

102, 103, & 104

I took the opportunity to testify before you this morning on Education bills SB 102/103/104.

Lest you've already forgotten and moved on to "more important" matters, I urged some of you (hopefully, you know who you are) to abandon an approach to public education which sacrifices our children's future (and with it, the future of our state) on the altar of your ideology.

During my testimony, I was berated by the Chair for using this opportunity to testify to briefly also touch on my displeasure with the 5% cut to BSA funding, which is money that goes directly into the classroom. (This cut comes on top of the steadily eroding buying power of those dollars over the past 6 years, due to increased costs of doing business.) I mentioned the funding issue in this forum because the public was deliberately denied *any* meaningful opportunity to comment on this devastating cut, as it was only inserted into the operating budget after testimony shut down. This pretense of public process is an embarrassment of arrogance. If, as legislators, you cannot take the "heat" of hearing from the public, then get out of the "kitchen!"

At a time when we are all seeking programs that work to improve education outcomes, my testimony urged you to vote against SB 103 in order to keep the highly successful Alaska Performance Scholarship program in place. In my efforts to be brief, I neglected to mention that Pre-K funding supports another program with a demonstrated track record for long-term impacts. An investment in Pre-K funding NOW means dollars--and more importantly, productive lives--saved down the road. OOPS! I guess that was ANOTHER public education "funding issue" the public wasn't given any opportunity to address.

In terms of where to find the money for essential education programs... Yesterday, Anchorage voters demonstrated their priorities and willingness to tax themselves to pay for quality education by passing a \$58 million school bond. Please, take the hint and generate revenue to balance the budget via an income tax. If not, responsibility for deepening the current recession and its consequences will lay at your feet.

Terrie Gottstein

Small Business Owner

907-223-4240

Dear Senators,

Our kids need teachers in the class rooms, and reasonable and manageable class sizes. High speed internet would be a lovely thing, but it is nothing compared to social interaction between engaged teachers and their students. The Alaska Performance Scholarship Program has successfully supported 8,600 students to go on to post-secondary education. Pre-K education is foundational for kids of all economic backgrounds and has been shown to increase students learning ability and success as they move through elementary and secondary schools.

Your answer to our budget problem is to further cut funding to our most precious resources, our children. Do you think that it's ok to cut 270 more teachers from Anchorage alone, on top of the 125 that were already going to be cut (not to mention the 100s that have been cut over the past several years)? Every campaign season you go door to door handing out flyers that say you support public education, and then during the year most of you work to slash and defund it. The hypocrisy is unbelievable.

The House Majority has passed a comprehensive bill (HB115) which eliminates our budget deficit for next year and provides sustainability in future years. SB26 does not offer fiscal stability and balances the budget with more draconian cuts to our already struggling economy. Why would you do this? It seems that most of you are using our children as a political pawn, and quite frankly, it makes me sick.

Cordially,
Catherine Coward
6221 Farpoint Dr
Anchorage, AK 99507

Dear Senator Hughes

Thank you for your service to Alaska.

I am writing to you as a parent of three Alaskan students. We moved here from Florida to be a part of this wonderful state. I'm a resident who believes in the value of public education.

I'm writing to ask you to not cut our education funding. Please pass legislation to close Alaska's fiscal gap with a comprehensive plan that raises new revenues – including restructuring the permanent fund earnings and a broad-based tax like an income tax to avoid further deep cuts. We need to provide stable, predictable and adequate funding to our public schools so that districts can focus on innovation, student engagement, and student performance – not on constant contingency planning for potential budget cuts.

A 5% BSA reduction will have devastating impact on student learning in every district in Alaska. In Fairbanks alone, this equates to \$10 million less revenue. That translates to larger class sizes and fewer

programs. The money that will selectively be funneled back to individual school districts through SB 102, 103 and 104 will not fill the hole left by the BSA cut!

Please bring the level up to what it would have been if the BSA had been increased in tandem with inflation since 2011. What is being called “flat funding” by some is actually a dramatic decrease in public school funding, since costs have increased for health care, energy, technology, and insurance.

I understand that oil revenues have decreased, and you are feeling the pressure to cut spending. I also know that education funding has increased dramatically over the past 10 years. However, these increased costs are related to capital spending, legislative grants, and paying off the pension fund for retired teachers. These increased costs did not go toward funding teachers in the classrooms.

With layoffs as proposed for next year, our children and young people are really going to suffer. Please, help us put our resources into educating our young people, they are our future and we only get one chance. Targeting our base student allocation for an increase. A well-educated cohort of graduating seniors is going to be ready to take on jobs in our workforce. If they decide to go outside to college, they are more likely to come back if our schools are top-notch. Why would they want to raise a family in a state that doesn't support its public schools?

Even though our oil revenue is declining, Alaska still has plenty of capital. Please, let's put some of these financial assets back into our most important resource: our children. Please, let's make funding our public schools a top priority, and pass legislation to inflation-proof the base student allocation. We will all benefit from a well-educated community.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Stefanie Donahue, Fairbanks Alaska

Unfortunately I can not testify today or tomorrow against SB 102, 103 and 104. Unfortunately these bills were introduced in the middle of the night circumventing the light of public process

Our schools and teachers need continued funding to be strong. We cannot afford to cut the BSA. Especially in the light of rising health care costs and the impact that has on school budgets.

Student teacher ratio continues to be one of the largest factors contributing to student success... NOT fancy new online computer classes that you recently introduced.

Support the Alaska Performance scholarship. Support pre k education. Support our kids.

Also please leave decisions about curriculum to local communities.

Lastly.... introduce a tax and use all three prongs to balance our budget: cuts, permanent fund and tax. Do NOT balance the budget on the backs of children

Thank you
Marti Pausback

SB102 – Broadband Access Grants

SB103 – APS

Hello Alaska senators,

My name is Sophia Puliafico and I'm a junior at Juneau's Douglas High School, as well as a member of JDHS girls' basketball, Model UN, and student council as Junior Class Vice President. Today our school caught wind of SB103, which plans to cut the Alaska Performance Scholarship, starting with this year's junior class. To say my heart sunk when I heard the news would be an understatement.

I'm reaching out to testify against the passing of this bill, as it would be detrimental to many and is an inappropriate attempt at fixing the current education deficit.

The APS is an effective and inspiring program that has assisted in funding over 8600 students in Alaska state universities. Personally, I have made sure to work my high school courses around what is required for the highest bracket of the APS so that I could acquire funding for my college education. Although other scholarships/loans are possible, the APS is guaranteed, and is the one thing keeping me, and many other high achieving students, interested in instate education.

To cut the APS would be to cut many future students out of secondary education. Please consider the many students working hard every day to attain the APS in order to attend Alaska universities before voting for SB103.

With gratitude and hope,

Sophia Puliafico

April 4th, 2017

To: Senate of Alaska Senate Education Committee

This is in regards to SB 103.

I have grave concerns about the proposal to cut the Alaska Performance Scholarship, a targeted and effective educational effort, and shift the funds to support a new ill-defined K-12 "new innovative project).

In my 25 years working with Alaska students in K-12 and higher education, I would rank APS among the most beneficial for our educational system. Not only does it provide both incentive and a road map for students to be able to afford a college education in state it also provides incentive and motivation at the K-12 level. Students as young as 2nd grade are hearing about the APS (at least in Sitka) when they participate in the "I Know I can" college readiness program.

I personally know of students currently working on their BA degrees who would not have attended college at all without the APS program. One young man that comes to mind is a Sitka graduate who now has an AA from UAA and is working on his BA. Even with a high school GPA of 3.9, he had no intention of attending college until he realized he could use the APS scholarship. This program ultimately bolsters our economy by keeping more of our best and brightest students in state and in our Alaska workforce.

I urge you to keep the APS scholarship program in place for the good of all Alaskans and the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Barbara Morse

Sitka, Alaska

Ms. Hughes,

The recent news that proposes the canceling of the Alaska Performance Scholarship is disturbing.

Being the parent of a current Junior in high school I am appalled that this is being considered. My daughter has spent the last three years in high school using the APS check list as a map of her education. It was a promise Alaska made to her...if she did the work, took the right classes, achieved the grades.....they would provide her scholarship money for UA. She has done everything you asked of her, at the expense of taking classes that were not on the list. Alaska made a promise.

I understand the need for budget cuts, but dropping the APS 1 year before these kids graduate will derail their plans for college. Perhaps propose the phase out happens after the current high school Freshman graduate. This plan would give future students time to plan and plot their high school classes appropriately.

Please work to find an alternative to dropping the APS. It is not the answer. Alaska made a promise.

Sincerely,

Nicole Lockwood

Fairbanks, AK

Dear Senator Hughes:

My children have benefitted from the Alaska Performance Scholarship, and I would hate to see State funding not utilized in this way. The Alaska Performance Scholarship further supports the higher education of Alaska students, so please prioritize keeping it intact. Please reject Senate Bill 103 and the elimination or changing of the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

Thank you for considering my views, and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Daniel H. Williams
6425 Tolhurst Court
Anchorage, AK 99504

Senator Hughes,

I am a junior in high school in Anchorage, and would like to receive the Alaska Performance Scholarship. I currently hold a high GPA, but not high enough for top national scholarships. I intend to stay in Alaska for college as well as a future job, but scholarships for Alaska colleges play a key role. The Alaska Performance Scholarship is a fair way to evaluate students, keeping the criteria based on achievement in a level playing field.

Please do not support Senate Bill 103.

Thank you,
Clarissa Williams
akcw15@gmail.com

Dear Sen. Hughes,

I am writing to strongly object to the proposed additional cuts to education that the Alaska Senate passed yesterday.

The cuts do nothing to improve the high school graduation rate. On the contrary, the proposed cuts, including SB 103, would harm hard-working students who want a chance to go to university. Rewarding

"innovative ideas" doesn't solve the achievement gap unless those ideas bear fruit, and frankly, many ideas proposed for education do not further the goal of increased student success.

The University of Alaska system and its three accredited universities, UAA, UAF and UAS, are all making changes to reduce the reliance on state funds. Faculty and staff are working harder with fewer resources. As a faculty member, I can tell you that UAA is a much slimmer institution, with many programs phased out or eliminated and a fraction of the employees that used to be here. However, the state cannot cut its way to prosperity. Already, students who complete high school look out of state for college, and many graduates of the universities are looking beyond the state's borders for employment and opportunity.

If Alaska's elected leaders have a sincere desire to develop the economy, they will rethink these harmful cuts.

Sincerely,

Paola Banchemo

The Honorable Shelley Hughes
State Capitol Room 125
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Hughes,

RE: SB 103: ED GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIP; INNOVATIVE ED FUND

I would like to request that you vote NO on Senate Bill 103, which would eliminate the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

Our family is in the middle income bracket, and earning money for college is difficult. We have not been able to save anything towards our children's college costs, and we don't qualify for any minority or special interest grants or scholarships. We have independently home schooled our children, so we also don't qualify for the state high school scholarships. The Alaska Performance Scholarship has enabled my son to graduate from UAF with a degree in Civil Engineering (he is currently employed by the FAA in Anchorage). My daughter is a high school junior, and she would like to be able to receive the Alaska Performance Scholarship as well.

There are serious concerns that the "education innovation grants" would be biased, and possibly not include independent home schoolers. Since the purpose of these grants is to save money for the state of Alaska, fewer students would be receiving them, and/or with lower award amounts. There would also be a considerable amount of overhead to administer these grants, which would hurt students and not help the state budget. Therefore the "education innovation grants" are NOT an acceptable substitute for the Alaska Performance Scholarship!

For the good of our state, we need young people that will attend college here, graduate from college here, and then find employment here. The Alaska Performance Scholarship supports this trend! In our family, my son has used the scholarship, and my daughter wants to use it, with both of them planning to live and work in Alaska. This should be an incentive for our Alaska legislature to KEEP the Alaska Performance Scholarship!

So I plead with you, please do NOT support Senate Bill 103.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nancy Williams
6425 Tolhurst Court
Anchorage, AK 99504
(907)337-4918

The Honorable Shelley Hughes
Alaska State Senate

Dear Senator Hughes,

I am opposed to Senate Bill 103 ("An Act establishing the Alaska education innovation grant program, eliminating the Alaska education grant program and the Alaska performance scholarship program, redesigning the Alaska education investment fund as the Alaska education innovation grant fund, and providing for an effective date").

I believe SB 103 is a poorly thought out bill. It will likely have the effect of driving out of state Alaska high school students who are contemplating attending an in-state college or university or vocational/technical program. In particular, I support the Alaska performance scholarship program - a well-designed program that provides financial support to high school students who graduate from high school at three levels - with students with a High School GPA ranging from 2.5 to 3.5-to help them cover the cost of an education.

In reviewing the program's website (<http://acpe.alaska.gov/FINANCIAL>), I am impressed about how this excellent program also provides from private and home school students and a wide variety of thirty-eight colleges, universities, and career and technical education (CTE) institutions and training centers. I also liked this program because it is a major way that students can attend a college, university, or technical/vocational trade school with as little debt as possible.

I was impressed about the Alaska Performance Scholarship's testimonials on its website. For instance, Ian Sanders of Bethel, who graduated with a 4.4 GPA from Bethel High School, could not afford to

attend college. This program gave him an opportunity to come to Anchorage, where he now attends the University of Alaska Anchorage.

I strongly support vocational/technical education, as a college classroom is not for everyone. This program gives direct financial aid to high school graduates seeking training in such subjects as nursing aides, culinary art, medical coding, welding and construction, diesel/heavy equipment technology, plumbing and heating, pipefitting, truck driving, structural welding, etc. I liked that these training opportunities were available in both accredited urban and rural vocational/technical schools, such as Alaska's Institute of Technology (AVTEC), Northern Industrial Training, and the Galena City School District Postsecondary Adult Programs. I also have a concern about the dire effects that the cancellation of such a scholarship program will have on keeping vocational/technical programs up and running.

I am a retired federal employee who supports performance-based educational scholarships. I came from a low income middle class family of two elementary school teachers in Colorado. I worked my way through undergraduate/graduate school. I received an out-of-state tuition scholarship to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a life-changing opportunity for me, based on GPA performance. I hope that similar, direct financial aid to Alaska high school students in the form of the Alaska Performance Scholarship will continue to be funded.

This was one of the signal achievements of former Governor Sean Parnell (Republican-Alaska) and it ought to stand in place.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Parham
(Robert Bruce Parham)
4310 Seeley Circle
Anchorage, AK 99502-1957
Tel. (907) 248-6867
E-mail: bparham@gci.net

Hello Alaska Senators,

I am a Junior at Juneau-Douglas High School, a member of Student Council, and a proud Alaskan. I would like to give written testimony against SB 103, a bill to cut the funding given to the Alaska Performance Scholarship. This bill is not an appropriate solution to our current budget situation and should not be considered viable.

I have worked all my years in high school towards fulfilling the requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). I am dyslexic, and success in school has always been something I have struggled to obtain. I am a high achieving student, but at many times throughout my highschool career I have been close to giving up on taking high level classes, because my dyslexia is such a barrier to my success. The guarantee of the APS has been one of the few things that has kept me going. I live in a low income household and this scholarship makes higher education feel like it really is an option for me. If I were to pursue higher education without the APS it is unlikely that I would consider an in-state university.

My story is not a unique one, there are students across the state that see the APS as our reason to attend Alaska Universities or even pursue higher education at all. Without this money, attending school in Alaska would not be possible for many students, and makes Alaska schools much less competitive for students in terms of financial aid packages. It has provided aid to 8,600 students to achieve their dreams since 2011, and should be continued to encourage students to stay in Alaska for both their education and their future employment.

According to the United States Census only 28% of Alaskans have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Money put into higher education is an investment in the economic future of Alaska, a future that is currently at jeopardy. The better educated the population, the more money we have in the state. I understand that right now we need to find money to get us to that future, but that money can not come from the Alaska Performance Scholarship. Taking that money is borrowing from the future of Alaska, and just extending this recession.

Please keep me and my peers in mind when voting no on SB103.

Thank you for your time!

Theo Houck

Dear Senator Hughes,

I am writing to express my absolute displeasure with the Senate's vote to pass SB 103. This bill which effectively eliminates the Alaska Performance Scholarship is a slap in the face to all hard-working students and their families. At a time when Alaskan families are being asked to make do with less income, higher costs,taxes, and fees, as well as the cut to their Permanent Fund Dividends, eliminating the APS is simply another blow to families.

Both of my daughters are attending University of Alaska schools because of the APS. Both girls worked hard throughout their high school years and qualified for the highest tier of the APS. My family simply could not afford to pay their tuition without the APS.

I find it reprehensible that the Senate would vote to eliminate such a valuable program and yet defend such egregious spending for themselves, such as reimbursing legislators thousands of dollars to move four weight benches, among other items, from Juneau to their homes. (Who needs four weight benches???)

As a parent and educator, I am disgusted by the Alaska Legislature's inane need to balance the budget on the backs of our students. The cuts to the University of Alaska system as well as those to the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District are excessive and capricious. You claim to be pro-student, pro-education, but I find your inaction to defend your home school district as well as Kenai Peninsula College appalling.

Sincerely,

Bridget M. Clark
907-299-3949

Dear Senators on the Education Committee:

I am concerned about SB103 as it is written for numerous reasons, but most importantly because it eliminates the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS), an innovative long-term approach to improving elementary, secondary and post-secondary education in Alaska. In addition to improving education the APS also improves the opportunity to increase residency employment of skilled labor, and improve the economy by having people invested in Alaska stay here for their education and potentially their work/career. The State of Alaska, the University of Alaska, and school districts expended energy implementing the APS, and turning away from that work will sacrifice the gains, and all future gains, this scholarship has is designed to influence.

By design the APS rewards rigor, therefore all districts had to increase the rigor of courses for students through multiple means, including curriculum redesign, distance education, and introducing more challenging courses. Work took place to make sure appropriate assessments to determine college and career eligibility are accessible to all students. Then, the districts had to develop the support to prepare students for these more rigorous courses, and students likely found themselves struggling in more challenging courses, but that ultimately is a good thing because challenge in a rigorous course to earn a

C or low B creates far more learning than earning an A in an easy course. Ultimately, the improvements to K-12 will prepare more students for success in rigorous high school courses.

In the book “The smartest Kids in the world, and how they got that way” Amanda Ripley points out that one of the differences between U.S. schools and those schools in some other countries is academic rigor and demand. She found that students had a much more rigorous, and academically focused, education in high performing countries. Imagine the APS fully implemented in Alaska, causing high performing students who might otherwise go outside for school staying and contributing to the post-secondary system, under-performing students challenging themselves to take courses that may reduce their need for remediation, and ultimately both groups of student contributing to the Alaska skilled workforce and economy. The APS is part of a system of accountability to raise the bar for system of education, educators, and students.

If the APS needs more focus and attention, then under the new ESSA plan the State Board could include as an indicator of school success a measure of the percent of students accessing more challenging courses, and the percent of students eligible for the APS. The APS as part of the accountability system will provide the focus and attention necessary to cause system improvement that directly benefits students, post-secondary opportunities, and the economy.

If the APS is dismantled we will see a program of innovation disappear, and we may have negative impacts to the quality of courses offered to students, fewer students attending post-secondary, increase percentage of students requiring remediation, and fewer residence holding skilled employment in state. Additionally, the higher education fund, which not only can sustain the APS but also fund other projects when the returns are good, will be gone in a short number of years.

The bill addresses the idea of innovation in districts, which is a worthy goal, however I think districts innovate when they can through incentives and accountability. Having worked in Alaska public education for 30 years, 17 of those years in two different school districts, I saw few large grants have the type of universal, long-lasting, and innovative impacts that will come from the APS. Many grants unfortunately speak to the long-term but once the money is gone the innovation departs as soon as the leader who applied for the grant departs. A better approach to long-term gains is the APS, and building it into the states accountability system.

Regarding SB102, and broadband, I believe the goal here is wonderful. Adding more money to broadband grants is great, but not at the cost of depleting resources from the Higher Education Fund in a manner that destroys the sustainability of the fund.

I believe **SB104** is unrealistic in scope and timeframe. To stop reviewing curriculum will create long-term costs in terms keeping curriculum up to date. Most districts have, at a minimum, seven areas of curriculum: math, English/language arts, science, history/social studies, career-technical education, health/physical education, visual & performing arts. Each of those need to be regularly reviewed not only because it is required, but more importantly it is best practice to incorporate new knowledge. To institute a delay means that a curriculum reviewed last year will not again be examined for a decade as they review curriculum on a rotating basis.

Further, to place the burden on the department to review curriculum, which simply does not have the resources, as suggested in SB104, isn't reasonable. Even if the department could find employees, that likely would not occur until 2-4 months into the new fiscal year. If the department utilized contractors they also have the challenge to get through the procurement code and then supervise those contracts. A better approach might be to have districts work together, pool the resources they utilize for curriculum development, and create a voluntary consortium, since this is a voluntary movement anyway.

Finally, let me briefly address something I heard multiple times in the two hearings on this legislation: each component, outside of the elimination of APS, would be voluntary. Making improvement efforts voluntary does not make sense – if we have an achievement problem why would we make improvement voluntary. While the Moore case was settled and thus not precedent setting, Judge Gleason provided some insightful thinking into education and I am sure any future litigation would turn to her writing because she studied the issues so deeply. She said that an education system must have four components, generally they include: 1) funding, 2) standards, 3) accountability, and 4) support. Improvement efforts by the legislature, if those efforts are intended to cause improve, would likely be considered accountability or support. Accountability and support should not be voluntary, even if it makes buy-in from those being held accountable more palatable.

I wish you the very best in this challenging time, not only fiscally, but in your effort to see educational attainment continue to improve.

Les Morse

Douglas, Alaska

Our state budget has not been cut near enough! Since education is a large part of budget, it needs additional cuts.

In the last 10 years, our education budget has increased 34%, while inflation has only increased 17%. The education budget has even gone up last 2 years, while oil prices have gone down. Between 2003-2015 reading proficiency scores have been stagnant, while funding went up about 30%. The facts show that money doesn't produce results.

Here's some ideas where school districts can cut after cutting the redundancies. We don't need to pay for preschool. Some members of finance committee didn't bother to get informed of latest research that shows preschool doesn't help beyond 2nd or 3rd grade. My own children are testimony to this. They did not attend preschool, yet are contributing members of Alaska, making more than the average salary for Alaska.

We don't need licensed nurses in the schools! We lived in Hawaii for several years while children were in elementary school & they had health aids in schools, which worked quite well. If districts insist on nurses, why aren't they billing student's Medicaid & insurance for services?

Stop funding the college performance scholarships! Even a large percentage of those students need remedial 101 classes. Ridiculous!

I urge you to reduce education spending, we have to cut the state budget a substantial amount yet! You've had 4 years to get this done, DO IT NOW!!

Sharla Erickson

Wasilla, Ak

907 373-4641

SB104 – Curriculum Review

Dear Senator,

Without Trooper service to the Seward Hwy I don't feel I can buy property down that road. The cuts to our budget have gone way beyond 'fat.' The population is no longer safe.

Now I read in today's paper that draconian and illogical cuts are proposed for education. Do you really want us to be not only unsafe, but uneducated too?

Both cuts would keep businesses and people from moving here. Is that what you want?

It is way past time to stop worrying about votes and instead consider the voters. We are the laughing stock of the nation when we cut public safety AND education when the solution is available:

- 1) Yes to an income tax (but with a sales tax too because alone it wouldn't bring in much \$).
- 2) Yes to a small sales tax with a top limit for big ticket items like cars.
- 3) Yes to keeping the PFD to \$1K or less
- 4) Yes to cutting oil credits.

Additionally, do not suspend the requirement for review of school district curriculums by the Dept of Ed. That leaves the door open for unscientific and biased teaching.

Dianne Holmes