



February 9, 2022

Madam Co-Chairs and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Frank Hauser, and I'm the Superintendent the Sitka School District. I am providing written testimony today in support of HB 272 and HB 273, Increase Base Student Allocation and Increase Base Student Allocation Inflation.

The Sitka School District is facing a budget deficit of \$1,959,425 for FY23, which represents almost 10% of our total general fund budget.

“Flat funding” sounds benign and static, but every year of flat funding, since 2017, has represented a loss to districts because it does not provide for inflation and for increased fixed yearly costs, such as utilities, student transportation, and insurance. Multiple years of flat funding have eroded Alaska’s ability even to keep educators in classrooms.

We have been forced to make significant cuts to teachers, administrators, support staff, and programs due to flat funding of the BSA since 2017. In my district, we no longer have a dedicated librarian at either our K-1 or middle schools. Alaskan students today do not have the benefits of the same programs, resources, and staff that I did, when I attended public school in Alaska.

We are not able “cut ourselves out” of this deficit without having significant negative impacts on our pupil teacher ratio (PTR), programs, and educational system as a whole. HB 272 or HB 273 would not close our existing \$1,959,425 deficit in Sitka, but any increase to the BSA would help save teaching positions and valuable programs in our district. It would also support our ability to retain and attract the high-quality educators and educational professionals the students of Alaska deserve. Reliable funding brings stability. The stakes have never been higher, and the needs, never so great.

In my 24 years as an educator in Alaska’s public schools, my students have included Alaska’s welders, engineers, construction workers, Ivy League graduates, doctors and health care professionals, computer scientists, culinary workers, and even the first Miss America from Alaska. Money invested in Alaska’s schools and students is money well invested in the future of Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your continued commitment to public education in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Frank Hauser



February 8, 2022

Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 403
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: House Bill 272 Increase Base Student Allocation and House Bill 273 Increase Base Student Allocation Inflation

Dear Representative Story,

On behalf of the 11,000 members of NEA-Alaska, I'd like to thank you for introducing House Bills 272 and 273.

This legislation and the associated funding is desperately needed to provide stability and relief for our public education system. Our public schools have been flat-funded since 2017, even as the cost for essential services and goods have increased rapidly due to inflation. This means every school district in Alaska is being asked to provide the same, or increased levels of service with reduced spending power. The consequence is fewer opportunities for students, increased class sizes, and increased educator attrition with few eligible candidates to replace them.

The provision in HB 273 to tie the Base Student Allocation to the CPI is critical and long past due. As you know, a certain set of required expenditures, including energy, broadband, transportation, health insurance, and more, increase on an almost annual basis. As these costs increase, school districts have no alternative but to divert resources from the classroom and student programs to pay the increasing costs.

Thank you for supporting Alaska's students and for sponsoring this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Tom Klaameyer, President NEA-Alaska



To: House Education Committee

From: Association of Alaska School Boards

RE: Letter of Support for:

HB 272 – Increase Base Student Allocation

HB 273 – Increase Base Student Allocation; Inflation

House Education Committee,

The Association of Alaska School Boards is in support of HB 272 and HB 273. School districts in Alaska face constant increases in supplies and services necessary to operate their schools. These include utilities, supplies, transportation, fuel, salaries, insurance, maintenance, freight, food, instructional materials, communications, internet, and a myriad of other supplies and services necessary for operating a school system. These increases coupled with the inflationary loss of buying power have forced school boards to make difficult choices every year on what to discontinue offering to their students. Districts across the state have eliminated counselors, nurses, after school programs, extracurricular programs, elective courses, enrichment opportunities, travel, and the deferred maintenance list in every district continues to grow.

There has not been an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) since 2017. In some years the legislature has provided one-time funding but districts desperately need the benefit of increased funding within the BSA to provide predictable funding to allow for appropriate and efficient planning. It seems disingenuous to expect improvement and innovation while removing opportunities and personnel to create this innovation and improvement in order to pass and remain within a balanced budget.

I frequently hear legislators cite the Constitutional requirement to provide a public education system, *Article 7, Section 1*, and I believe every legislator wants effective and productive schools within their districts. HB 272 and HB 273 will put into action the spirit of Alaska's constitution relative to education funding.

AASB has several long-standing resolutions which address this issue. We have included those for your review. We encourage your support for HB 272 and HB 273.



Pete Hoepfner, President



Lon Garrison, Executive Director



Norman Wooten, Director of Advocacy

B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY

Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all school age children. Public education is fundamental to democracy and economic advancement of the state and tribes. AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make early, sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth.

2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE

The sustainability, reliability and adequacy of Alaska's funding for public education are of highest concern to the Association of Alaska School Boards. AASB urges the Legislature to develop a state fiscal plan. This fiscal plan would provide a long-term approach to funding the costs of public education and other services upon which Alaska's students and their families depend. The plan should be strategic, sustainable and realistic, providing a framework for balancing budgets while adequately funding public education.

2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide early, adequate, equitable, and predictable funding of public education. AASB believes that adequate funding should include the following:

- State funding of the TRS-PERS retirement liability;
- An increase to the Base Student Allocation to account for both inflation and adequate pre-K through 12th grade education;
- Recognition of the need to keep pupil-teacher ratios to a level in line with research-based best practices;
- Career and technical education.

- An early adoption timeline that allows school boards and district administration to effectively plan instruction and staffing for the upcoming school year.
- Programs and Initiatives focusing on Alaska Native languages and cultures.

AASB urges that in the years when the Alaska Legislature has not approved an education budget by April 1, the budget from the previous year shall be the legal minimum funding for the next fiscal year.

AASB urges the Legislature to review and recommend appropriate adjustments to AS.14.17.460, District Cost Factors, to ensure equity in school funding.

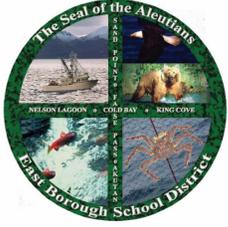
AASB urges the Legislature to provide stable forward funding that addresses inflation, including the use of an education endowment, to ensure funding predictability.

2.23 FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS BY ESTABLISHING THE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION IN ADVANCE

AASB supports funding for schools in advance. At a minimum, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) should be established at least one, and preferably three, years ahead to provide sufficient time for school districts to prepare and submit their budgets in a timely manner without spending unnecessary time and resources revising budgets based on legislative action after the local budget process has begun. The Education Fund, AS 14.17.300, must also be maintained and increased for this purpose.

2.50 Inflation-proofed Base Student Allocation (BSA) Investments

AASB urges the State of Alaska to make inflation-proofed incremental investments to the BSA to make up for flat funding since FY 2011.



Aleutians East Borough School District

P.O. Box 429, Sand Point, Alaska 99661

Ph. 907-383-5222 FAX 907-383-3496

**Serving the children in the Alaskan communities of:
Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, and Sand Point**
www.aebbsd.org

February 11, 2022

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Co-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 272 and HB 273

For the record, my name is Patrick Mayer and I am the Superintendent of the Aleutians East Borough School District, as well as a Past President of the Alaska Superintendents Association.

First, I greatly appreciate House Education seeking input on the BSA. As we all know, the BSA has not seen an increase since 2017. Inflation, however, has taken a significant toll on how we are able to fund the day to day operations of our school districts. The Aleutians East Borough School District is located in one of the most remote regions of Alaska. We operate 4 sites within a 12,500 square mile area. The only way in, or out, is by air or sea. The ferry system has become very limiting, our air service is not always reliable and what this all adds up to are extremely high costs for just about everything and with the current inflation rate it will only be more of a challenge. **A point worthy of noting is that Governor Dunleavy referenced inflation being at a 40 year high during his address at the beginning of session.** But, for the sake of this conversation let's address costs as they relate to our schools.

- The purchase of food for our students have risen dramatically just during this school year, roughly 10 percent.
- Transportation for goods delivered through Coastal Transportation have also risen proportionally with the increase in fuel prices.
- Fuel costs, in fact, are up 34 percent from FY21
- Increases in insurance costs are now going up 17 percent from FY21.
- Staffing costs make up the largest expenditure in most districts including the AEBSD. As we try desperately to retain teachers, we must try to support competitive salary structures which is a cost increase. I am sure that is no surprise to anyone listening to this testimony. Recruitment and retention of administrators and teachers is a big challenge everywhere in the U.S., and it is greatly magnified as a challenge in Rural Alaska. We simply must pay a competitive wage in order to retain quality educators.
- While CARES ACT and ARPA funding has been greatly appreciated, these Covid monies are "one time" that are being used for their intended purpose, Covid Mitigation. These dollars come with various strings attached that limit, especially smaller districts, in how those resources can be utilized.
- Our district has been able to backfill the loss of some teaching positions as recipients of outside monies, but, when those monies go away will there be a mechanism to replace them? That is always a challenging prospect as it is essentially an unknown.
- Moving forward, both the effort to address these challenges in the near term (HB 272) and the effort to inflation proof on an ongoing basis through the consideration of HB 273 will go a long way toward avoiding the major challenges that lay ahead when CARES and ARPA monies are gone.

I am sorry that Representative Prax had to leave. I will be certain follow up with him to help understand the realities of our increased cost in Alaska, Especially remote rural Alaska.

Again, thank you Madam Chair, Madam Co-Chair and members of the committee for opening up this discussion surrounding the BSA through the introduction of HB 272 and HB 273.

Sincerely,

Patrick Mayer,
Superintendent



Invited testimony for HB 272

February 9, 2022

My name is Dayna DeFeo, I represent UAA and the Institute of Social and Economic Research (or ISER), where I direct the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research. I am joined by two coauthors of the report I will be testifying about, Matthew Berman, Professor of Economics at ISER and Diane Hirshberg, Professor of Education Policy and Director of ISER.

I'd like to address three issues around public spending on k12 education. I'll talk about what we pay, how that compares to other states, and some of Alaska's unique education costs that affect the comparison.

1. What do we pay?

The last time we formally compared Alaska's per-pupil spending to other states was in 2019, using 2017 figures.

In 2017, Alaska's per-pupil spending¹ was 46% higher than the national average and the 6th highest state in the nation.

The latest national numbers now available are for 2019. And they show that Alaska was still in 6th place, but per pupil spending² was only 39% higher than the national average. In 2019, the economy was growing faster nationally than in Alaska, and other states – particularly those that had spent less historically,³ invested more dollars in education.

2. Do we really pay that much more than the US average?

In raw dollars, yes. But everything in Alaska costs more. I'm in Arizona right now, and \$20 buys more here than it does at home in Anchorage. If I want to spend those \$20 in Nome, I get even less. So we need to make some adjustments to do a fair comparison of Alaska to other states.

In the ISER report, we made 2 adjustments to the buying power of the dollars we spend. First, we used the foundation formula's geographic cost differential, weighted by district average daily membership, to level the differences in costs within Alaska. That adjustment alone – adjusting

¹ \$17,838

² \$18,394

³ Oklahoma and Alabama

Alaska communities to Anchorage - explained about half the difference between Alaska and other states' spending – after those adjustments, Alaska spent 22% above the national average.

And then we adjusted Anchorage dollars to the nation using the Anchorage cost of living index.⁴ After that second adjustment, Alaska costs were actually 2% below the national average. And that was in 2017. By 2019, Alaska was falling further behind.

But we should also be talking about the different services and costs needed to deliver education across the state. And so that brings me to the last question in this presentation:

3. What are some of Alaska's unique education costs that we need to keep in mind?

I'd like to talk about 3 funding challenges that are unique to Alaska.

First, Alaska has a lot of small schools. Alaska has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide public education to all students, and 3 major cases between 1975 and 2004 define the state's responsibility very clearly. Small schools are more costly to operate – they have small class sizes, and do not benefit from economies of scale in capital and labor costs.

The second is healthcare. Alaska has the highest per capita healthcare costs in the US, and this is bad for all sectors of our economy. While the challenge of high healthcare costs is not unique to education, in a fixed budget scenario these costs put downward pressure on wages, making it more difficult for Alaska districts to offer teachers a nationally competitive salary.

And the third is energy. Energy costs are high and have been rising. Fuel costs fluctuate over time, but fuel also costs different amounts in different places. It costs more to transport and store fuel in small communities that lack year-round road or water access, and communities may not get the best prices when they have to make their bulk fuel purchases.

Electricity costs can be three to five times higher in remote places, and schools do not benefit from the Power Cost Equalization programs that reduce these costs for local residents.

Regardless of cost, school districts require a lot of fuel to heat facilities in colder communities, and they need electricity to operate them, no matter how many students there are in a building.

Wrapping up

So in the analyses I have done with my colleagues, Alaska is not overspending on public education. When we adjust the spending to make fair comparison to other states, we spend less than the national average.

I'd like to speak briefly about the school funding formula and how that fits in. It has been analyzed, and even though the geographic cost differential needs updating (that is a separate issue), the formula does work to distribute available funds equitably among Alaska's school districts.

But how big that base pot of dollars should be is the issue today. In addition to the discussion about the base student allocation, I'll note that the state of Alaska has not had an education

⁴ We used the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association (ACCRA) cost of living index, not to be confused with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI).

spending adequacy study to empirically explore what we need to invest in public education to provide the services that would enable students to be successful.

We still need to look not only look at how much we are spending, but what we are spending these dollars on to ensure that Alaska students and teachers and schools and communities are set up for the best possible education outcomes.

Thank you.

Dayna Jean DeFeo, PhD
Director, Center for Alaska Education Policy Research
Institute of Social and Economic Research
University of Alaska Anchorage
907.786.5494
djdefeo@alaska.edu

Madam Chair, members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Dr. Bridget Weiss, and I am the superintendent of the Juneau School District and President Elect of the Alaska Superintendents Association.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here in support of HB 272 and inflation proofing the base student allocation for public education.

In the Juneau School district, the effects of inflation have been felt as we prepare our budget each year, and with 7.2 percent CPI increase in Alaska in the last year, public schools are left to make tough decisions again as we prepare our budgets for the next fiscal year without the success of this bill.

Over the last five years, public education has received flat funding while the fixed costs of running our schools have seen significant increases which results in a decline of funding.

In 2017 the price of Water, Sewer and telephone services for the Juneau School District was \$396,148, for FY 22 \$464,200, an increase of 17%.

The cost of electricity and heating oil in 2017 was \$1,258,439. In FY 2022, \$1,527,200, an increase of 21%.

Property, liability, auto and cyber insurance premiums for the school district in 2017 were \$606,588. In 2022, \$995,600, an increase of 64%. Our projected cost for FY 2023 is \$1,545,000. This is a 155% increase since 2017 and a 55% cost increase over the last year.

The current budget proposal for education funding does not account for inflation, which is a budget cut, knowing the cost of basic services continue to rise.

We have made adjustments...we have lost counselor positions, nurse positions, instructional coach positions, administrator positions, etc.

My school district will be expected to find the funds to pay for the increased cost of insurance, utilities, and supplies while ensuring our staff have a living wage—all of this on the same funding we've received since 2017.

We have been doing more with less for years, seeing inflation continue to rise while funding for education remains flat, with a decreasing value. We are hurting Alaska's students and our states' future leaders by not fully funding public education or accounting for inflation in the state's education budget.

I am a product of the Juneau School District. I am now leading our very important work. I am doing that in large part because of the learning opportunities and high quality educators I experienced in this district. Please help us keep delivering a robust education for our future leaders.

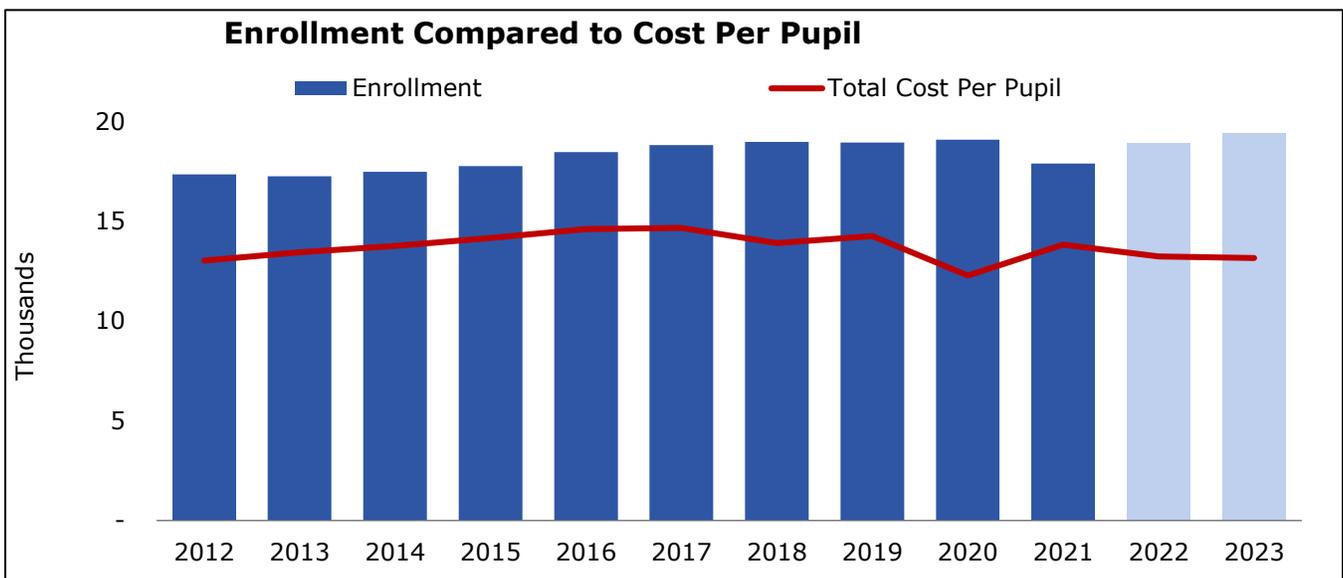
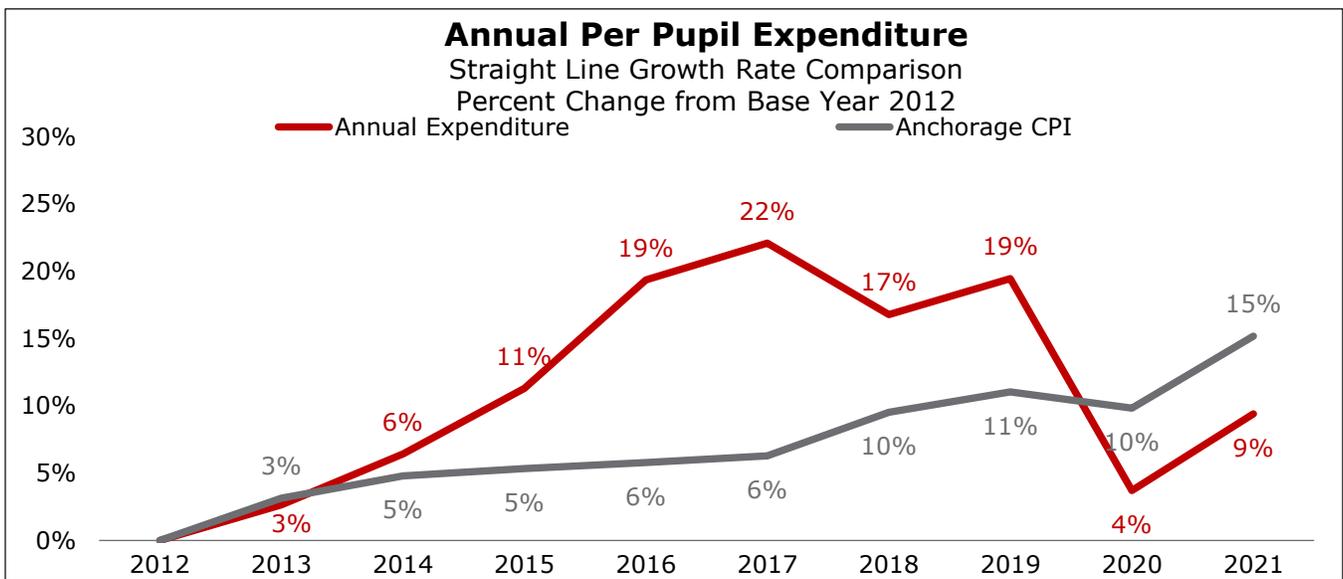
Thank you for your consideration.



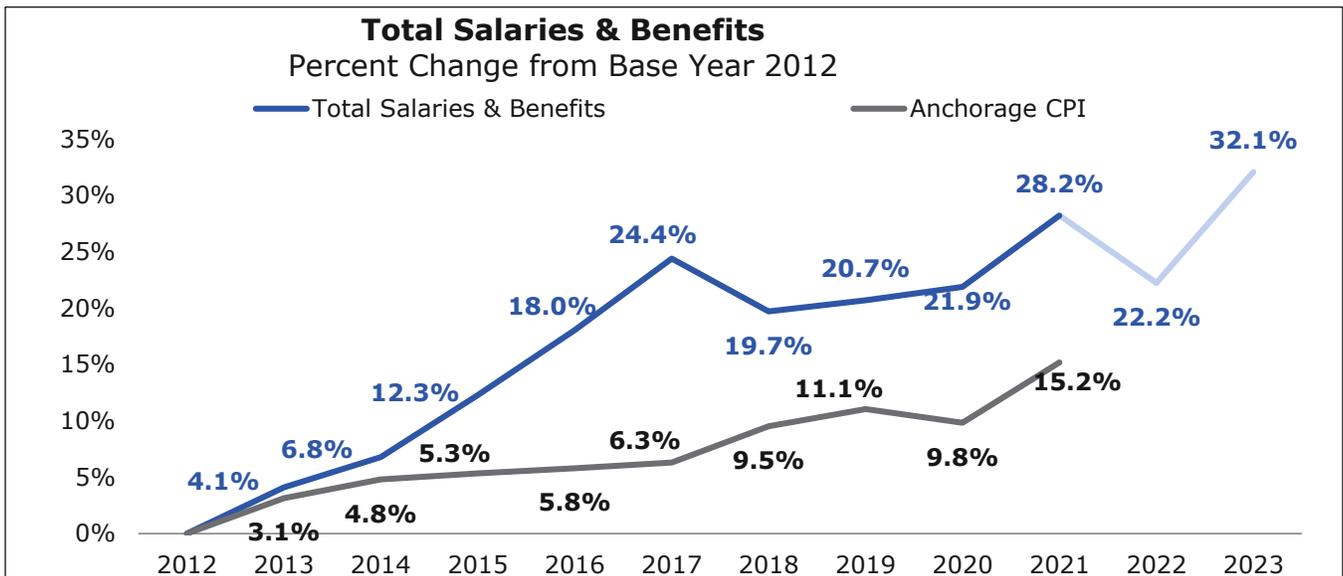
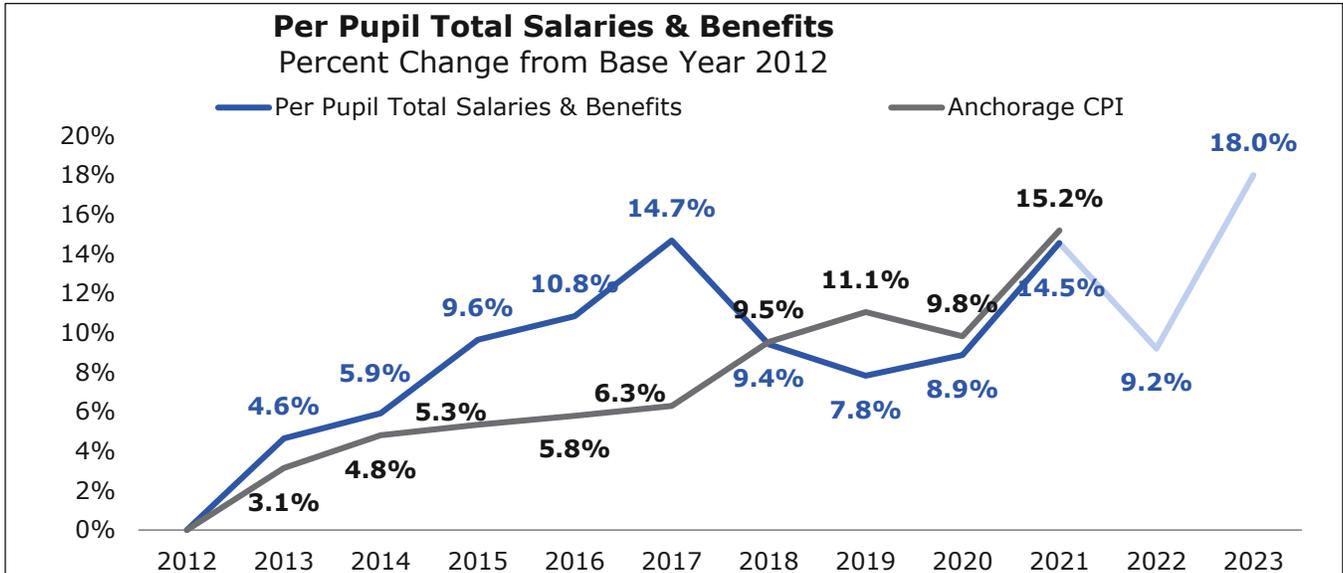
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

February 9, 2022
MSBSD Written Testimony for HB 272

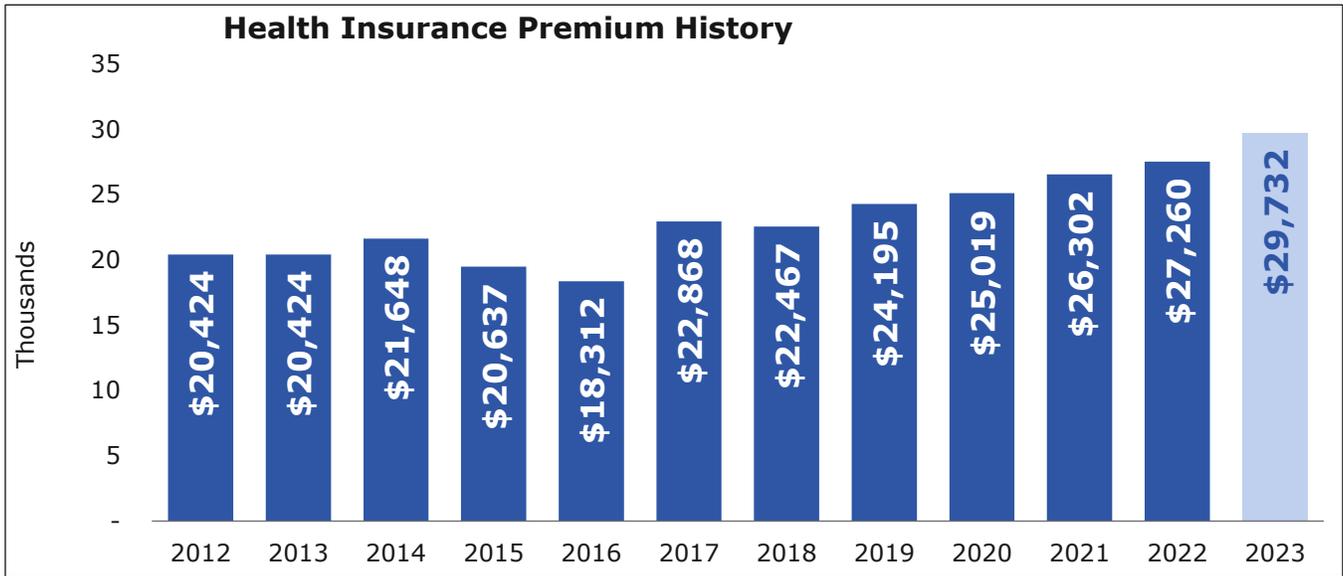
Although enrollment has varied from year to year, the District has grown by approximately 1,648 students over the past decade. Because an increase in the number of students served has a high correlation to operating costs, the District analyzes expenditures on a per-pupil basis, allowing some planned expenditures to be adjusted based on expected enrollment. The attached graphs present data for the District’s largest costs. All years shown are fiscal years, and the dark blue represents audited data, the light blue represents MSBSD’s most recent budget for that fiscal year as of 02/09/2022.



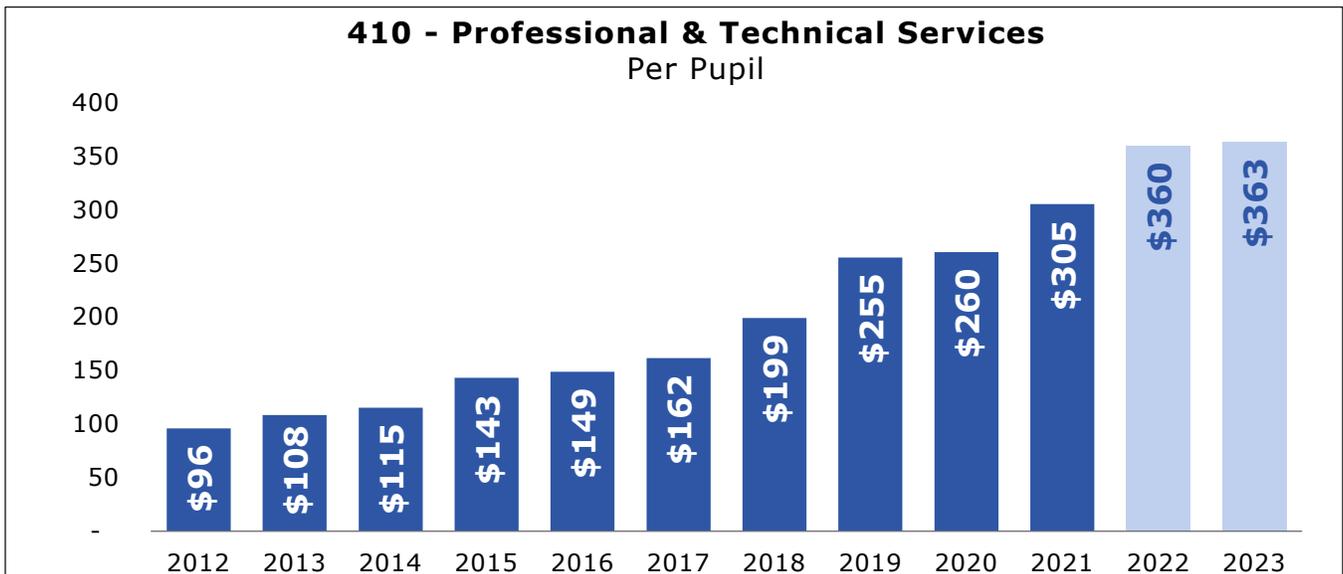
A per pupil comparison of annual expenditures over the last decade shows an overall upwards trend that generally exceeded the rate of inflation. Part of this growth can be directly attributed to increased enrollment, but some costs such as for utilities, energy, and property and general liability insurance, do not necessarily have a direct correlation to enrollment, and instead are dependent upon market rates. Towards the end of FY 2017-FY 2019, the District instituted spending freezes for all non-essential purchases, which did result in reduced expenditures for those years.

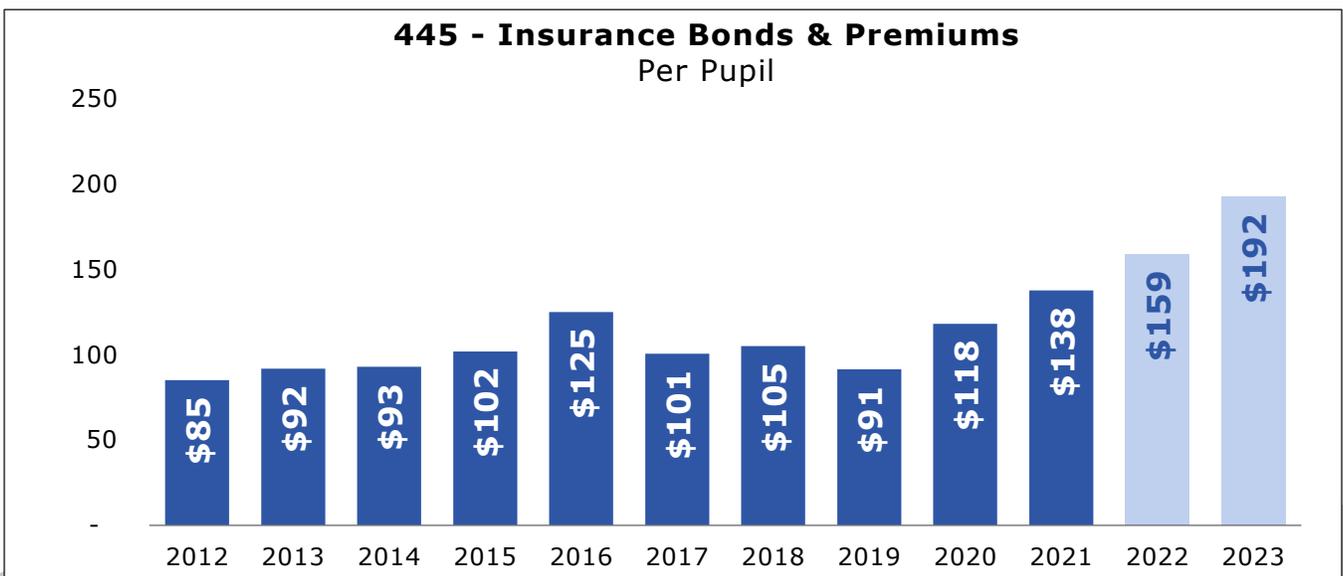
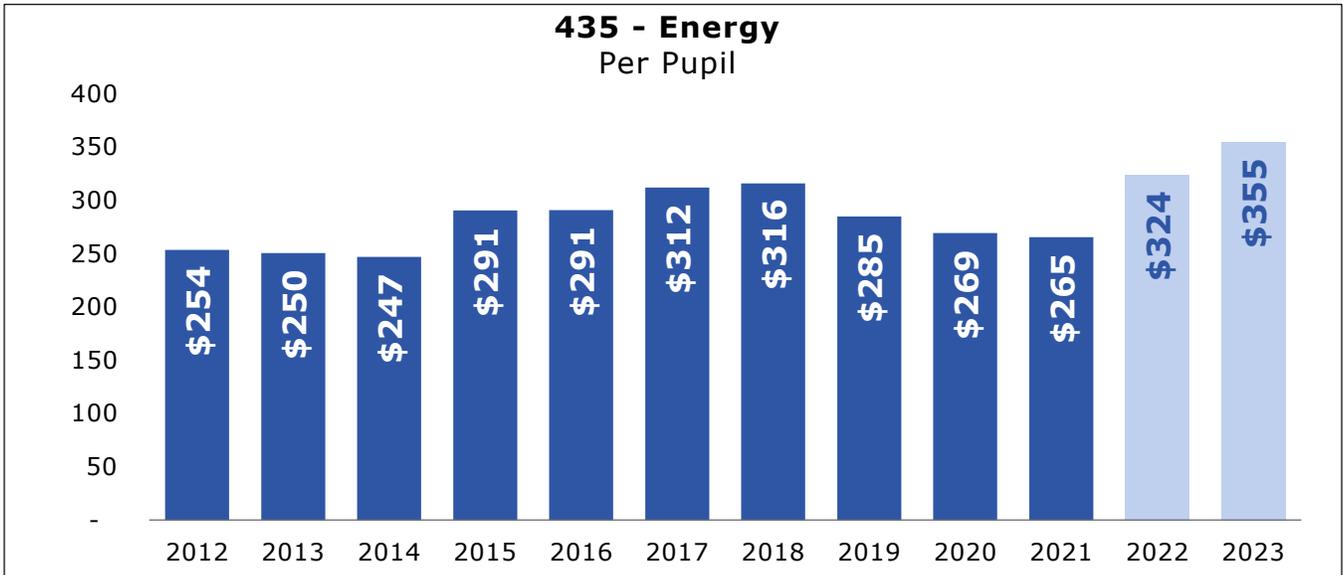
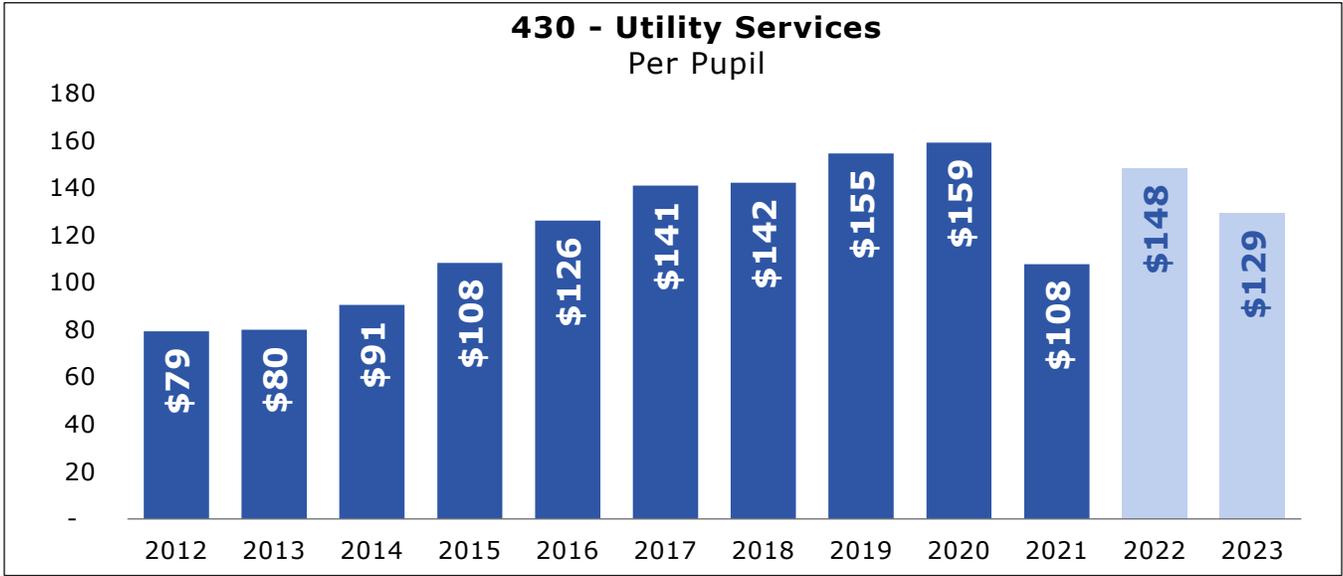


The largest cost driver that strongly correlates to enrollment, but is also dependent upon market costs, is employee compensation and benefit costs, which make up over 80% of total expenditures. Excluding the State of Alaska on-behalf payments, certificated salaries, non-certificated salaries, and employee benefits, have increased by 28% over the past decade. Health insurance premiums, which are the second largest cost outside of certified staff salaries, have increased by approximately 33%. The District has attempted to contain healthcare increased by negotiating shared increases with all employee groups. However, healthcare costs continue to rise.



There have been dramatic increases in the year-over-year expenditures for professional and technical services, largely due to increases in costs for occupational therapists, physical therapists, sign language interpreters, speech language pathologists, and other service providers.





ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS 2022

JOINT POSITION STATEMENTS



Student Achievement
is our **number one Priority.**

Adequate Funding
remains our **most critical need.**

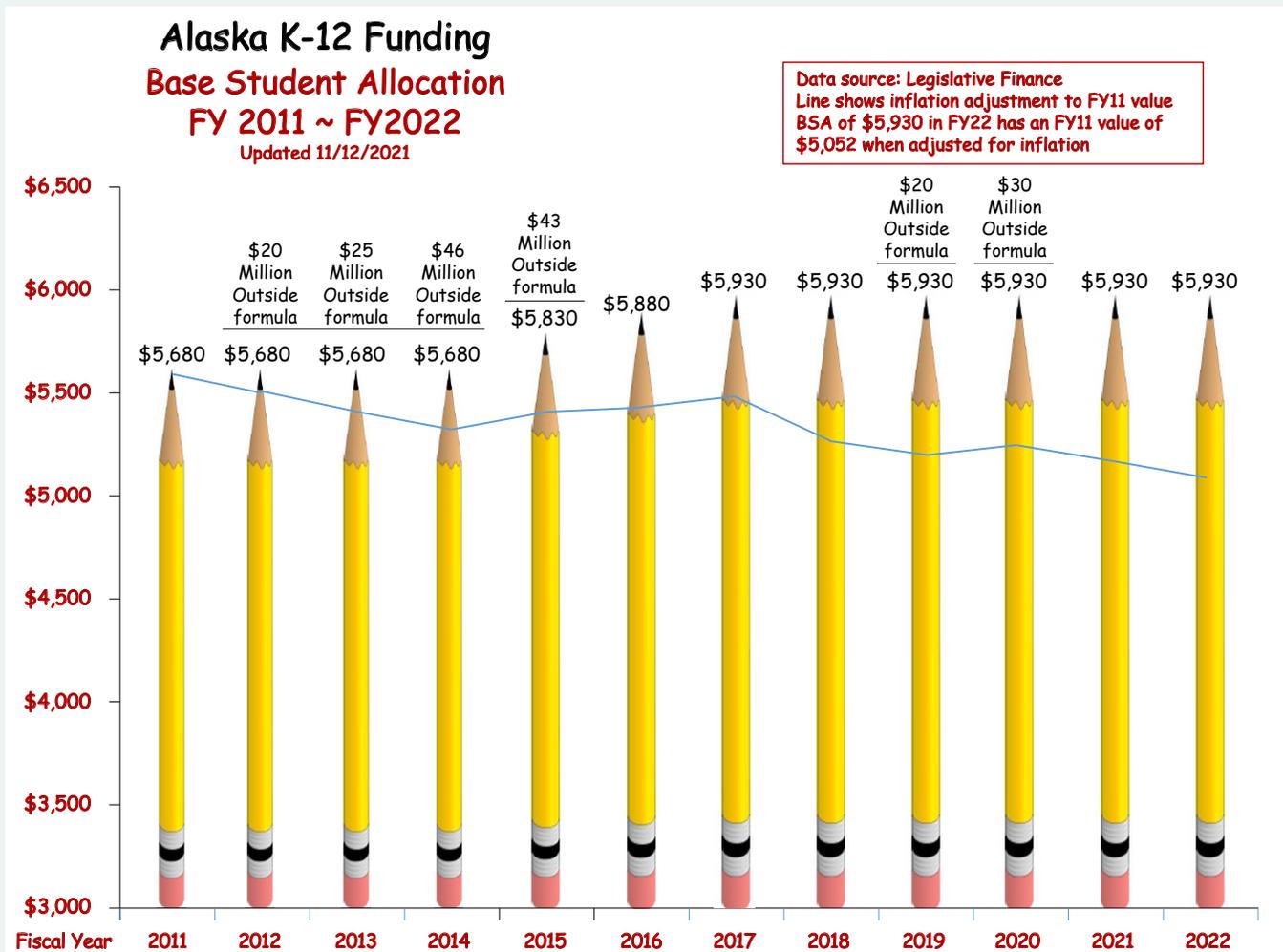
PRIORITY FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

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 and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. Policy makers must recognize the diminishing value of flat funding in relation to inflation. Early notification of funding and forward funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Implementation of a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains imperative to maximize the ability of districts to meet student needs. Diversified revenue streams are critical in the current fiscal climate to address any deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements, while preserving the Permanent Fund Dividend for future generations. For the coming fiscal years, the state legislature must consider options for new revenue, such as new taxation (income, sales, education head tax, etc.), changes in oil taxes, and further restructuring of the Permanent Fund Dividend income stream.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

Federal COVID relief funds should not be used to supplant the constitutionally required funding for public education. State funding should be adjusted with inflation to enable districts to use COVID relief funds to address educational deficiencies caused by COVID rather than be used to maintain existing operations.



COVID-19 ADJUSTED FUNDING FOR FY23

October student enrollment numbers are the biggest determinant of state revenue for districts in Alaska. COVID-19 has caused major enrollment disruptions. Current Hold Harmless statutes provide some relief to districts for enrollment losses in neighborhood brick and mortar schools, but Hold Harmless is intended to ease the burden of a sustained enrollment decline. In the current situation, districts need to be able to staff to serve students who may return to brick and mortar schools later in the school year. Long-term regression of academic, behavioral, and social/emotional growth from birth to university will be significant. These losses will increase the cost of operations through COVID-19 and beyond due to significant recovery needs.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Alaska's students endure extremely high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The impact of COVID-19 has elevated many Alaskan students' ACEs scores. Pediatric studies and CDC studies report positive depression screenings and positive suicide risk screenings increased during the pandemic, as well as an increase in suicide attempts, especially for adolescent girls.

In the journal *Pediatrics*, a study found that from April 2020 through July 2021, around 140,000 children have lost a primary caregiver due to the pandemic. The same study says that Alaska Native children were 4.5 times more likely to lose a primary caregiver to COVID. ACEs brought on by pandemic will have long-term impacts on students.

The trauma felt in our schools is not just limited to students; staff have also felt the impact of COVID-19 on their own social, emotional, and mental health. These issues have connections in other legislative priorities identified, such as attracting and retaining educators and access to health care.

ACSA urges the state to provide funding and resources so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally responsive, school-based mental health programs to foster the health and development of students and provide structures to support the wellbeing of staff.

ACSA supports targeted funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase students' access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development for all staff to meet the increasing and diverse needs of all students.

HEALTH CARE COSTS

Providing health insurance to our employees is essential for retaining and recruiting high-quality staff who can maximize student achievement. Controlling the cost of health care for our essential workers is critical. We encourage solutions to the long-term escalating costs of healthcare and health insurance in the state. We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease health care costs, including such measures as: allowing employers to purchase health insurance policies across state lines, controlling the cost of medivacs, and promoting personal wellness and proactive health care options.

SCHOOL SAFETY

ACSA supports improving the safety and physical and mental well-being of our children, knowing this is critical to increasing student achievement. ACSA supports providing school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. School safety is developed through maintaining effective, positive relationships among students, staff, communities, and tribes responding to local needs.

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. ACSA supports full funding for law enforcement, Village Public Safety Officers, state troopers, and other agencies such as the Office of Children's Services who are trained to work as partners with school districts supporting children.

ACSA supports funding through the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) school construction process for capital projects and major maintenance to existing school district facilities in order to provide students a safe and healthy learning environment. ACSA urges that all safety improvements including air and water quality be made a priority.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

According to the Alaska Developmental Profile, nearly 70% of Alaska's students enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning and reaching up to almost 90% in some communities. This includes over 50% of entering kindergarteners who lack critical foundations in literacy. ACSA supports the definition of elementary education to include universal Pre-K, thus ensuring equitable access to fully funded, sustainable, birth to age five learning programs and nutrition services. This provides a foundation of critical social, emotional, and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates early intervention, instruction and parent education is one of the best ways to decrease opportunity gaps across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade and minimize the dropout rate. ACSA supports adequate, sustainable early childhood education and Pre-K funding as part of the base student allocation.

INCREASING BANDWIDTH IN UNDER-SERVED AREAS

It is critical that we recognize the ongoing and increasing need for Alaska's students, educators, and leaders to have equitable access to the digital world both inside and outside of the school environment. ACSA wants to ensure every student has reliable internet access throughout the pandemic by enacting a moratorium on internet service suspension. Access to modern technology in order to innovate learning, create efficiencies, provide online health services, and keep pace with peers globally is especially essential in rural and under-served communities where infrastructure is extremely limited or non-existent.

ACSA supports continuing the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) in order to ensure all schools are able to access a minimum download speed of 25 megabits per second as this leverages federal E-Rate funds up to a 9:1 match; we support efforts to continue to increase download speed to meet national recommendations. ACSA also supports efforts by the legislature to continue to increase innovative infrastructure capacity through public/private partnerships and statewide consortiums in an effort to provide all communities with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional learning with DEED, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska with educators and industry-based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. ACSA fully supports continued funding for voluntary internships and pre-apprenticeship programs that prepare students for high-earning, high-demand jobs, as well as dual credit offerings that provide opportunities to obtain an occupational certification or credential. These programs give students the opportunity to build future-ready skills and contribute to their local economy after high school. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, tribal, regional, and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving on-time graduation rates, higher career earnings, and decreasing dropout percentages.

PREPARING, ATTRACTING, AND RETAINING QUALIFIED EDUCATORS

Retaining effective educators and leaders is imperative to increase student achievement and eliminate academic disparity for all of Alaska's students. ACSA strongly encourages the development of comprehensive statewide programs to prepare, attract, and retain high quality, diverse educators and professionals. ACSA further recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts along with a renewed commitment to growing our own educators, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, principals, and superintendents.

The national teacher and education shortage compounds Alaska's need to fund a robust educator pipeline with the University of Alaska and create incentives for graduates to stay in Alaska. ACSA supports aligned and accredited University of Alaska Schools of Education. Exploring innovative alternative pathways is paramount to attracting high quality educators to the state and the education profession to address Alaska's unique circumstances. A nationally competitive compensation and benefits package, combined with a robust state retirement system is imperative for attracting and retaining effective educators and leaders.

OTHER STATE ISSUES

Capital Improvement (CIP) funding must be restored. Long-term fiscal planning is needed to maintain and protect infrastructure.

ACSA supports and expects the State of Alaska to fully utilize matching federal grant monies such as those required for Head Start and other early learning programs.

ACSA supports the local control and autonomy of Alaska's communities who are served through all 54 unique school districts.

All of Alaska's schools depend on reliable transportation via air, ferry, or road to meet the critical medical, economic, and basic needs of all residents. As a state with diverse transportation necessities, Alaska must ensure that all communities have equitable access and opportunity to meet those needs. Funding for transportation should be adjusted to match actual costs and inflation protected to ensure continuity of services in future years.

OTHER STATE ISSUES

The state should continue efforts to control the cost of workers' compensation claims, including adoption of medical treatment guidelines, improved management of claims, and an improved reemployment benefits process.

If the school funding formula is reviewed, ACSA strongly supports that it be done by a task force including nationally-recognized school finance experts, with input from Alaska school finance experts.

ACSA supports a non-partisan and independent State Board of Education with the sole purpose of ensuring a quality education for all of Alaska's children.

ACSA is proud and supportive of educational alternative programs, so long as the directive in Alaska's Constitution is upheld: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution. "This restriction includes vouchers and/or any other mechanisms. Our funding system must be transparent, inclusive, and collaborative.

FEDERAL ISSUES

FOREST RECEIPTS (SAFE AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT)

ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the federal government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership. ACSA supports an equitable, long-term solution that supports the many sources of funding for Alaska's school districts. ACSA supports the reauthorization of the Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act, included in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, that would provide funding beyond FY23.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

ACSA encourages the United States Department of Education to continue to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control. Further, ACSA encourages Congress to eliminate discretionary funding caps to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every School Succeeds Act.

OTHER FEDERAL ISSUES

ACSA strongly opposes the use of public money to fund private/religious education through vouchers or other mechanisms.

ACSA supports full funding with cost of living increases for E-Rate, Indian Education, Impact Aid, and all Title programs with no significant program changes.

ACSA supports funding for social emotional learning, social workers, mental health support, school nursing, and birth to age five learning for all.

ACSA encourages the inclusion of legal immunity for schools in future CARES Act and other COVID-19 relief legislation.



ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
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