

Valdez City Schools

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February 6, 2026

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 256—Military-Connected Students

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Valdez City Schools is writing to formally express its strong support for House Bill 256, an act essential for enhancing educational opportunities for public school students connected to the military.

Our city is the proud home of three United States Coast Guard units that provide invaluable service to the Prince William Sound region and the State of Alaska. These families are integral members of our community, and our commitment to supporting their children is a priority. Approximately 10% of our student body at Hermon Hutchen's Elementary School are military-connected children, making this proposed legislation directly relevant and impactful to our district.

We are currently working to achieve Purple Star Status for our elementary school, an effort that underscores our deep commitment to military families. Through our experience working with Coast Guard families, we recognize the critical need for additional support for students who frequently navigate the challenges of relocation, family separation, and transition between disparate school systems.

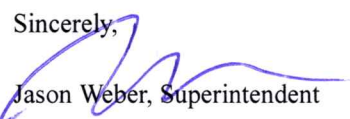
House Bill 256 will significantly strengthen and expand these vital efforts statewide by:

- **Establishing the Purple Star School Program in statute:** Creating a formal, consistent, and statewide process to recognize schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.
- **Creating a Purple Star Funding Factor:** Amending Alaska's education funding formula to provide meaningful financial support for districts where 75% or more of schools achieve the Purple Star designation, applying a factor of 1.75. This incentive is a strategic way to encourage districts to expand support systems while simultaneously bolstering overall educational resources.
- **Improving Transitions for Military Students:** Requiring districts to ensure comparable educational accommodations, including all necessary IEP and 504 supports, are in place on the student's first day of attendance. This is crucial for ensuring continuity of services and minimizing disruption during an already stressful period of transition.
- **Strengthening Statewide Coordination and Support:** Enhancing the role of the State Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and establishing a state-level coordinator to ensure districts have a clear point of contact and effective guidance for successful implementation.

HB 256 is a comprehensive reflection of Alaska's commitment to its military families and provides a thoughtful, pragmatic approach to improving student outcomes through stability, consistency, and the formal recognition of best practices. Valdez City Schools believes this bill will deliver substantial benefits to students, families, schools, and communities across Alaska.

We urge you to support and enact House Bill 256.

Sincerely,


Jason Weber, Superintendent