

234 Gold Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

ALASKA COUNCIL



OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

January 23, 2018

Chairman Paul Seaton
House Finance Committee
State Capitol Rm 505
Juneau AK 99801

Dear Chairman Seaton:

The Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) supports HB287, "An Act making appropriations for public education and transportation of students; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

Stable, timely funding for education is our highest priority for this session, as noted in our Joint Position Statements - Priority Funding for Education, which reads as follows:

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the true cost of an adequate education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding is crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Education was previously funded on a forward basis, enabling school boards to finalize district budgets in March. This was well before the required date for notice to teachers of layoff or non-retention of May 15 (AS 14.20.140). Without forward funding, school districts must try to finalize their budgets by the end of April, but have substantial uncertainty as to what that funding might eventually be.

The result, as seen last year when the operating budget did not pass the Legislature until July 1, is to force many school districts to issue layoff notices. By recapitalizing the Public Education Fund (i.e. forward funding), HB287 will prevent this from happening. Please let me know how else we might support your efforts, and thanks!

Cordially,

Deanna Beck

Deanna Beck
ACSA President / AASSP President

Lisa Skiles Parady

Lisa Skiles Parady, JD, EdD
ACSA Executive Director



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

January 25, 2018

Rep. Paul Seaton
Co-Chair, House Finance Committee
State Capitol Room 505
Juneau, Alaska 99801

As superintendent of Anchorage School District, I would like to offer my support for HB 287 to provide known funding for education early in the legislative session as a separate appropriation.

Early funding will help to avoid unnecessary layoff notices going out to our teachers. As you stated, the statutory deadline for teacher layoff notices to go out is the May 15 for tenured teachers and the last day of school for non-tenured—typically the third week in May for ASD.

During this past legislative session, State budget negotiations went beyond the aforementioned statutory deadlines, funding levels were uncertain, and ASD was forced to issue layoff notices to 223 teachers. Some legislators at the time were calling for a three to five percent cut to K-12 education.

The risk for ASD was too high to avoid issuing the layoffs. Most of the teachers that received layoff notices were recalled, but the loss of morale surrounding the layoffs has been felt all year. The timeline for hiring quality applicants is also directly impacted by late or uncertain funding. If the District cannot issue contracts to these teachers early on, the highest quality applicants tend to find employment in states that are already hiring.

I appreciate your support for public education and would like to reiterate my support for having funding for education appropriated early in the legislative process. This will take the “guessing game” out of our budget process. Please contact me if I may provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Deena M. Bishop, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Anchorage School Board
Starr Marsett, Vice President
Kathleen Plunkett, Clerk
Tam Agosti-Gisler, President
Elisa Snelling, Treasurer
Bettye Davis

Dave Donley
Andy Holleman

Superintendent Dr. Deena Bishop



SKAGWAY SCHOOL

P.O. Box 497

• Skagway, Alaska 99840

• (907) 983-2960

Dear Representative Seaton,

The Skagway School Board takes the duty of being fiscally responsible seriously. The Board's annual goal is to make strategic and responsible budgetary decisions that enhance our students' learning and achievement. The consistent uncertainty of education funding in Alaska has made it extremely difficult to plan and ensure that the district is using education funding in the most effective way possible. This lack of security has a direct impact on student learning due to the difficulty it causes planning the budget for staffing and hiring teachers and other essential staff. We urge you to pass HB 287. By ensuring that state education funding is set by March, you will give the district enough time to guarantee that we are using this money in the most effective way to teach our children. Thank you for all of our hard work on behalf of our state.

Sincerely,
Skagway School Board.

John Hischer
Board President

Heather Rodig
Board Treasurer

Denise Sager
Board Member

Darren Belisle
Board Vice President

Jaime Bricker
Board Clerk



February 1, 2018

Co-Chairs Seaton and Foster, and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Dr. Mary Wegner, and I am the superintendent of the Sitka School District. I am testifying today in support of HB 287, Appropriations Education/Student Transportation.

Thank you for your support of public education in Alaska, and thank you for putting forward an Appropriations bill to support student learning throughout the state. After the last few Legislative sessions where students across the state became pawns in a political chess match, I am thrilled to see HB 287, which is a welcome response and is much appreciated.

We are facing a budget deficit for FY19 that is 12% of our total general fund budget, and we need timely, stable, and adequate state funding to keep our talented teachers and provide a quality education for the students of Sitka. Providing an excellent education to every student every day requires high-caliber teachers combined with a culturally responsive learning environment with targeted instruction to meet a student's individual learning needs. All of which helps us strive to achieve the three commitments of Alaska's Education Challenge, which are increasing student success, cultivating safety and well-being, and supporting responsible and reflective learners.

Given the financial crisis in Alaska and in the community of Sitka, we have made significant cuts to our non-personnel budgets in order to maintain our teaching force. However, we are now at the point where we are looking at the reality of reducing our number of teachers so much so that a conservative estimate has our class sizes increasing by up to a quarter if additional revenue is not available to us. I appreciate HB 287 and know that you are doing everything in your power to help students in public schools around Alaska; however, flat funding still means that we will lose teachers, which will negatively impact student learning. I wanted to keep this awareness present in this conversation.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and thank you for your commitment to public education in Alaska! I hope you will pass HB 287 for funding for public schools and student transportation.

Sincerely,

Mary Wegner, Ed.D.



January 29, 2018

The Honorable Paul Seaton and the Honorable Neal Foster
Alaska State Representatives
Co-Chairs, House Finance Committee
State Capitol Rooms 505 and 410
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 287

Dear Co-Chairs Seaton and Foster:

On behalf of 13,000 teachers and education support professionals statewide, I am writing to express NEA-Alaska's support for House Bill 287.

This appropriation is a proactive step by the legislature to give confidence, predictability, and stability back to our school districts, educators, and communities. This legislation will limit pink slips, reduce the stress placed on educators, and provide districts the ability to develop realistic budgets based on accurate state funding levels.

There is no question that some Alaska educators are leaving the state due to budget uncertainty every year. Alaska started the 2017-2018 school year with 250 vacant teaching positions. Each of these vacancies means lost opportunities for Alaska students, larger class sizes, and less time for one-on-one learning. If the cycle of laying off educators at the end of every school year continues, these vacancies will only rise as our best and brightest leave the profession, and the state, for more stable careers.

Under HB 287 districts will be empowered to make early decisions regarding their budgets. This approach lends itself to more transparency, community involvement, and input from all stakeholders. Educators who are impacted by declining budgets will have the certainty they need to make informed decisions about their futures, rather than having to wait until well into the summer to find out whether or not they have jobs in the fall. Having the ability to plan for the future will help to attract and retain the high quality educators our students deserve.

I know from experience that when students have the time to get to know and trust their teacher and the teacher gets to know their students, that's when real learning happens. That trust isn't built overnight, and it's certainly not built by having teachers cycle in and out of our public schools every few years. This is one of the underlying issues that HB 287 addresses and why NEA-Alaska so adamantly supports it.



NEA-Alaska educators are eager to support this legislation because we know it will be good for kids, good for our schools, and good for Alaska families.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 287.

Sincerely,

Tim Parker
President, NEA-Alaska

SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL BOARD

RESOLUTION NO. 18-02

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE EARLY FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION DURING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

WHEREAS, the Constitution for the State of Alaska directs that "the legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions"; and

WHEREAS, each of the local public school districts are responsible for approving and adopting an annual budget that meets State Department of Education and Early Development financial reporting guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the budgeting process requires adequate time over a several month period to ensure that the public and various stakeholders, including municipalities, borough, and local school district boards of education, provide input and adopt the budget; and

WHEREAS, hiring qualified and excellent staff is a major key to meeting the needs of students and ensuring that the goals of Alaska's Education Challenge are met; and

WHEREAS, there is a state and national shortage of individuals who are pursuing careers in the teaching profession; and

WHEREAS, schools and districts must be able to begin the recruiting and hiring process for teachers early in the spring with the guarantee that funding will be available; and

WHEREAS, the legislative financial appropriation for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development including each of the State's public school districts must be passed before each district can determine the actual number of staff that may be hired.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest Region School District urges the Legislature to establish adequate, equitable, sustainable, and predictable revenue for schools early in the legislative session.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL DISTRICT THIS 28th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2017:



President, Southwest Region Schools

11-28-17
Date



Superintendent, Southwest Region Schools

11-29-17
Date

House Finance Committee Public Testimony
Thursday, January 25, 2018 9:00AM

Chairs Foster and Seaton, members of the committee, for the record my name is David Piazza, Superintendent of the Southwest Region School District.

As many of you have heard previously, school districts need notice of funding levels as early as possible to help planning efforts for the upcoming school year. Although Southwest Region did not send out pink slips to employees last year, the District did hesitate on making hiring decisions early. This made for a long and drawn out hiring season. Where the District normally has all of its positions filled by June 1st, the District had several vacancies including two Principal/Teacher positions into the summer months. While the pool of candidates still contain quality individuals, the number of candidates are very limited, especially the ones that have made up their mind to seek their calling in Alaska.

The District supports measures by the legislature to secure funding early to help public school systems including the department of education as well as local schools to plan effectively and efficiently. The District supports HB 287.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

From: Todd Hindman [<mailto:THindman@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>]
Sent: Thursday, January 25, 2018 8:38 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton <Rep.Paul.Seaton@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 287

I wanted to voice my support for HB 287. The reality in Alaska today is that we are not able to hire and retain qualified educators for a variety of reasons including but not limited to salaries in the lower 48 being competitive to the salaries in Alaska, the challenges of teaching in Alaska (especially in rural areas), and our defined contribution retirement system. This has been exacerbated in the past few years due to the delays in funding of the public education system. When districts have to wait late in the hiring system, the best teachers have been hired in the lower 48, greatly reducing the quality of the pool of possible applicants. While, this is only part of the problem, HB 287 is a step in the right direction to address the ability to hire and retain the best educators for our students.

Todd Hindman
Principal, Fireweed Academy

The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I've found it!), but 'That's funny...' -Isaac Asimov.

PHONES:

Main Office 907-235-9728; Little Fireweed 907-235-5792; FAX 907-235-8561

Big Fireweed (Grades 3-6 at West Homer Elementary)

995 Soundview Ave. Homer, Alaska 99603

Fireweed's main office is in room 214 at West Homer Elementary

Little Fireweed (Kindergarten-2)

813 East End Road Homer, Alaska 99603

Representative Seaton,

The Anchorage School Board has as one of its legislative priorities receiving early notice from the Legislature for education funding. Although our preferred date is March 1st since that is when our budget is due to our local Assembly as per Municipal code, we do support your bill which will help us avoid the pink slip debacle that our teachers and HR department endured last year. This will have a direct impact on our ability to retain quality teachers. Thank you for your support of education.

Sincerely,

Ms. Tam Agosti-Gisler
President
Anchorage School Board
5530 East Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504-3135
(907) 742-1101 ext. 4

From: milli
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2018 8:58 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton <Rep.Paul.Seaton@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 287

Good Morning Paul,

I am thrilled to see this bill. It is something that I know was attempted back in the 1980's, not successfully. It seems education funding is held because it makes a great "negotiation tool for the final budget vote. It should be automatically done early in the session and avoid pink slipping our teachers. Thank you for introducing the bill and I am delighted to see so much support.

Thanks so much Paul,

Milli Martin
District 31

From: Marion K. Nelson

From: Marion K. Nelson
To: [Rep. Paul Seaton](#)
Subject: HB 287
Date: Monday, January 22, 2018 10:13:08 PM

Representative Seaton....

I support:

HB 287 - "An Act making appropriations for public education and student transportation". This Bill appropriates funding from the Constitutional Budget Reserve (CBR) and the Statutory Budget Reserve (SBR) to the public education fund for K-12 funding and student transportation. The bill also appropriates funding for Boarding Home Grants, Youth in Detention, Special Schools, and Mt. Edgecumbe Boarding School.

Marion K Nelson


Kenai 99611




From: Gary Miller
To: [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Les Gara](#); [Rep. Jason Grenn](#); [Rep. David Guttenberg](#); [Rep. Scott Kawasaki](#); [Rep. Mark Neuman](#); [Rep. Lance Pruitt](#); [Rep. Paul Seaton](#); [Rep. Steve Thompson](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#); [Rep. Tammie Wilson](#); [Rep. Chris Birch](#); [Rep. Mike Chenault](#); [Rep. Matt Claman](#); [Rep. Harriet Drummond](#); [Rep. David Eastman](#); [Rep. Bryce Edgmon](#); [Rep. Zach Fansler](#); [Rep. DeLena Johnson](#); [Rep. Jennifer Johnston](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Gary Knopp](#); [Rep. Chuck Kopp](#); [Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins](#); [Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux](#); [Rep. Charisse Millett](#); [Rep. George Rauscher](#); [Rep. Lora Reinbold](#); [Rep. Dan Saddler](#); [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Rep. Colleen Sullivan-Leonard](#); [Rep. David Talerico](#); [Rep. Geran Tarr](#); [Rep. Chris Tuck](#); [Rep. Adam Wool](#); [Rep. Justin Parish](#); [Rep. Sam Kito](#)
Subject: HB 287: (Appropriations for public education and transportation of student).
Date: Friday, February 2, 2018 9:52:40 AM

HB 287: (An Act making Appropriations for public education and transportation of student).

I support HB 287.

Representative Kito and Parish and other bill sponsors, thank you for sponsoring this bill.

My wife and I adopted our nine-year old grandson. His education is a top priority for us. The local news has been covering the budget shortfalls for the Juneau school district. Our kids are the future of our state and they need the best education they can get.

Schools need to be able to set their budgets early in the legislative session. Teachers need to know there is money in the school budget that class sizes aren't too large and that they will keep their jobs so they can support their families.

Thank you.

Gary Miller
20135 Cohen Dr
Juneau, AK 99801-8211
(907) 789-3757

From: milli [mailto:millimom@xyz.net]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2018 8:58 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton <Rep.Paul.Seaton@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 287

Good Morning Paul,

I am thrilled to see this bill. It is something that I know was attempted back in the 1980's, not successfully. It seems education funding is held because it makes a great "negotiation tool for the final budget vote. It should be automatically done early in the session and avoid pink slipping our teachers. Thank you for introducing the bill and I am delighted to see so much support.

Thanks so much Paul,

Milli Martin
District 31