HAINES BOROUGH SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 1289

Haines, Alaska 99827

January 31, 2018

Representative George Rauscher
State Capitol, Room 426
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Rauscher,

Thank you very much for sponsoring House Joint Resolution 29 supporting the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000. This Joint Resolution urging Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural School Act (SRS) comes at a critical time for many school districts and communities in Alaska and across the country. The SRS program provided over 720 countries and 4,000 school districts in 41 states the funding to make up for the shortfall resulting from declining timber sales off federal forestlands which began in the early 1990s. SRS was last reauthorized retroactively for FY2014 and FY 2016. The last payment received by counties and schools was in the spring of 2016. Without these funds school districts and local government have been forced to scale back school programs, reduce staff, and have been unable to adequately care for public infrastructure.

Your resolution reminds lawmakers in Washington, DC, of the commitment they made to assist local communities. The Haines Borough School District supports House Joint Resolution 29.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Carlson
Interim Superintendent

Cc: Lisa Parady

Superintendent's Office
Phone (907) 766-6725
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K-12 School Office
Phone (907) 766-6700
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SITKA
SCHOOL DISTRICT

February 1, 2018

Chair Kreiss-Tomkins, and Members of the House State Affairs Committee:

My name is Dr. Mary Wegner, and I am the superintendent of the Sitka School District. I am testifying today in support of HJR 29, Reauthorize Secure Rural Schools Act.

Thank you for your support in advocating for the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. As you know, Secure Rural Schools funding is critically important to the Sitka School District, as well as many other school districts around Alaska. The Sitka School District resides in the Sitka Borough of which 95% is comprised of Tongass National Forest. Around Alaska local municipalities have a limited ability to generate local tax revenue to support schools and roads due to the surrounding national forests, which is why it is so imperative that this act is immediately reauthorized and funded. The loss of Secure Rural Schools funding places an onerous burden upon our local citizenry that cannot be ameliorated without federal assistance.

In your advocacy on behalf of the reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools, please seek a long-term reauthorization of the legislation, as failure to do so has the potential to wreak long-term damage on public education in Sitka and in communities across the state and nation. The limits imposed by national forests are a reality every year, which is why authorization is critical every year.

Having Secure Rural Schools funding as a revenue source in the Sitka School District's FY19 budget would greatly help to save teacher jobs. Providing an excellent education to every student every day requires quality teachers combined with a culturally responsive learning environment with targeted instruction to meet a student's individual learning needs. All of which helps us to live the three commitments of Alaska's Education Challenge, which are increasing student success, cultivating safety and well-being, and supporting responsible and reflective learners. We are facing a budget deficit that is 12% of our total general fund budget, and we need this federal funding to keep our talented teachers.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and thank you for your commitment to public education in Alaska! I hope you will urge the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Act.

Sincerely,

Mary Wegner

Mary Wegner, Ed.D.

SERRC
ALASKA'S EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

SERRC Board of Directors Resolution No.: 2017-01
Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCSDA) Reauthorization

WHEREAS, the 18 public school districts in Southeast Alaska reside in land comprised of 95% Tongass National Forest; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 years ago a partnership was created between the Federal Government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership; and

WHEREAS, SRSCSDA is critically important to 24 of Alaska's 54 school districts; and
WHEREAS, many national forested counties and school districts have limited ability to generate local tax revenue to support schools and roads; and

WHEREAS, the impact of a National Forest that no longer provides adequate revenue to help support local schools and roads places an onerous burden upon local citizenry that cannot be ameliorated without federal assistance; and

WHEREAS, if not reauthorized Alaska will lose $11.2 million dollars in revenues, mostly tied to education; and

WHEREAS, as there is a year lag time for most districts, a reduction in funding of this magnitude will have significant impacts on districts and create significant hardships;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SERRC Board of Directors, comprised of the 18 Southeast Alaska superintendents and 3 SERRC Advisory Board members, superintendents from other regions of the state, urges the Alaska congressional delegation (Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Representative Young) to do all in their power to effect the reauthorization and funding of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act retroactively and going forward, and to work towards multi-year reauthorization and mandatory funding.

Adopted February 3, 2017. This resolution is effective upon signing.

Robert Boyle
Chairman of the Board of Directors
SERRC, Alaska's Educational Resource Center

SITKA
SCHOOL DISTRICT
DISCOVER | NURTURE | INSPIRE

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RESOLUTION OF THE SITKA SCHOOL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Resolution No. 2018-02

Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization

The Sitka School Board supports Alaska House Joint Resolution 29 and urges immediate reauthorization and funding for fiscal year 2019 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000. Furthermore, the Sitka School Board urges multi-year reauthorization and mandatory funding of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCA) by the U.S. Congress as a key component of federal financial assistance to local governments and school districts across the country. This law recognizes the need for sustained funding to school districts that have non-taxable national forest lands within their boundaries.

The Secure Rural Schools Act is critically important to many rural school districts such as Sitka which have relied heavily on Secure Rural Schools funds to supplement local revenue for education. The Sitka School District resides in the Sitka Borough which is 95% comprised of the Tongass National Forest. The impact of a National Forest that no longer provides significant revenue to help support local schools and roads places an onerous burden upon our citizens that cannot be adequately addressed without Federal assistance.

Given the many national-forested municipalities and school districts that have no ability to generate local tax revenue to support schools and roads, it is imperative that this act is immediately reauthorized and funded.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Sitka School Board** urges the support of Alaska House Joint Resolution 29 as it will serve as a strong reminder to federal lawmakers of the critical importance of ongoing support to local communities.

Approved on February 6, 2018

Jennifer McNichol, President, Sitka School Board