

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 236

As a former superintendent of three various school districts and a former state legislator in Oregon, I write this in support of HB 236. In addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, I am a parent, a grandparent, a former business owner, and a dedicated citizen of Juneau, where I was born.

Education is key to the future of the world! Only by educating the population can we hope to achieve a worthwhile and long-lasting level of survival. It is imperative that we provide the funding needed in order to achieve an educated public. In order for the impact of education to be felt and to contribute to the future, we must support it now.

The variety of educational settings in Alaska makes it a challenge to support them. While serving in the Chatham School District, I was made aware of the complexities and challenges of the small, isolated districts...and that was when the ferries were running!! Although different, when I served in Juneau, the costs and needs of the larger districts also became apparent. It takes money to adequately provide for the education of our youth throughout our multi-faceted state.

Please consider the future of our children, our state, and our country and provide needed revenue to provide facilities, teachers, classes, and social opportunities. It is not just about us...it is about the future.

Elaine M. Hopson
9450 Del Rae Rd., #27
Juneau, AK 99801
907-957-2148

From: [House Education](#)
To: [Caitlyn Ellis](#)
Subject: FW: Parent petition to fund vital Educational needs
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 5:38:32 PM
Attachments: [Health, Mental health, IGNITE Petition Feb 8.docx](#)

Message below, and PDF above into searchable pdf

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarah Randall <randallfam10@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:11 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>; Sen. Mia Costello <Sen.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov>; Senate Education <Senate.Education@akleg.gov>; House Education <House.Education@akleg.gov>
Cc: Great Alaska Schools Anchorage <greatakschoolsanc@gmail.com>; Great Alaska Schools <info@sg.actionnetwork.org>; Sara Dykstra <sara.dykstra@gmail.com>; Mitchell_Deena <mitchell_deena@asdk12.org>
Subject: Parent petition to fund vital Educational needs

To whom it may concern,

I have attached my petition I wrote explaining the need for more funding for ASD, and the dire consequences for children if schools are not funded for basic services like health, Gifted Educ, and mental health to become a trauma informed district. Please consider the needs of 24,000 children and take seriously the signatures of 100's of parents who are concerned about the long term damage flat funding and continued cuts to Education will have on all Youth within Anchorage School district.

Thank you,
Sarah Randall

To whom it May Concern,

Feb 10, 2020

We, the parents and community members of Anchorage School District, **reject** the budget proposals made by ASD administration to the Anchorage School Board. ASD's proposed cuts for 2020-2021, totaling \$19.5 million, are **inadequate to meet basic and real student needs of ASD's diverse student population**, and will cause clear, long-term, and costly harm to individual students, their families, and the State of Alaska.

Instead of capitulating to those who think only of the short term, we strongly request additional funding from Alaska Legislature (instead of their 3 year flat funding), to meet the following real needs of ASD students -with special regard to at-risk students- and similarly request Deena Bishop and her Administration to spend those funds wisely, with priority to cutting Administrative positions first, before cutting the following indispensable areas of crucial need:

- **Health:** Certified Health teachers, who are dedicated to teach a sequential course of health education to all students must be retained in the current bi-monthly schedule. Elementary Health educators who have passed the Praxis exam—not librarians trained in library science or maximized classroom teachers who already have less time to teach added curriculum—must continue teaching basic principles of personal safety, hygiene and human development to all students. Health instructors with ongoing professional development and credentialing, not other ASD employees, must continue to inform students about the crucial links between smoking, drugs, vaping, alcohol, food choices, risky behaviors and diseases like alcoholism, obesity, STD's, Type II Diabetes, cancer and addiction. Finally, and especially, in a state with high rates of sexual abuse and domestic violence, regularly teaching basic bullying and abuse prevention programs are indispensable; programs such as "Good Touch/Bad touch" (where in some cases this is the only opportunity for a child to recognize the mal-treatment they are receiving from trusted adults) is crucial, in addition to working as a team with the school counselor for other foundational mental health supports.

- **Mental Health:** We recognize the increased urgent need for a Full-time school counselor in every Elementary School and for their input on increased mental health instruction taught within the protected health curriculum. (The trauma and crisis that a large number of ASD students regularly experience are not scheduled in accordance with a-week-on-week-off counselor availability). We also recognize the crucial need for an expanded corps of high school counselors (1:250 ratio as recommended by ASCA) to address increasing adolescent mental health risks such as: suicide, self-harm, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and cyber bullying.

- **IGNITE:** The current weekly program serves the real needs of gifted elementary students and fulfills the Alaska State mandate to provide services for Gifted and talented students to be taught in the least restrictive environment for children in every Elementary school. (The needs of gifted students are distinct, requiring longitudinal projects of deeper and sustained engagement than can be offered in the general classroom and cannot be addressed under the current restructuring plan). Cutting this program will negatively affect these students' academic outcomes, and may persuade their families to leave the district entirely.

- Finally, we ask priority be made to become a **“Trauma-informed” district** to address one of the biggest deterrents to learning and most overlooked ROOT causes of our state’s low reading scores; the extraordinarily high ACE’s scores of youth in Alaska. Research has found that children living in domestic violent situations; dealing with sexual, verbal or physical abuse, can not turn off their brain’s fight or flight response which bathe the brain in cortisol to survive these chronic traumas, making it physiologically impossible to focus or think clearly –or learn to read- without trauma informed interventions. Studies have also shown that creating trauma informed plans within schools for children to process trauma, dramatically increases learning (reading) abilities, decreases behavior problems, and overall sets kids up for greater success in life. See references

In summary, we the parents, declare it is unacceptable to require teachers to provide these services they are not certified to teach, nor have enough planning or quality teaching time to provide science and social studies, let alone Reading and Math to their increasing classroom sizes (and thus increasing behavior problems with increasing mental health needs). **We the parents, ask the ASD school board to not accept the proposed budget without first listening to parent’s suggestions in a future forum, of where to cut the budget.** We also ask ASD administration along with the school board to actively discuss the district’s real financial straights with legislators themselves in Juneau.

References: “The Deepest Well” By Nadine Burke Harris MD
“Trauma-Sensitive Schools” By Susan E Craig PhD
Miss Kendra Program @traumainformedschools.org
National Association for Gifted Children: nagc.org
American School Counselor Assoc: schoolcounselor.org

Signed Most Sincerely,

Sarah Randall (parent and foster mom of 6 ASD students,
founder of ASDacademicBALANCE)

And 100’s of other concerned parents and Anchorage community members
(see actual online petition and comments)

Alaska Superintendents Association

234 Gold Street • Juneau, AK 99801

907.586.9702 • (Fax) 907.364.3805



February 25, 2020

The Honorable Members of House Education Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Building Davis Rm 106
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Honorable Members,

There is no greater investment in the future of Alaska than investing in public education that is equitable, fully funded and sustainable.

The Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) supports HB236. A change in the BSA from \$5,930 to \$6,045 would go far in replacing funding that has already been cut. Schools must have the ability to plan and have stability.

School districts have faced flat funding for the past several years that does not keep up with inflation or the rising costs of operations – increased fuel prices and health insurance rates and now deferred maintenance to name a few.

With no guarantees of forward funding and a lack of clarity on what our next year's budget will be, many school districts have had to rely on spending down the available budget that we, like most households, typically reserve outside of our normal operating budget to cover emergencies and unexpected expenses.

In a recent poll of Alaskan school superintendents asking about the impact of flat funding on Alaska School Districts, many cited that fixed costs of operating a school would have to take priority over things like instructional materials, academic programs, sports and even the lunch program.

Thank you for your efforts in supporting this bill. Thank you for your service.

Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Shawn Arnold, Superintendent
Valdez City School District
ASA President



Alaska Council of School Administrators

Leadership, Unity and Advocacy for Public Education

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February 25, 2020

The Honorable Members of the House Education Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Building Davis Rm 106
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

As President of the Alaska Council of School Administrators and the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals I am writing to urge your support of HB236 "An act relating to increasing the Base Student Allocation."

ACSA's purpose is to advocate for quality public education for all Alaskan children. One of our top priorities as cited in our Joint Position Statement is **Priority Funding for Education: The state of Alaska must provide timely, reliable and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding and forward funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.**

A change in the BSA from \$5,930 to \$6,045 would go far in keeping pace with inflationary costs. Schools cannot afford to lose more ground. School districts have faced flat funding for the past several years that does not keep up with rising costs of operations – increased fuel prices and health insurance rates and now deferred maintenance must come out of our existing budget.

We struggle to retain the teachers/educators we have. Failing to pass this bill would work against our efforts to prepare, attract and retain qualified educators. I urge you to support HB236 and thank you for your efforts to provide adequate funding for public education.

Please contact me with any questions. Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robin Jones, President
Alaska Council of School Administrators / Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Principal, Chief Ivan Blunka School, Southwest Region School District

Lower Kuskokwim
School District



Bessie Lea Weston, Board Member
PO Box 305, Bethel, AK 99559

State of Alaska
House Education Committee
State Capitol Room 108
Juneau, Alaska 99801

February 26, 2020

RE: House Bill 236 – Increase the Base Student Allocation Testimony Follow-up Request

Madam Chair:

Thank you Madam Chair for taking my testimony this morning on HB 236. As requested, the following text is my testimony. A brief explanation will follow on what I understood to be an area of interest for you.

“Unuakukegci -good morning, I am Bessie Weston, Board member with the Lower Kuskokwim School District, representing Mekoryuk, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok and Chefnak. I also serve on the Mekoryuk AVEC (Alaska Village Electric Cooperative) board.

I met with Nuniarmiut School students in grades 6 – 12. There were 17 of 19 enrolled students present and each voiced their opinion. They collectively produced a list of 7 activities or programs that are important to them. Of the 7, the top 3, by vote, were: Cugtun Language, Basketball and Native Youth Olympics.

They as a whole, are in favor of an increase in the BSA, so as to keep these programs active and effective in efforts to keep school a desirable place to be.

I also spoke with the Mekoryuk AVEC chairman. We support an increase in the BSA. LKSD implements a CTE program that has the potential to “grow our own” people into electrical process careers. The implementation of the CTE program can provide the base education of future operators and personnel that help to keep our communities powered statewide.

Additionally, we all as, board members, parents, educators and leaders, expect our students to grow in academic performance, yet do not provide the additional resources required to produce the expected outcomes.

LKSD faces a 1-2 million dollar shortage, without an increase in BSA. This shortage would effect 28 schools in 23 communities.

In regard to teacher retention, Nuniwarmiut School has lost 3 teachers this current school year alone. This is a school that requires 4 teachers, so I support the points made earlier on the need for teacher retention and recruitment.

Lastly, please know that the Cugtun Language is the only dialect of its kind in the world, as Mekoryuk is the only community in the world that has begun to read, write and speak this dialect. For those Nuniwarmiut School students that I mentioned earlier, to collectively agree that it is the most important program in their school, should speak volumes to you.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the LKSD students, and I absolutely support and hope for an increase in the BSA."

You, Madam Chair, sounded interested in the point on the Cup'ig Language. Mekoryuk is the only community in the world that speaks the Cup'ig language. Recent efforts by LKSD have put into place a Dual Language Education program, which allows each school the opportunity to teach their native language, if they so choose.

After decades of loss of the Cup'ig Language by missionary introduction of western teaching and lack of educational materials and qualified Cup'ig Language teachers, in 2014, Nuniwarmiut School, in the community of Mekoryuk, designated itself as a Dual Language School. It teaches students to read, write and speak the local, native Cugtun Language in addition to English.

I am available to answer any questions at, bessie_weston@lkzd.org, or at 907-538-9069.

Thank you again for this opportunity to support an increase in Base Student Allocations.

Sincerely,



Bessie Lea Weston
Lower Kuskokwim School District
Board Member, Seat B



Southwest Region School District

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Aleknagik

Ekwok

Koliganek

Manokotak

New Stuyahok

Togiak

Twin Hills

House Education Committee Public Testimony
Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:00AM

Chairs Drummond and Story, members of the committee, for the record my name is Kay Andrews, Board President of the Southwest Region School District school board.

We would like to thank you and your colleagues in the legislature for your continued support of the public educational system and for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Our students and all across Alaska represent the strong future of our state. They are our greatest natural resource and require the support necessary to grow into the leaders and workforce that will keep our state prosperous for years to come.

Our District continues to see substantial cost increases to health insurance, supplies, transportation of goods to our schools, and foresees a renewed upward swing in the cost of fuel oil and other utilities again this spring. These continuous increases directly impact District finances and reduce funds available to support instructional programs for students.

Our schools face many issues today. Among them are complex issues related to trauma. There is a great need for training for staff in trauma-informed practices, for school counselors, school psychologists and other related professionals. This need is greater than it has ever been. With cuts in recent years to other departments at the state level, the state's ability to support our youth in this area has been dramatically reduced. Without stable, predictable funding, our schools' ability to address students' needs is extremely difficult.

As was stated earlier this morning, funds distributed outside the formula are very hard for us, as a district, to rely on and plan for effectively. Funding of a one-time nature cannot be used for long-term initiatives, staffing or other core functions.

An example of the need for sustained predictable funding is our ongoing efforts to increase reading achievement in grades K-3, which has been a focus since 2016. This is not a one-year, short-term effort. To successfully take on an effort of this magnitude, we must be able to predict funding allowing us to hire quality staff and create sustainable programs.

Funding for schools should be distributed through the foundation formula where it can be depended on and allow districts to make solid long-term plans for instruction.

The District strongly supports HB 236 and its measures to secure annual, predictable funding to allow us to effectively meet student educational needs.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Kay Andrews, Board President
Southwest Region Schools