

From: [Sen. Anna MacKinnon](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FW: SB 207, 208, 209
Date: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:21:07 AM

From: Rebecca Bernard [mailto:rbernard.ak@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:20 AM

To: Sen. Pete Kelly <Sen.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov>; Sen. Anna MacKinnon <Sen.Anna.MacKinnon@akleg.gov>; Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Sen. Donny Olson <Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov>; Sen. Lyman Hoffman <Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Mike Dunleavy <Sen.Mike.Dunleavy@akleg.gov>; sen.pete.micciche@akleg.gov

Cc: governor@alaska.gov

Subject: SB 207, 208, 209

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to remove SB 207, SB 208, and SB 209 from your consideration. The future of our beloved state depends on how well we educate our children, and the short-sighted and unfair changes made in these bills will undercut our ability as a state to educate our children well.

* Shifting state pension obligations to the local level, as SB 207 and 209 would do, without a concurrent guarantee of funds to cover that new cost is unfair, poor public policy, and constitutionally problematic. The result would be tens of millions of dollars in new costs for localities and school districts that have less ability to cover these costs than the state does. Imposing new costs on school districts is no different from cutting education funds; either way, the districts will have to cover the gap by eliminating teachers, increasing class sizes, cutting programs that keep students engaged in school, and so on.

* Eliminating a scholarship fund, as SB 208 does, that has helped thousands of students pay for college -- including many who otherwise would not be able to afford it -- is simply shortsighted and mean-spirited. Why would we make it harder for kids to go to college when we have other ways to address our state budget gap?

The majority of Alaskans -- at least 60% -- want you to solve the budget problem through a variety of measures, including modest cuts, new broad-based taxes, and some sort of use of the Permanent Fund. Expert after expert has publicly stated that the solution must be broad-based and it must happen this year. The constituents who want you to rely on cuts and savings alone are a minority of Alaskans, and they are not listening to the economists and other experts who have studied this problem the most.

Cuts like the ones proposed in SB 207, 208, and 209 will drive young people, families and skilled professionals out of the state -- just the people we need to build a strong future for Alaska. And these cuts aren't necessary, we have other choices. Please drop your consideration of these bills and others that take the state down a path of deep cuts and economic instability. Instead, take advantage of the many potential sources of new revenues - the kinds that most other states rely on -- to stabilize Alaska's budget.

Thank you for your consideration of my views, and please include my comments in the public

record for these bills.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Bernard
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