

David Song

From: Jasmine L. Nickell <Jasmine.Nickell@k12northstar.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2021 10:43 AM
To: David Song
Subject: Support for HB 173

TO: Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 15, 2021

RE: HB 173 – School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act

Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today to express my support for House Bill 173, the School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act. This bill will modernize and transform the approach that Alaska takes towards education, and make our schools safer, more supportive, and more culturally-relevant for our children.

I am a school counselor in a middle school in North Pole, Alaska, and I am terrified by what we call the "pipeline to prison" as students who tend to drop out, not have support they need-end up in prison right out of high school! We know our jails and prisons are overloaded!

Not only this, but I have seen the damage and lack of opportunity that using traditional, old-school discipline promotes- and it hurts kids in our schools!!! Administration desperately needs training in Restorative Justice, in order to teach our high risk students that they can succeed, and even guide them, not just a slap on the hand and send them home!

In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has been involved the formation of this bill, and I appreciate Rep. Tarr for being a staunch advocate for our students. I urge all of our legislators to support HB 173 for the benefit of all Alaskans!

Respectfully,

[Jasmine Nickell](#)
North Pole Middle School
7th Grade Counselor
(907)-488-2271 x40102
jasmine.nickell@k12northstar.org

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 15, 2021

RE: HB 173 – School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act

Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today to express my support for House Bill 173, the School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act. This bill will modernize and transform the approach that Alaska takes towards education, and make our schools safer, more supportive, and more culturally-relevant for our children.

The way that Alaska (and the United States as a whole) has approached education has been extremely prescriptive and generalized; teaching more to the generic standards covered on a high-stakes statewide assessment rather than focusing on critical skills such as social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and aligning lessons to local cultural values. Additionally, the traditional zero-tolerance approach to punitive discipline has harmed students for decades. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions do nothing to make our schools more conducive to learning; they simply prevent our most marginalized students from being able to catch up to their peers academically. These punishments also fall disproportionately on our low-income students and students of color.

We can and should do better for our children, who are our most precious resource, and HB 173 would be a significant first step in the right direction. This bill recognizes the need to move away from these harmful, punitive practices and more towards a healing-centered, restorative approach. Our students will not be students forever; they need to learn to develop interpersonal skills and how to repair relationships. We cannot simply exclude them once a behavioral intervention is deemed necessary. These self-regulation and resiliency skills will serve them throughout the course of their lives, not just while they are in school. The bill affirmatively states that Alaska's education policy will take into account the principles of early childhood and youth brain development.

We also need to update our educational policies to reflect the diversity of our schools, as well as the Indigenous values that are ingrained in the communities our schools serve. When the state attempts a one-size-fits-all approach for all students, many will inevitably become alienated or even distrustful of our schools – which is understandable given the fraught history Alaska has had with its colonial boarding school system. HB 173 is an opportunity for our educators to intentionally reimagine their approach to better serve our kids. The bill will include concepts such as: social and emotional learning, trauma-informed/healing-centered practices, culturally-competent instruction aligned with Indigenous values, multi-tiered systems of support for restorative behavioral interventions, and methods for reducing racial disparities and punitive disciplinary measures.

Finally, I support HB 173 because it provides a support mechanism for school districts – it does not just give them a mandate without any guidance. The multidisciplinary and diverse School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Committee created on the state level will serve as a wealth of knowledge that can support our educators through the planning process. HB 173 also provides stringent

guidelines for the selection process, so I am comfortable knowing that this group will be representative of our diverse state.

In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has been involved the formation of this bill, and I appreciate Rep. Tarr for being a staunch advocate for our students. I urge all of our legislators to support HB 173 for the benefit of all Alaskans!

Sincerely,
Joyce Song

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 26, 2021

RE: HB 173 – School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act

Representative Tarr,

As a public school teacher, I am writing to you today to express my support for House Bill 173, the School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act. The success of social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and culturally relevant lessons have been proven across the country and should be a core part of any modern education system. HB 173 is an opportunity to move away from harmful, inefficient, outdated policy and realign schools with current best practices.

Sincerely,

Matt Duvall

From: [Milo Hou](#)
To: [Rep. Geran Tarr](#); [David Song](#)
Subject: I support HB 173
Date: Friday, April 16, 2021 11:50:22 AM

It is a good step forward for our kids and our students

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Milo Hou
milostar@gmail.com

North Slope Borough School District

Pauline Harvey, Superintendent
829 Aivik Street
P.O. Box 169
Utqiagvik, Alaska 99723
(907) 852-5311



April 20, 2021

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801
April 15, 2021

RE: HB 173 – School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act
Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today to express my support for House Bill 173, the School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act. This bill will modernize and transform the approach that Alaska takes towards education, and make our schools safer, more supportive, and more culturally-relevant for our children.

The way that Alaska (and the United States as a whole) has approached education has been extremely prescriptive and generalized; teaching more to the generic standards covered on a high-stakes statewide assessment rather than focusing on critical skills such as social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and aligning lessons to local cultural values. Additionally, the traditional zero-tolerance approach to punitive discipline has harmed students for decades. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions do nothing to make our schools more conducive to learning; they simply prevent our most marginalized students from being able to catch up to their peers academically. These punishments also fall disproportionately on our low-income students and students of color.

We can and should do better for our children, who are our most precious resource, and HB 173 would be a significant first step in the right direction. This bill recognizes the need to move away from these harmful, punitive practices and more towards a healing-centered, restorative approach. Our students will not be students forever; they need to learn to develop interpersonal skills and how to repair relationships. We cannot simply exclude them once a behavioral intervention is deemed necessary. These self-regulation and resiliency skills will serve them throughout the course of their lives, not just while they are in school.

We also need to update our educational policies to reflect the diversity of our schools, as well as the Indigenous values that are ingrained in the communities our schools serve. When the state attempts a one-size-fits-all approach for all students, many will inevitably become alienated or even distrustful of our schools – which is understandable given the fraught history Alaska has had with its colonial boarding school system. HB 173 is an opportunity for our educators to intentionally reimagine their approach to better serve our kids.

Finally, I support HB 173 because it provides a support mechanism for school districts – it does not just give them a mandate without any guidance. The multidisciplinary and diverse School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Committee created on the state level will serve as a wealth of knowledge that can support our educators through the planning process.

Address: P.O. Box 169, Utqiagvik, Alaska 99723 (907) 852-5311

HB 173 also provides stringent guidelines for the selection process, so I am comfortable knowing that this group will be representative of our diverse state.

In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has been involved the formation of this bill, and I appreciate Rep. Tarr for being a staunch advocate for our students. I urge all of our legislators to support HB 173 for the benefit of all Alaskans!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pauline Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Pauline Harvey
Superintendent of the NSBSD

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Pauline Harvey
Superintendent of the NSBSD

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801
April 19, 2021

RE: HB 173 – School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act

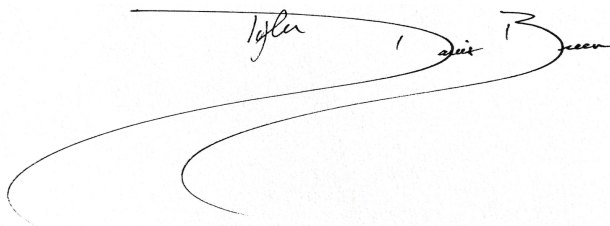
Representative Tarr,

First off, thank you for the work that you have put in for Alaska's students, both in the legislature, as well as working with me at events like the Youth Advocacy Institute. It has been a pleasure having your insight on issues affecting students. That's why I am happy to be writing to you today to express my support for House Bill 173, the School Climate and School Connectedness Improvement Act. Transforming Alaska's approach to education as this bill instructs will make our schools safer, more supportive, and more culturally-relevant for our children. As education professionals, we know that these supports benefit students' academic outcomes.

As a prior teacher, I tried to work my curriculum to meet the needs of my students in ways that apply to their lives. I tried to avoid teaching more to generic standards, instead focusing on building their critical thinking, analytical skills, facilitating relationships between them and the community, and aligning lessons to local cultural values. Alaska has made amazing strides towards making these a focus in education, but centering them in policy will be a major step towards institutionalizing these proven best practices. Especially during a time of such calamity in education, understanding the disproportionate impacts that punitive measures have on our low-income students and students of color is imperative to making measurable progress.

I am a true believer that blanket policies impact different communities differently. The unique context of Alaska's geography, history, people, and the diversity therein requires that we similarly take a diverse and individualized approach to education. The School Climate and Connectedness Improvement Committee at the state level can guide individual districts in best practices that can be adapted to their own districts. Thank you for your work on this bill. I urge your fellow legislators to support HB 173 as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Breen", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Tyler Breen