

From: [Sen. Anna MacKinnon](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FW: Testimony on Senate Bill 208
Date: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:25:34 AM

From: Hayleigh Stephens [mailto:hayleighdaniellestephens@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2016 12:36 PM
To: Sen. Pete Kelly <Sen.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov>; Sen. Anna MacKinnon <Sen.Anna.MacKinnon@akleg.gov>
Subject: Testimony on Senate Bill 208

Hello Senators Pete & Anna,

My name is Hayleigh Stephens and I'd like to submit a written testimony on Senate Bill 208, which would eliminate the Alaska Performance Scholarship. However, I have class and cannot make it in person to testify at the Anchorage LIO, so I'm writing you instead.

While I understand and am sympathetic to the need to create savings within the state in this time of economic hardship, I firmly believe that limiting the opportunity of Alaska's youth is not the way to do this and the removal of the APS would indeed be severely limiting to the opportunities that Alaska's graduating high schooler seniors receive. APS is a scholarship that students must earn through high GPAs, a more difficult curriculum, and commendable SAT/ACT scores. This means that if APS goes away we are potentially preventing hard working, motivated, students from attending the UA system. This is a potential loss for both the students and the University of Alaska System. I know this to be true because I am one of those students, so let me share with you my story.

I am a first generation college student who grew up moving from place to place because my parents would frequently switch jobs. My parents were encouraging and always pushed me to be my best, however our house always faced financial troubles due to the poor decisions of my parents past.

I always loved school and learning and I always knew I wanted to go to college. In middle school I joined the National Junior Honor Society and got an award for 3 years of consecutive honor roll. In high school my success and involvement continued I joined Student Government, I was active in Prom Committee, I was accepted into the National Honor Society, and I graduated as Valedictorian with a 4.0 GPA. My hard work in school had paid off with good SAT scores and I became a recipient of the UA Scholars scholarship and Level 1 of the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

My parents although loving and supportive emotionally, could not afford to help pay for college and certainly not the the college experience I wanted of living on campus at UAA, however this was possible for me with the APS and it has made all the difference. Once I got to UAA I got involved on campus. I became a Resident Advisor in the Residence Halls, I served on the Executive Board for the residential student governing body (Residence Hall Association) first as a Public Relations Coordinator and then as President, I joined campus clubs, and I excelled in my courses. I'm now in my final semester at UAA, and learned yesterday that I have been awarded Leadership Honors from UAA. An honor granted after careful review of an application, leadership narrative essay, and reference letters. This

achievement means that not only did I excel and get involved at UAA, but that my leadership made meaningful impact on the UA community.

You see, without the APS I would not have gone to UAA and not only would I have lost the opportunity to get an education and better myself as a person, but UAA also would have lost a student leader; someone who cares passionately about the UA community and the future of the university and its students, someone who truly made a difference in their time at UAA. Not only am I leaving the university having bettered myself, but I also am leaving having bettered the university.

The UA system and the state of Alaska NEEDS these sort of leaders, most especially in hard times, to help better the university system and the state. Removing the APS disadvantages the students and the system. Without the APS students like me may not have the opportunity to go to college, the opportunity to excel, or the opportunity to make positive change in our UA community.

I sincerely hope this is strongly considered when considering removing the APS. I beg you please do not take away opportunity from Alaska's high-achieving youth, they need this opportunity and we as a state need the leaders these students will become through the opportunity provided by the APS.

Best wishes,
Hayleigh Stephens