To: Honorable Representative Lynn Gattis
From: Superintendent Bob Crumley, Chugach School District
Re: HB 142 – Residential School Stipend

As an operator of a Variable-Term Residential Learning Center for over 16 years, I am submitting testimony in support of HB 142. I applaud this forward thinking proposed legislation.

Over 16 years ago, the Chugach School District embarked upon an effort to overcome the many barriers to our youth acquiring a quality education. We engaged our communities and acted upon their input. That input led to the development of our performance-based education system where learning is the constant, and time is the variable. This community input also led us to develop a residential program we call the Voyage To Excellence program, or VTE. Funded primarily through competitive grants, we've spent years developing a significant network of business partners who are key to helping our students succeed. From construction and health care to oil and hospitality, and everything in-between, business have constantly informed us that employability skills and life skills are equally important with academics when it comes to hiring today's youth. We listened to them. We embedded their input into our educational system.

The result is a very successful, holistic educational program that helps students understand the value of learning. Now, rather than trying to avoid school, or fight being taught, students voluntarily seek out learning. Not only on school days, but during summer vacations and weekends, students choose to participate in VTE because it is relevant. Partnering with other school districts, VTE now serves students from around the state.

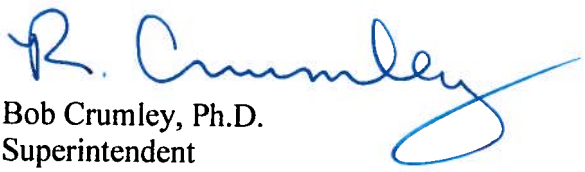
Student need was the driving force for the development of our variable-term residential program. The VTE program has been successfully meeting student needs for over 16 years. As the operator of this program, we know the following:

- We know the overwhelming need for this type of program across Alaska
- We know the how to successfully build such a program
- We know how to successfully operate such a program
- We know what it takes to sustain such a program
- We know the value and benefits VTE provides for the students
- We know the positive impact VTE has upon schools in Alaska
- We know the value VTE provides for Alaska (from financial & economical to social & health benefits)

Building such a program outside of state support has been a challenge to say the least. Sustaining VTE for the long term is proving to be an even greater challenge. To meet that challenge, the Chugach School District is currently developing an application to become designated as a statewide residential school. The proposed increase to the residential school stipend is essential to sustain the state's residential school programs that are meeting the needs of Alaskan students like no other school is able to do. This increase can in no way be considered a hand out, but should be considered a leg up for the kids of Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input, and for your support of HB 142

Sincerely,



Bob Crumley, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Chugach School District