dalrymple Law, P.C.

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## Helen Phillips

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**From:** House Finance  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:18 AM  
**To:** House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** FW: HB 278 - Adequately Fund our Schools

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**From:** LIO Anchorage  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 8:09 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** FW: HB 278 - Adequately Fund our Schools

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**From:** Wendy Woolf [<mailto:paww@alaska.net>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 8:16 PM  
**To:** Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Stoltze  
**Cc:** LIO Anchorage; Rep. Mike Hawker  
**Subject:** HB 278 - Adequately Fund our Schools

Dear Representative Austerman, Representative Stoltze, and the entire House Financing Committee:

Thank you for extending the comment period to allow for public testimony around the state.

I am writing on behalf of myself as the parent of two children who have benefited from the Anchorage School District; one graduated in 2004 and the other will graduate in May. I am concerned that future students will not receive the same benefits my children received; a well-rounded education and the ability to excel in their areas of interest. We have excellent programs in the Anchorage School District that meet the needs of many different kinds of students. These programs cannot continue without adequate funding and I'm afraid it is those programs that are not directly related to meeting testing requirements will be cut. We have already seen the district limit and cut funding to these types of programs.

I recognize balancing the budget is a difficult job, but please do not do it on the backs of our children, our greatest resource. Please increase the base student allocation by at least \$400. Please ensure adequate state funds go into the classroom and to provide necessary counseling services to all our children, but particular those children at risk within our communities.

I am in favor of instituting a school tax for all tax payers in Alaska. I have never understood why this tax we repealed when it was such a nominal tax in comparison to the benefit it provided.

Lastly, I do not support requiring the school district to pay for transportation to charter schools. Attending a charter school or other types of specialty school (open optional schools, etc.) in the Anchorage School District is a choice. It is a choice I made for my children, and it was not easy to provide that transportation every day, but I still feel it is the parent's responsibility to get their children to school when they choose to attend a charter school. I would not like to see our precious classroom funding go towards busing students to charter schools when school funding is limited.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Wendy Woolf

Indian, Alaska



## Helen Phillips

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**From:** House Finance  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:18 AM  
**To:** House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** FW: Raise the Base Student Allocation to \$400 per student

-----Original Message-----

From: LIO Anchorage  
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2014 8:09 AM  
To: House Finance  
Subject: FW: Raise the Base Student Allocation to \$400 per student

-----Original Message-----

From: Rachel Faralan-Mingo [<mailto:faralanmingo@rocketmail.com>]  
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2014 2:11 PM  
To: Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Stoltze  
Cc: LIO Anchorage  
Subject: Raise the Base Student Allocation to \$400 per student

In place of attending the LIO Hearing today I submit the following testimony:

I was born and raised in Alaska and attended 1st grade through college in our state and I had enough teachers to make sure I had a good public education! Our class sizes were reasonable and if teachers needed to they could spend extra time with me.

Having enough teachers means that class sizes are low enough so that teachers can teach instead of manage behavior. We are not funding daycare centers so that our kids can be watched for us while we go to work!

These institutions need to have the number of teachers needed to ensure that each child gets individualized attention when needed!

The BSA goes directly toward teachers; not paper and pencils, not toilets and lunches... TEACHERS... the most critical part of MY kids' education.

Please recognize that not funding the BSA means that the # of teachers will be cut, because the ones employed still get their pay increases (as they should)... and if there isn't enough \$ in the BSA then that means less teachers can be paid out of it.

And that means that teachers have larger #'s of kids which means they teach less and manage behavior more. And that is not okay with me, nor with my kids. My kids want to learn.

It's that simple. And it's not okay with this Mom who has 4 kids in Anchorage schools now with another 1 starting in a year to turn our schools into daycare centers.

Please raise the Base Student Allocation by \$400 per student and dismiss the Governor's proposal to raise it only by \$85! By the way, I am not a member of NEA, nor have I ever been.

Rachel Faralan-Mingo  
Independent Product Consultant  
doTERRA Essential Oils  
[www.mydoterra.com/faralanmingo](http://www.mydoterra.com/faralanmingo)

## Helen Phillips

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**From:** LIO Fairbanks  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 2:36 PM  
**To:** House Finance; House Finance Legislation  
**Subject:** FW: Public Testimony for House Finance Committee on HB 278 (BSA)

Please enter into the record the testimony below to the HFIN committee on HB 278 dated 3/18/2014.

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**From:** Tammi Ganguli  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 12:09 AM  
**To:** Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Stoltze  
**Cc:** LIO Fairbanks  
**Subject:** Public Testimony for House Finance Committee on HB 278 (BSA)

I humbly request that you pass legislation that increases the BSA by at least \$400 and inflation proof this increase for years to come.

One of the reasons my husband and I have chosen to stay in Alaska was that our children have access to a high quality public education. As a very active parent in our school district, I have seen the quality graduates Fairbanks' public schools have produced. I have seen the quality instruction my children have received.

I am concerned that the base student allocation has NOT been increased since 2011 and has fallen substantially behind inflation. This directly affects Alaska's public school classrooms in a very negative way. The BSA needs to be increased every year, because Alaska's public schools' day to day operating costs increase every year.

Without an increase to the BSA to catch up with inflation, teachers as well as programs in our district have been cut every year. Last year the Fairbanks School District's budget cuts resulted in some large class sizes in our district. We were lucky, that the cuts did not reach our children's school. Due to lack of funds, the Fairbanks School District is facing an \$8 million shortfall from its budget next year. This will lead to large class sizes throughout our district, at every grade level except Kindergarten, as well as fewer course offerings and loss of programs. This will have a huge, negative impact on the way our school delivers its education program to our children. We have reached a tipping point. Lack of funds will impact the quality of education provided in Alaska's public schools.

We appreciate that you have appropriated dedicated funds for buildings, fuel, safety and transportation. These funds are valuable for those purposes, but they do not reach our classrooms. So, while "education spending" has gone up, the money that schools are allowed to use for the classroom has fallen in real dollars by roughly 7% over the last few years.

The governor's bill, HB 278, provides a modest increase to the BSA -- \$85 for 2014-15, and \$58 for 2015-16 and 2016-17 -- that will not avert large cuts to the day to day operating funds of Alaska's public schools and will not help the BSA catch up with inflation. That is why I am requesting in this testimony that you raise the BSA by at least \$400 to avert cuts this coming year and restore the cuts since the last BSA increase. I am also requesting that you inflation proof the BSA so that it increases each year without the need for additional legislation.

Thank you for your time. Please support my request to raise the BSA by at least \$400 and inflation proof the BSA so that it increases each year without the need for additional legislation.

Respectfully,  
Tammi Ganguli  
2530 Allen Adale Road  
Fairbanks, AK 99709

907-750-1466



## Louise Taylor-Thomas

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**From:** Robin Wittrock <wittrock@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2014 8:50 PM  
**To:** Louise Taylor-Thomas  
**Subject:** Governor's omnibus education bill, HB 278

Dear House Finance Committee,

I hope you will accept this email as part of the testimony arising out of tonight's House Finance Committee hearing which I was unable to attend.

First, thank you for your service to Alaska and your work on the Finance Committee. Your time and commitment are much appreciated.

**I would like to begin by asking you to increase the Base Student Allocation by \$400 per student. I request this because, it is my understanding that anything less than this will result in serious cuts to the Anchorage School District, cuts that concern me a great deal.**

I am a lifelong Alaskan resident. My wife and I live in Anchorage, with our 3 children. Our children attend Government Hill Elementary School. I am very happy with the education my children are receiving through the Anchorage School District.

I am extremely troubled by the level funding ASD has received since 2011. Failing to increase with inflation, and after substantial cuts already made by the ASD, this funding will not adequately support my children's education. I ask you to act now, before further damage is done.

My wife and I are now getting ready to send our oldest child to Romig Middle School. In the process of acquainting ourselves with this school, I have learned of the effects of flat funding there. These effects are particularly concerning.

To date, Romig teachers have taught 5 out of 7 classes per day, having one class period per day for planning, as is typical at the middle- and high-school levels, and one class period per day to work as teacher teams to address needs of individual students. Now, Romig teachers will teach 6 of 7 classes per day, thereby adding ~32+ more students to their ~100+ student load while eliminating their ability to focus on individual students in a team approach. *I have heard from other parents whose children have gone through Romig that this attention to the individual students has been of great value to their children.*

Because of these cuts, not only will my children not receive the individualized attention that will help usher them through the difficult Middle School years, there will be other effects too. I expect that teachers will no longer be able to run after-school or other extra-curricular activities that are very beneficial to our students because they will have more students to teach and grade with less time in which to do that work. Staffing is a very serious issue to me. ***Not only are teacher positions being cut, I have learned of a high number of longterm, highly experienced teachers and staff who are retiring from Romig and throughout the district, not because they are necessarily wanting to retire but because they are tired of the message sent to them by flat funding and they are tired of dealing with the effects of these budget cuts.*** The staffing of the library shared by Romig and West High School has already been cut from two to one librarian. Because of this cut, the library is not open to Romig students beyond the end of their school day. It is clear that, if the BSA is not sufficiently raised, teachers will continue to be cut substantially and class sizes will, accordingly, continue to increase substantially. This is contrary to what I want for my children and all the children of our state.

Instead of cutting our schools' ability to teach our children, our society should be helping our schools in their challenging job of educating our future society.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony on this very important matter.

Patrick Wittrock

9701 Sidorof Ln.

Anchorage, AK 99507

## **Louise Taylor-Thomas**

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**From:** Hilkka Bold <hilkka55@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 21, 2014 1:43 PM  
**To:** Louise Taylor-Thomas  
**Subject:** Bill #278

To Representative Bill Stoltz and the House Finance committee members,

My name is Hilkka Bold. I have two children in public school in Anchorage. I am very concerned about the effects of insufficient education funding.

I believe the BSA should be increased by at least \$400. The BSA should reflect the current cost of high quality education, especially considering increasing utilities and insurance costs.

I believe that excellent teachers are the key to high quality education. Teachers need to be fairly compensated for the important work that they do, so that we can continue to attract great teachers.

Furthermore, keeping class size to a minimum clearly enhances learning, and decreases stress on teachers and students.

These and other important components of public education require sufficient funding. It's not just about my children, it's about our community, our state, our future.

I believe we have an obligation to ensure that all of Alaska's students have access to high quality education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
Sincerely, Hilkka Bold