

Tracey Martin
PO Box 879538
Wasilla, AK 99687
Residing at:
9971 W. Dusk Lake Loop
Wasilla, AK

Dear Legislature,

Thank you for your service to our great state. My name is Tracey Martin and I am a 4th generation Alaskan. My grandparents, my parents, myself, my children, and now my grandchildren have all attended public schools in Alaska. I was inspired by my teachers in Wrangell to become a public educator. I support the American style of public school system where we educate ALL children. I taught English in a Japanese public school where I admired their emphasis of the arts while being appalled at the system of segregation of those who are disabled and not high achievers. Those students are sent to other schools and are not included in the national testing pools. In fact, if you don't test high enough in 8th grade, you are given a job in the community instead of going on to high school. Just keep this fact in mind when comparing international test scores. Our great American school system educates ALL and gives every student the opportunity to become successful while most foreign schools don't provide equal opportunities.

First, I would like to voice my displeasure at not being allowed to testify at the scheduled time for testimony on SJR9. I showed up at the LIO in Wasilla with at least a dozen others in opposition to SJR9 but was amazed to see and hear that the Superintendent of Matsu Valley Schools was able to be testify on speaker phone because she was supporting Senator Dunleavy's proposal, while we all lost our turn to testify. Then the session was cut short and rescheduled for a time when most cannot take another day off of work. I am hearing from others around the state that they too could not believe how everyone was cut off and told that they had to reschedule.

I am writing to oppose SJR9, the constitutional amendment to allow public funds for private schools, which is an open door to a voucher system. Public schools are accountable to local, state, and federal regulations which require accountability and provide protections for all children and employees. A voucher system would either require bigger government, which means spending more state dollars to ensure accountability and compliance for schools receiving vouchers, or no accountability at all, which is a bad idea.

If the goal of voucher systems is to provide more choice to parents, there is already choice in our public school system with public charter schools, correspondence programs, and online learning opportunities. If the point of vouchers is supposed to increase academic achievement, research has shown that vouchers are not any more effective at raising test scores than public schools. The only achievement of vouchers has been to siphon more money from public education. As the Chief Financial Officer for Matsu Public Schools stated when asked how many vouchers it would take to hurt our Matsu schools. He said, "Every one."

The legislature MUST also consider our rural areas when deciding if we should change our constitution to allow public funds for private schools. Rural areas are losing

their population to more urban areas so the amendment could pass a public vote while bringing irreparable harm to rural schools. One or two students using a voucher could be the kiss of death for a rural school, which is usually the lifeblood of the community. Changing our state constitution to benefit a few while harming many is not responsible legislation. We MUST wisely weigh all of the benefits and consequences before deciding to bring this to a public vote. Consider who SJR9 would benefit compared to whom it may harm. Let's continue to work together to improve the wonderful public schools that we have in our great state by raising the base student allocation so schools can continue to make the necessary improvements and keep our class sizes smaller. Thank you for your time and consideration!