



LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 • Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411 Fax: (907) 591-2449

www.loweryukon.org

Edgar Hoelscher
Chairman

Dr. Rob Picou
Superintendent

May 13, 2017

House Finance Committee
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

I have been a teacher, a principal, and a superintendent in both rural and urban Alaska for the past twenty years. On behalf of the Regional School Board, the families of the Lower Yukon School District, and the staff of the Lower Yukon School District this testimony is in support of restoring the appropriation to the governor's recommended \$1,750,000 for desperately needed teacher, health, and public safety housing.

We are in support of restoring the appropriation for the following reasons:

1. In a recent university study published by Alaska Dispatch, it was suggested that teacher turnover costs Alaska about \$20 million per year. The Lower Yukon School District experiences an approximate annual 30% teacher turnover rate. The top two reasons given in exit surveys for teachers choosing to leave the district are personal safety and inadequate teacher housing.
2. The Lower Yukon School District has a long history of settling grievances related to substandard teacher housing along with associated legal fees. I personally conducted housing inspections in several villages. Some of the housing conditions have been neglected for many years and are frankly unacceptable. We are in the process of working with our regional partners and using funding from our operating fund to build new and upgrade existing teacher housing.
3. To date in 2016/2017 the Lower Yukon School District has spent \$4.3 million out of its operating fund, money that would otherwise go to students and instruction, to renovate dilapidated teacher housing. We are building new teacher housing in Emmonak to replace old asbestos infested BIA buildings where teachers have been forced to live that flood every year due to a rising river. That construction project is costing the district \$2.3 million that once again could otherwise be spent on other badly needed upgrades to instructional programs.

For these reasons and many more, the Lower Yukon School District supports restoring the appropriation to the governor's recommended \$1,750,000 for desperately needed teacher, health,

CHILDREN FIRST

and public safety housing. Maintaining and building teacher housing is a large expense for rural Alaskan school districts. The anticipated needs for the Lower Yukon School District is an additional 20 units for the next five years. Without adequate funding for AHFC, school districts will have no choice. Rural school districts will be forced to choose between investing in teacher housing or investing in technology and other instructional programs.

Sincerely,

Rob Picou, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Lower Yukon School District