



March 11, 2013

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy  
State Senate  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Opposition to SJR 9 to be included in the Bill Packet

Dear Senator Dunleavy:

Congratulations on your election to the State Senate. We look forward to working with you on education issues.

We are writing this letter to express our opposition to Senate Joint Resolution 9 and House Joint Resolution 1. Upon taking our oath of office, as school board members, we swear that we will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Alaska. Separation of church and state is clear. Public funds cannot go to religious schools. We do not support the removal from the Constitution of Alaska, the language, "no money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or private school." It would be in direct conflict with the United States Constitution.

In the language added in SJR 9, "however nothing in this section shall prevent payment from public funds for the direct educational benefit of students as provided by law", it assumes that the education offered will be of benefit to the students. This implies that there will be oversight of all educational options. Yet the bill does not address accountability measures to children and their families and the public. In the recent Senate hearing on vouchers, the speaker from Marquette University, a Senior Fellow in Law and Public Policy, cautioned that voucher systems had not brought high quality options to students that was desired, the programs were unregulated without any public disclosure or reporting requirements. This is of great concern and our work is dedicated to high standards for the children in our district. In addition, in our district, and across the state, we do offer choices to families (Montessori, Charter School, Tlingit Culture Language Literacy program) and do have accountability systems in place.

The Legislature is charged with maintaining a public education system. Funding needs to be worked out for our public schools. As a Board we have heard the message from the Legislature that districts need to be accountable and our students making progress before receiving more funding. As a Board, we feel that we are doing this and our data verifies we are making some progress. Our funding has not kept pace with our costs; class sizes are higher, we have fewer nursing services, art lessons, and less special education services to name a few. A stable funding plan needs to be in place for our current neighborhood schools that meets the needs of our students and their families. Operating with less revenue when we are already stretched thin is very concerning.

Sincerely,



Juneau School Board

Sally Saddler, Sean O'Brien, Andi Story, Phyllis Carlson, Destiny Sargeant, Barbara Thurston,  
Lisa Worl

Cc: Senator Dennis Egan, Representative Beth Kerttula, and Representative Cathy Munoz