

Thank you Co-chairs Himshoot and Story and other members of committee

My name is Richard Saville,

I am the Education and Early Intervention coordinator for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE). Through that position I am also an ex-officio member of SESA board of directors.

SESA is an educational services agency providing consultation and training across Alaska for students with limited incidence disabilities. They are authorized to operate by the State of Alaska and their re-authorization comes before the Legislature every 8 years. Typically SESA's funding is increased during this process.

A steady decline of Alaska's Average Daily Membership (ADM), a steady increase in demand for SESA's services, and unprecedented inflation have made it necessary for SESA to seek a funding increase before its next reauthorization in 2029.

Alaska's news source reported on Feb 5th DEED projects the ADM will drop by 1500 more students next school year resulting in another cut for SESA next year.

SESA plays a significant role in helping Alaska meet the federal mandates outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by increasing capacity in rural districts starved for special education professionals.

Many rural districts struggle to find SPED teachers and often those that do are only able to provide those services via distance/online delivery. Many schools must rely on paraeducators who are from the community but have very little specific training in special education or disability awareness. With this as a reality SESA's services are imperative.

By supporting HB 246 and increasing SESA's funding by this relatively small amount, we can ensure continued support for these rural students, their families, and the schools that serve them.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of assistance during this process.

Thank you,

Richard Saville

AK GCDSE