

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Amber Zins <arzins@live.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 21, 2026 9:49 AM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Subject:** ASD Funding

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed reduction of class periods and middle school sports opportunities. These cuts may appear to be logistical adjustments on paper, but for our children, they represent a devastating loss of opportunity during one of the most formative periods of their lives.

My child is in middle school and has developed a true passion for band. Learning a musical instrument has been widely shown to improve cognitive development, increase memory and focus, and strengthen problem-solving skills. Music education is not an extracurricular luxury — it is brain development in action. Because of the proposed schedule cuts, he will have one fewer class period in seventh grade, forcing him to choose between continuing band or enrolling in Advanced Technologies. This is an impossible choice.

Advanced Technologies provides hands-on learning that teaches students how to build, create, and think critically — skills that are essential for real-world problem solving and future careers. Removing the ability for students to pursue both artistic and technical pathways undermines the goal of developing well-rounded, capable young adults.

As an Anchorage employer responsible for hiring the future workforce, I know firsthand that well-rounded individuals are the most valuable employees. We need people who can think creatively, solve problems, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others. Sports play a critical role in developing these skills. Participation in athletics teaches teamwork, resilience, leadership, adaptability to different coaching styles, and effective communication. These are foundational life skills that cannot be replicated in a textbook.

By reducing class periods and cutting middle school sports, we are stripping away the very skill sets that will shape the next generation of our communities.

I understand that funding challenges require difficult decisions. However, cutting opportunities for students should not be the solution. Many employers recognize that organizations often carry excessive administrative costs, and I hear similar concerns from teachers who feel their voices are not being heard regarding where efficiencies could be found. I encourage the district to explore right-sizing models and operational efficiencies that allow schools to operate at higher capacity while preserving student programs.

Middle school students are navigating an intense period of change and development. The classes they take and the activities they participate in during these years often shape the paths they follow — for better or worse. It is critical that we preserve opportunities that guide them toward positive growth, skill development, and community engagement.

Protecting seven class periods and middle school sports is an investment in the strength, resilience, and future success of our community.

I urge you to reconsider these cuts and work collaboratively with educators, families, and the community to find solutions that protect student opportunities.

Respectfully,

Amber Zins

Mother of two ASD kiddos and Chief Operating Officer for Northrim Bank

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

As a parent in District K / 21 and a mental health professional, I am writing with both professional and personal concern about the long history of effectively flat education funding in Alaska.

While the recent increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) is a welcome step, it does not come close to offsetting the cumulative impact of inflation and rising operational costs over the past decade. Since 2017, the BSA has remained largely stagnant while districts have absorbed major increases in fuel, utilities, health insurance, transportation, and staffing. In real dollars, schools are operating with significantly less purchasing power today than they were years ago.

The consequences are visible and measurable. Districts across the state are cutting programs, increasing class sizes, and laying off educators. My child's school, Chugach Optional Elementary, is projected to lose 2 of its 11 teaching positions due to the current budget shortfall.

Chugach Optional is not a high-cost program. It is, in fact, a model of fiscal efficiency:

- It operates without district-provided transportation, saving an estimated \$200,000–\$500,000 annually.
- It does not include an assistant principal, full-time counselor, or reading coach.
- It maximizes pupil-to-teacher ratios responsibly.
- It is already operating at over 100% capacity and maintains an active waitlist.

Programs like this represent strong budget value for districts. Yet even cost-efficient schools are facing cuts.

From a mental health perspective, instability in schools has long-term consequences. Larger classes and reduced student services mean less early intervention, fewer trusted adult relationships, and greater strain on already overburdened systems. Preventative investment in education reduces future costs in remediation, behavioral health, and public safety.

Stable and predictable funding is not simply about increasing dollars; it is about allowing districts to plan responsibly and avoid annual crisis budgeting. That predictability reflects fiscal discipline and supports measurable student outcomes.

I respectfully urge you to build on the recent BSA increase and commit to a sustainable funding framework that restores lost purchasing power and ensures long-term stability for Alaska's students.

Thank you for your service to our state and for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandi Askeland, MS, LPC

Constituent of District K / 21

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Colleen M Bolling <colleenmbolling@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 28, 2026 1:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Finance Committee; Senate Education; Sen. Matt Claman; Rep. Mia Costello  
**Subject:** Please make a meaningful increase to the BSA this session and inflation-adjust education funding into the future  
**Attachments:** BSA buying power\_Bar and Line with labels.jpg

Good afternoon,

**I am writing today to to plead with you to increase the BSA in a meaningful way this session and to set up a long-term fiscal plan to keep sustainable education funding in place through built-in annual inflation-adjustment.** I am grateful for the legislators who voted to override the Governor's veto for an increase during the August special session, but we all know that was a compromise bill that still vastly under-funds education after 15 years of flat funding. **See the attached graph that depicts the drop in buying power since 2011.**

If you haven't already, please take the time to read Ben Walker's op-ed because he clearly paints the picture of our current dire situation with education in our state:

[Opinion: We were honored as Alaska Teachers of the Year. Now we can no longer stay.](#)

### Revenue

I support new revenue streams to help cover education funding including an income tax, an education head tax (HB 152), a re-working of SB 113 to tax companies doing online business in Alaska, and many of the other ideas the legislature has come up with to bring in new revenue streams. It is not enough to say we don't have the money to increase education funding, we have a constitutional duty to provide adequate education for all Alaskans. **I do not support the governor's proposal of a regressive sales tax.**

### Diminish Governor's Veto Power

We have seen the damage that one governor can inflict to undo all of the hard work of the legislature to reach a bipartisan revenue bill, and I also support a resolution to diminish the governor's veto power so the legislature can do their work and have the power to override a veto by an overzealous governor like we currently have. We currently have the highest threshold of any state to override a governor's veto, and this is unnecessary and dangerous for our state. Please balance this power so the legislature can continue to protect the priorities of their constituents.

Thank you for your hard work, and please make education funding the top priority this session.

Sincerely,  
Colleen Bolling  
10830 Kamishak Bay Cir  
Anchorage, AK 99515  
907.301.4522

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Connie Markis <crmarkis@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 30, 2025 10:42 AM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding

I understand that you are tasked with a serious evaluation of Alaska's education system. I'm assuming the purpose is to look for efficiencies, identify duplications and gaps, determine what's equitable or not while trying to manage costs. One of the things I would like to suggest is to ask for evaluation of the outcomes for homeschooling and voucher programs like what is required in the public school system. Currently, there is an imbalance in evaluations in these areas. Because of this, it seems to give more favorable outcomes for the homeschool and voucher programs because they're evaluated on different measures. This creates an inequity and lack of fairness that should be measured for all students.

Thank you for your work to help our students and schools reach their maximum potential.

With appreciation,  
Constance (Connie) Markis

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Diana Johnson <akdianaj@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 10:25 AM  
**To:** Senate Education; Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** Deep Cuts: why can't we afford school nurses?

Senate finance committee,

In light of our schools' budget crises, I sent the following letter to ADN and am sending it to you now so that you can further understand the need for an increased BSA and a BSA funding calculation system that is linked to inflation. I know you're busy, so **I put my direct message to legislators in bold** in the text below.

Sincerely,

Diana Johnson  
2613 Redwood St  
Anchorage, AK 99508

---

Deep Cuts: why can't  
we afford school nurses?

Across Alaska, our school districts face impossible budget deficits and some have already been cutting their budgets and gutting programs for years. Locally, our Anchorage School District (ASD) has finally run out of savings and one-time funding boosts with which to bridge the gap between the flat Base Student Allocation (BSA) and the inflation-driven rising costs of running our schools. The gap is enormous and the proposed cuts are devastating: increasing class sizes by 4, tossing the middle school model, cutting gifted education, removing nurses from schools, cutting special education staff, and dropping school sports. Children will suffer with losses in learning, year over year, in overstuffed classrooms with overstretched school staff. Families with means will move out of state in search of better education, young people will choose to start careers elsewhere, and we'll be looking at a future of decline.

Here in Anchorage, school nursing is just one of many of ASD's proposed cuts, but I am a middle school nurse, so I feel deeply unsettled by it. On one hand, I see ASD's need to trim our budget and that it's no one's fault that nursing is on the chopping block; everything is. On the other hand, my nursing office is very busy and I'm providing an essential service to our community every day of the school year. If I'm not in the building, the nursing work won't go away, it'll just be delegated to our front office or teaching staff without medical training, decreasing safety and increasing stress on staff, students, and families. It's confusing to be busy and essential and also deemed extraneous via budget cut. How did we come to a place of no longer being able to afford a public service as basic as school nursing?

What I gather is that our state's revenues have been in decline and our state government hasn't been able to adapt to that reality in any way but by cutting services. When you cut far enough, you hit essential services like classroom teachers and school nurses. If we want to maintain these essential services for our communities, we either need to cut other services, raise revenue through taxation of one variety or another, or both.

This week, the ASD School Board was able to retain most school nurses and school sports through actions such as closing several elementary schools. These savings were, however, one-time savings and that nursing and school sports will be on the chopping block again and again without a significant BSA increase at the state level; ASD's deficit this year is \$90 million and anticipated deficit next year is an additional \$47 million.

**Legislators from across the state: band together this session, as you did last, to pass education funding. Push to inflation-proof the BSA. Raise revenue through taxation or cut other services if there are any left to cut. Keep in mind that governor Dunleavy, who has vetoed bipartisan education funding**

**bills three times in the last three years, will veto any education funding bill you pass, requiring 45 of 60 of you to again band together to override his veto. (By the way, it was amazing to see so many legislators come together last summer to override Dunleavy's BSA veto. Alaskans appreciate you and see your monumental efforts!)**

**Finally, Alaskans, in the coming state gubernatorial and legislative elections, rank candidates whose records show solid, unwavering support for our kids and our communities. These cuts are too deep. From here on out, let's fund our schools!**

- Diana Johnson is a lifelong Anchorage resident, an ASD graduate, a parent of young children, and an ASD school nurse.

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Emily Johnson <emilyjunerich@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 1, 2026 7:16 AM  
**To:** House Finance; Senate Finance Committee; House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

Dear Representatives,

I am writing as both a special education teacher and a mom. I see every day what is happening in our schools, and it worries me deeply.

Class sizes continue to grow and workloads increase. Teachers are being asked to do more with less, and the pace is not sustainable. Burnout is high. Turnover is high. The teachers who stay are stretched thin not only by their own responsibilities, but by the need to constantly support and mentor new staff coming in as experienced teachers burn out. That instability directly affects kids.

Many of our students simply cannot function in classrooms as large as they are right now. Students with disabilities and many typically developing students struggle in overcrowded rooms. The students who can manage end up losing quality instruction because their teacher is putting out fires all day. No one wins in that environment.

My oldest child starts kindergarten next year. I want to raise my kids here and continue working as a special education teacher. This is where our family lives. Having their support and being able to raise our children in a place with such incredible access to the outdoors matters deeply to us. Alaska is home.

But I am constantly questioning whether we will be forced to move out of state to provide our children a quality education. My husband works remotely. I know I can get a special education job almost anywhere. People want to live in Alaska, but we are asking educators and families to sacrifice too much when it comes to the quality and stability of our schools.

Increased and sustained school funding is crucial. It is about class size. It is about retaining experienced teachers. It is about giving students the support they need to actually learn. It is about whether families like mine can confidently build our future here.

I am asking you to prioritize meaningful increases in school funding this session. Our students, our teachers, and our communities deserve it.

Thank you for your time and your service to our state.

Sincerely,  
Emily Johnson

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Junowyatt <junowyatt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 8, 2025 6:37 PM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Subject:** Elementary Attendance

Hello Task Force on Education Funding,

I am in my 26th year as an elementary teacher in the Juneau School District and my 30th year in education. Over the years I've seen many attempts to improve student learning through curriculum changes, new programs, and professional training. Some of these have helped, some have not. However, one issue has consistently puzzled and frustrated me: school attendance.

I don't understand why more attention isn't given to this, especially at the elementary level where habits are formed.

Teachers like me spend countless hours preparing lessons that many students simply miss. When children are absent, they cannot fully participate, and they fall far behind. There were several students at our school last year that, despite the staff's best efforts, missed over 70 days of school. We were powerless to get those children the education they needed.

Sadly, it seems Alaska students are not truly required to be in school, and often children who want to attend are kept home at the discretion of their parents. I have, on many occasions, talked parents into bringing their child to school or convinced them not to take their child out before the closing bell. It is exhausting. It is also demoralizing when I don't succeed in convincing the parent that school is important.

Under AS 14.30.010(b)(12), parents can legally homeschool their children with no reporting, approval, or oversight. Yet, if they put their child in school, teachers are held accountable for their absence from public education.

A few years ago, I had a student come to my third grade class who couldn't identify all of the alphabet letters having been homeschooled since Kindergarten. We worked hard with that boy and by the end of the year he had grown but it went on my record that he hadn't met grade-level expectations even though it was the parents who had kept him home for so long.

Families can (and do) keep kids home for reasons like oversleeping, taking care of younger siblings, "rest" days, or for minor excuses, and some leave on vacations without informing the school at all. Sometimes we have no idea when the child will return and besides missing instruction, they miss testing that is required for us to prove their growth.

While a few parents request schoolwork when they are gone, most do not ensure their child actually completes it. So, I spend large amounts of time preparing lessons for them to do on their trips but it is time wasted. Even when the work is done, the quality of work lacks the gentle prodding a trained teacher can give in order for a student to work at their highest level.

Students can also be withdrawn for long vacations, sometimes for months, with no accountability. Last year a student of mine transferred to a homeschool program then went overseas for three months. They did no work for the homeschool program and returned to my classroom having lost 4 months of learning. They were a child who was already far behind and the missed days did not help them grow. Every year, I experience students who miss large chunks of school for 2 or 3 separate trips.

There are no state-sponsored truancy officers. Even if the legislature or governor insisted that every district have an officer, I have an idea they would require the districts to pay for them from their own budgets which are already tight. Juneau once had a truancy officer. I am sure they were very effective at the high school but they were very busy and elementary schools were overlooked. In my opinion, elementary school is the best time to form responsible habits of attendance. The responsibility to get truant children to school then falls on the school staff whose employees are already overworked and could use a break from trying to get students to school.

Meanwhile, teachers are often blamed by parents, administrators, and publicly by government officials for “poor instruction,” even though many students have attendance records that make learning nearly impossible.

At its core, this feels like an equity issue. Some families prioritize school, and their children benefit. Others do not, and their children miss out on essential learning and community. And yet the responsibility and accountability for student outcomes always seems to fall on the teachers, while attendance requirements remain weak and unenforced.

I am far enough into my career that I doubt this issue will be addressed before I retire, but I can’t help wondering why Alaska has allowed this problem to persist for so long. From your perspective, why hasn’t there been more effort to strengthen attendance expectations and provide schools with tools, like truancy officers or clearer enforcement, to ensure students are actually in class?

Thank you for your time and for listening to the perspective of someone who has spent decades in Alaska classrooms. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Wyatt  
Teacher, third grade  
Juneau, AK

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Heather Birch <heather.m.birch@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 9, 2026 1:01 PM  
**To:** johnson\_kersten@asdk12.org; Office Of The Superintendent; gustafson\_sven@asdk12.org; jacobs\_carl@asdk12.org; bellamy\_margo@asdk12.org; lessens\_kelly@asdk12.org; wilson\_dora@asdk12.org; donley\_dave@asdk12.org; higgins\_pat@asdk12.org; holleman\_andy@asdk12.org  
**Cc:** Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. James Kaufman; mayor@muni.org; Rep. Chuck Kopp; House Education; Rep. Ky Holland; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please Support our Schools with NEW Solutions and Keep HS and MS Sports!

Email to Anchorage School Board, ASD Superintendent, ASD Leadership, Mayor LaFrance and State Senators/Reps:

My name is Heather Birch and I'm writing to voice my disappointment and frustration with the current budget situation the Anchorage School District is facing and specifically address the drastic proposed cuts to high school and sports and activities & increased class sizes which are unacceptable. As an active participant in PTA and booster clubs and mother of two public school students (my son graduated from South HS in 2024 and my daughter will be graduating this May), I have experienced first hand the gradual but significant degradation of our public school system and supports these past 15 years that my kids have been enrolled at ASD. While our budget situation is a complicated issue that can partially be blamed on questionable spending decisions by ASD over the last decade, it is a well known fact that ALL of our public schools are suffering due to a slow starvation of funding mostly at a State-level, predicated by Governor Dunleavy's misaligned priorities to pay a full dividend at all costs and total disregard of the needs of our public school students and teachers. It's clear he would prefer our school system to fail and for Alaska to move to a private school voucher system. And he used to be a public school teacher! Crazy. Now throw in significant reductions in Federal spending on education and we are facing a crisis mostly of our own making.

It is unacceptable to ask a Kindergarten teacher to manage more than 30 students or for a high school teacher to be able to have meaningful interactions with 40 students crowded into a classroom. The effect is a stressful environment where learning is made difficult to impossible and most kids fall through the cracks. How can our State leaders expect schools to do better with less per-student funding every year when accounting for inflation. In the words of our ASD Superintendent, Jarett Bryant, "even with the BSA increase, we're still behind about \$1,400 per student than where we were back in 2011." Our schools are languishing and declining State funding IS the primary cause.

ASD's solution of cutting Middle School and High School Sports (aside from a few HS sports like football and basketball) is completely unjust and unequitable and the worst possible solution to the budget crisis. Many of the kids who participate in middle school and high school sports and activities cannot afford to play club sports so this may be their only opportunity. Also, involvement in school sports and activities is a HUGE motivation to stay in school and keep grades and attendance up. Why would we ever want to reduce our kids opportunities for physical activity and connectedness, especially when mental health for teens is a nationwide crisis? Sports provide a positive outlet and serve as a protective barrier against depression and anxiety and it would be an absolute injustice to eliminate them for our students. Also, what other state doesn't offer HS Sports like volleyball—one of the most popular sports for girls worldwide right now with the largest participation of any girls sport at

ASD? It would be an embarrassment to our State to not offer major HS sports especially in a city the size of Anchorage. I hope ASD will reconsider their proposal and look for other cost savings and new revenue vs taking this drastic and harmful step.

I could go on and on but finger-pointing won't do us any good—what we need are new and real solutions and leaders with integrity that will put aside partisan politics to do what's right for Alaska's kids and a future generation of Alaska citizens! What new revenue sources can we find at the state and local level, including at ASD to reduce the largest impacts on our students and teachers? I have several ideas that might work:

1. How about a state-wide income tax primarily benefiting education?
2. Couldn't ASD make income from running before and after-school care at all elementary schools? There is a HUGE need in Anchorage for before and afterschool care now that Boys and Girls Club has closed down their services and many families are left in the lurch. This seems like a no-brainer, win-win income option.
3. Could a non-profit like Healthy Futures or ASAA take over running ASD sports and activities and collect donations from businesses and individuals that are earmarked for sports and activities specifically?
4. Could ASD administration consolidate office space and go to remote work with school visits and a centralized meeting space? Could more schools be closed and consolidated? This seems like the biggest cost-saving opportunity if additional revenue isn't an option.

There are many solutions that need to be discussed and hashed out before these budget decisions are made.

And I ask again, **HOW can our State Leaders expect schools to do better with less per-student funding every year when accounting for inflation?** How do we keep our good teachers from leaving and recruit teachers to Alaska when we don't offer stability or the benefits like pensions that are offered at MOST other states? Action is needed at every level to affect real change and help save our public education system. Enough is enough. Take a stand for our schools now— our future success or failure as a State depends on it.

Thank you,

Heather Birch  
Anchorage, AK  
907-317-0015

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** heather anne <hcoletti@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 16, 2026 3:50 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** FUND OUR SCHOOLS and SUPPORT OUR KIDS

The Alaska State Constitution guarantees public education for all of Alaska's children. While it doesn't set funding levels, it implies that schools will be fully funded to guarantee success. How can our kids be successful when classrooms are too full, teachers are forced to teach subjects they aren't trained in (art vs. music, for example), sports are cancelled and special education is diminished. These are just a few examples. The state needs to raise the BSA to support our kids and help them be successful, contributing members of society. Alaska needs our kids to stay in the state and help it grow.

**Raise the BSA. Support our kids. Period.**

Sincerely yours,

Heather A. Coletti, Alaskan resident for over 25 years

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Jamie Miller <jamiemiller15@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 11, 2025 11:51 AM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Subject:** Concerns & comments

Good morning Education Task Force,

I am reaching out to share my deep concern for what is happening to education on the Kenai Peninsula. I am witnessing our local school district strangling certain charter schools while allowing others to breach their contract without facing consequences. One charter school in Kenai scored 8% proficiency in Math, which breaches their contract with the district and they are remaining in operation. Recently Aurora Borealis Charter School tried to amend their charter to expand into a K-12 program. During their work sessions, people that were not on the committee were permitted to make comments and ask questions. This never should have happened. The comments were very negative towards ABCS and no one stepped in to remind this local Administrator that they were out of line, let alone that only those serving on the committee were allowed to participate. Aurora will quickly outgrow their current facility (the oldest building in the district with over \$10 million of deferred maintenance). It is sad to see a district that is losing students, not promoting a successful charter school. In many ways, it seems like the district punishes Aurora Borealis, all the while using their scores to make the district test scores look better compared to the overall state scores. At the last board of education meeting, Superintendent Holland proudly compared KPBSD scores to those of the state, yet made no mention of the top performing charter school in his report. Aurora is a gem and yet our district treats it like a pebble to be kicked to the curb. ABCS has broken windows that are taped shut. We know of many local large (8+ children) families that intentionally left KPBSD and enrolled with IDEA because of what their children experienced in the local brick and mortar schools (exposure to pornography from a fellow student's cell phone at KMS, 23% proficiency in high school Math, bullying and drug use by fellow students that Administration refused to address because the student was considered "high risk".) Parents are unhappy with what KPBSD is providing and rather than humbly looking in the mirror and making meaningful changes, the district continues to go down a road that results in decreased enrollment. My husband and I are trying to be involved locally and make the necessary changes to promote excellence in education and share truthful and honest information about what is happening within our district, however it is becoming painfully clear that KPBSD is not interested in listening to parents. Please know that all is not well here on the peninsula.

If our Superintendent earns more than the Governor of Alaska, I'd expect to see better results and thriving educational opportunities on the peninsula. Our family is considering relocating to Idaho- a state that fully supports charter schools and the fruits are apparent: their charter schools are growing exponentially! Please consider modeling Alaska education law after Idaho, Colorado or Arizona. These are all pro-charter school states.

Thank you for your time, Jamie Miller ( 406.640.8250 I am happy to talk about my concerns)

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** January Frost <jannaberry@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 4:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Fund Our Schools!!!

Hi, I am a mother of five children in Anchorage. I am very upset with the state for not providing the money necessary to account for inflation over the last 10 years for our schools. People in Anchorage are angry, tired, and broken with the measures being taken to eliminate programs and close schools because the money is not available. My own children attend a Montessori program that is being consolidated and moved to another location, thereby ending it for most of the children who live in the neighborhood who will not have transportation to get to the new school. Other well performing schools are being closed with no notice, and fine arts programs, gifted programs, sports, and nursing care is being compromised. This is unacceptable. Our children deserve better.

Eliminating these programs without clear data showing meaningful cost savings erodes trust in the community. Families are already leaving ASD for homeschooling and private schools because they feel unheard and unsupported with many of the poorly thought-out recent changes. Cutting successful programs, fine arts, and sports only accelerates that trend. It seems preposterous that my children will have less opportunity than I had growing up. In this day and age, how is that even possible?

If enrollment is a concern, the district and state must reflect on why families are leaving. Students, teachers, and schools should not be punished for decisions made at the state and administrative level. The current education system is broken and needs to be fixed by sufficiently funding it to reflect the present needs. You will continue to lose people who decide to move or not relocate to Alaska because the school system is a joke and not supported by our state. I would think our children's education would be a top priority for our state. Please fund our schools. Alaska's future may very well depend on the children you are failing.

Best,

January Frost

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Jessika Aldridge <aldridgejessika@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 25, 2026 2:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Urgent Request to Support Campbell STEM Elementary

Hello,

I am writing as a parent of two young boys who currently attend Campbell STEM Elementary, and as a proud alumna of Campbell Elementary myself (1994–2001). My younger brother attended in the 2000s, and even my uncles were students there in the late 1980s. This school has served generations of my family and remains a cornerstone of our community.

Beyond the deep personal connection, I am profoundly grateful that my children have the opportunity to attend a school so intentionally focused on STEM enrichment and real-world application. Campbell STEM Elementary provides an educational model that prepares students not only academically, but practically - equipping them with problem-solving skills, collaboration experience, and critical thinking abilities that will serve them throughout their lives.

As the only STEM-focused elementary school in our state, Campbell STEM fulfills a unique and essential role. Closing it would be a short-sighted decision with lasting consequences - not only for current students, but for the long-term vitality of our local economy and workforce. Strong, forward-thinking STEM programs are not luxuries; they are investments in our state's future competitiveness and innovation capacity.

Campbell STEM serves students who may not always thrive in traditional classroom environments. It fosters curiosity, creativity, collaboration, and empathy at a time when many children struggle with disengagement. The school has built more than a curriculum - it has built a culture. Students are not treated as data points or budget line items. They are known and valued. Dr. Whitt and the dedicated faculty understand each child's strengths and challenges and intentionally cultivate an environment where students feel seen, heard, and capable of success.

Closing this school would not simply relocate students; it would dismantle a carefully cultivated community that affirms children's potential and encourages them to innovate and lead. It would also send a troubling message that specialized, forward-looking educational programs are expendable.

I am equally concerned about the process by which this decision has moved forward. The accelerated timeline, limited transparency, and shortened window for meaningful community input have deepened the divide between families and decision-makers. Despite these constraints, community engagement was substantial - a clear reflection of how much this school matters. The rushed nature of the decision, combined with the recent bond measure intended to improve Campbell STEM, has understandably led many in our community to question whether our voices are truly being considered.

The perception that such a significant decision could be made hastily - and, as described by administration, effectively reduced to a "coin flip" - undermines public trust. Our families deserve thoughtful research, transparent reasoning, and meaningful dialogue before a decision of this magnitude is finalized.

Our city needs Campbell STEM. Our students need Campbell STEM. If we are serious about preparing the next generation to contribute meaningfully to our state's future economy and workforce, we should be expanding access to innovative programs like this - not eliminating them.

I respectfully urge you to push back against this decision and advocate for sustained investment in Campbell STEM Elementary. The future of our children and our community depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jessika Aldridge

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Jim Fredrickson <jimfred13@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 2:00 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for Public Education Funding

My name is James Fredrickson. I have been an Alaska resident for 53 years and have lived in Seward since 1987. I had the privilege of serving in Alaska's public schools for 23 years as both a classroom teacher and building principal.

I was fortunate to serve Alaska's students back in the "good old days" when the State placed a high value on funding public education, making Alaska the envy of the nation as a place to teach and to raise a young family.

Unfortunately, those days have been over for some time now. But it's not too late to reverse course and once again be a state where families want to raise their kids and teachers want to pursue a career in education.

As we near the end of what I call "the dunleavy dark ages," you, the legislature, have an opportunity to do your constitutional duty and pass a budget that adequately funds public education. Please put aside your party politics, your allegiance to oil companies or your support of a governor who favors politically expedient fat permanent fund dividend checks over the welfare of Alaska's children.

It is time for you as a body to stand up for Alaska as statesmen and stateswomen who will pass a veto-proof budget bill that adequately funds public education. You can save school districts from having to cut teaching staffs, drop student programs and even close schools down.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I know you have very difficult decisions to make. I ask that you come together as a body to support Alaska's children and Alaska's future. I thank you in advance for doing the right thing.

James Fredrickson  
P.O. Box 2844  
Seward, AK 99664

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Karen McBride <mcbride\_karen@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 11:54 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Public Education

I urge you to financially support public education.  
I would gladly pay an income tax...  
I would gladly give up my pfd...

I urge you to take money from the CBR, if that is what it takes - tap into savings when facing an emergency.  
No mistake - school districts are in peril.

How can a state attract investment and businesses, when the schools are in crisis?  
Rely on the petroleum industry - of whom a large number of it's workers live and raise their families out of state?  
How can we diversify our economy? More out of state workers? Workers and Employers consider educational merits or demerits before choosing a state to invest and live in. You all know this.

Please make a stand for Alaska - support our educational systems.

I urge you to remember the states constitutional obligation to it's schools, for our collective children.

A grandma, a mom, a nurse, a very concerned citizen who is watching what happens,  
Karen McBride

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Lesley Hammer <hammer.lesley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 9:12 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for your work on the issues important to Alaska.

**I am writing you today with an urgent and heartfelt call to fund education to a level that allows for a healthy and sustained future for the children of our state.**

I am a life long Alaskan who attended elementary through University in Anchorage, I was a high school Chemistry teacher in the Anchorage School District and have children who and now grandchildren who are products/attending Anchorage public schools.

I have watched the slow erosion of education in Anchorage over the past few decades. First it was erosion of the career quality of the teaching occupation, continuing to erosion of education quality due to the teacher shortage / stress and other cost 'saving' measures such as increasing class size. I personally left the teaching profession in 1994 seeing that a future in the profession was looking bleak. Turns out I was correct. That said, I have remained and remain a strong supporter of public education and have chosen to volunteer and monetarily support classrooms directly.

**We now are beyond the process of erosion, and have reached a critical situation where the young parents I am in touch with are concerned that their choices will be to turn to private school or to move out of state.** Due to the annual fights for funding and dire predictions and program slashing to meet budgets, the young that are our future are thinking about giving up. While these families may have the resources to make the decisions to move or pay privately, most do not. We are then choosing to subjugate most of our children to a substandard system in constant turmoil.

Additionally, our family has a three generation construction business and are struggling to hire new employees that have the basic skills necessary to begin training. We are not producing enough students with the education readiness for entry level jobs.

**We must stop the constant fights and bare bones approach to education funding if Alaska is going to thrive into the future.** This is in your hands, fund sufficiently and determine thoughtful ways to evaluate and monitor the results of that funding. Do not rely on a 'test and punish' approach to school success. That is a road toward misappropriated funding. Definitely have expectations, but fund sufficiently first, determine meaningful measures to assess success after a reasonable period of time for results to have impact.

This is a long term game; set goals and fund, continue to support, allow districts to feel secure with their funding, measure the success and areas of remaining need. Repeat. The current approach, create chaos, doubt, discouragement and wasted effort annually has got to stop, or it will crush what is left of education of our future citizens.

I appreciate your attention to this issue, and look forward to seeing what you do to solve this problem moving forward.

Sincerely,

Lesley Hammer

---

**Lesley Hammer**  
hammer.lesley@gmail.com  
907-242-0229



## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Lisa Paesani <lpaesani@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 5:24 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please fund our Schools

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Lisa Paesani, I am apparent of three daughters that have now graduated from Chugach Optional, Central and Romig Middle Schools and West High School. All of our girls are very proud of where they are from and the education they received. I too am grateful. All of our girls played sports. They all continued to play sports and receive both academic and sports scholarships in college. One is now playing professional volleyball in Europe. I am also a volunteer and a clinical social worker. Our girls were lucky having a stable home life but our girls were on sports teams where that was not the case for everyone. Children need positive experiences to develop into their full potential. Sports, arts and theatre programs keep kids coming back to school and realize their potential in a way that just sitting in a classroom or staring at a screen can not come close to. We will lose this next generation if we do not provide a full educational experience. What do I mean by "lose this next generation"? Increased drop out rates, increase in crime, increase in suicide, lower career potentials and just unhappy lives. Some of peoples best part of their life was playing sports in High School. They don't have the money or talent to continue to the next level. This is about making a whole person, a strong foundation for their life, which is what should be our priority as adults, looking out for the best interest for our children. My last point is as a social worker. I have been working with a couple young boys as a CASA for the last four years and I am in the schools a lot. I was in a variety of elementary schools in Anchorage and the consistent thing, is that there are always teachers and staff that truly care about the children they work with. They were always helpful to me trying to help these boys. The schools catch the kids that otherwise would slip through the cracks. Our teachers do amazing work and are hardly compensated. We are losing teachers and Anchorage is losing any belief that anyone cares about kids anymore. Please do everything you are able to do to keep sports and arts as part of ASD's offerings and please do what you can to retain the excellent teachers we have.

Thank you for your work in the Senate.

Sincerely,

Lisa Paesani, MSW

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Mimzy Wellberg <mimzyw518@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 27, 2026 1:47 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** funding Alaskan education

Thank you for serving the public.

I support you in finding a way to adequately fund public education so that ALL children can succeed.

I REALLY support funding our schools at a level that surpasses the inflation rate and meets their financial needs.

I support taking money from the PFD for education and taxing the oil industry at a reasonable level to fund ALL our schools.

Children are our future and deserve the best we can provide

Thank you,  
Margaret Wellberg; retired educator and counselor and grandmother of Alaskan graduates

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Mark <alaskank5@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 21, 2026 7:57 PM  
**To:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Rep. Andy Josephson; governor@alaska.gov; House Education; Senate Education  
**Cc:** felix.rivera@anchorageak.gov; erin.baldwinday@anchorageak.gov  
**Subject:** \*\*\*\*\*SPAM\*\*\*\*\* State Funding Is Forcing Closure of Neighborhood Schools

Senator Gray-Jackson, Representative Josephson, Members of the House and Senate Education Committees, and Governor Dunleavy,

I live in Anchorage, Alaska in the Campbell area. I have a first grader at Campbell STEM and another child who will attend soon.

Campbell STEM is being recommended for closure. Not because it is failing. Not because families are leaving. It is being considered because the district says it does not have enough money.

Campbell performs above the district average in reading and has one of the stronger school index scores among the schools being discussed. Families are engaged. Students want to be there.

This is not a failing school. This is a funding issue.

STEM education is not optional in Alaska. I work in the utility sector that provides critical infrastructure. Every day I see how dependent our state is on people trained in science, technology, engineering, and math. Keeping power generation, transmission, and essential systems running requires those skills.

We should be strengthening that pipeline early, not closing one of the few elementary schools built around it.

My family's roots in Alaska go back decades. My grandfather moved here in the early 1960s and kept generators running in remote Aleut villages before becoming Utilities Director at Adak Naval Air Station. He later worked at the Alyeska Pipeline Terminal in Valdez and managed plant construction projects across the state. My grandmother served as an elementary principal.

Alaska was built by engineers, mechanics, educators, and people willing to invest in long-term infrastructure. That includes human infrastructure.

If the Base Student Allocation had kept pace with inflation and rising operating costs, districts would not be forced to close functioning neighborhood schools. When local districts are cutting schools that are academically performing and supported by families, that signals a structural funding problem.

What is the plan at the state level to stabilize education funding so districts are not pushed into closing schools like this?

I would appreciate a clear response outlining what steps are being taken this session to address it.

--

Mark Norman

[AlaskanK5@gmail.com](mailto:AlaskanK5@gmail.com)

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Megan McBride <megamcb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 9:51 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Funding for schools

I urge you to prioritize increased funding for our public schools. District after district across the state is announcing record budget short falls and looking at devastating cuts. School funding has not kept pace with inflation - there's deferred maintenance that is long overdue - and local resources and district reserves are exhausted.

This cannot wait. Our children deserve better.

Megan  
Mom of Kindergartener, graduate of ASD, former high school teacher  
West Anchorage

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** MICHAEL COONS <mcoons@mtaonline.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 30, 2025 6:44 PM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Cc:** Rep. Jubilee Underwood; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Rep. Cathy Tilton; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Elexie Moore; Sen. Mike Shower; Sen. Robert Yundt  
**Subject:** Education Task Force for Funding

I have watched the task force meeting of the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2025. These are my observations of that meeting.

The most glaring is the name of this task force, it is for funding, not policy. Same with the email address. This is about runaway funding, period.

The socialists and RINO's on this committee want to spend money down a rabbit hole. In the presser upon the start of the special session Senator Steven's and Senator Tobin lauded on how this task force would put forward policies and outcomes. In listening closely to the opening remarks of Senator Tobin, all I heard was platitudes on how this task force would be listening to the stakeholders and the people. Yet in her laying out the meeting of October and November, nothing about policies or ensuring outcomes that would result in students having an education to ensure they could function in the world. In fact, we found out that this task force will be for 16 months. It is painfully obvious that this is a stalling tactic in hopes of the socialist taking the Governors Office and maintain their hold in the House and Senate in the upcoming races.

The following are my takes on the opening comments. Senator Keil's opening comment had really nothing to do with any policy to help our kids learn. Rep Story's opening statement was all about increased funding. I find it laughable that she is now all for the teachers, yet the BSA does little to nothing in retaining those teachers. In point of fact the socialist majority refused any and all

policy bills from the Governor, both in session and in this last special session that would have helped retain and recruit qualified teachers. In the mind of the socialists, the idea of a qualified teacher is one that teaches DEI, CRT, LGBCDQ and no inclusion of other views vs the basics of reading, writing and math and the ability of listening to opposing views! Rep Story ended that the people must feel confident in this task force. I have zero confidence in any real policy and outcome based aspects that will come from this task force.

Senator Tobins comment about looking at different forms of health care will not be discussed until November as an example. Of course, many policies including health care have been put forward and all voted down by the socialists and RINO's over the years. Senator Hughes has put forward solid legislation that combined health care plans throughout the state. Yet, since the unions could not control that, they opposed and the socialist legislators were their lackeys in opposing it. The Matsu School district just implemented a solid health care plan the the unions opposed but the solidly conservative School Board over power the union. Now those teachers have a solid health care plan that is responsive to them and the people of the Matsu.

As to Senator Cronk and Rep Ruffridge. Their comments rang hollow and of course wants to upgrade the funding formula which is more money without positive outcomes for the students. They was picked by the Speaker because they are RINO's and have a voting record of supporting out of control funding vs policy! On that note, not one Republican from the House and Senate that are conservatives and have a history of working positively to making our schools actually have kids graduating with knowledge that will help them being adults that can work are part of this task force! So much for diversity!

Rep Hemshoot again all about funding. No real ideas as to policy.

As to upcoming meetings, no public testimony was mentioned. Testimonies in October and November are all “stakeholders”, all socialist or supporting organizations, with the exception of DEED. All but one, will be pushing for increased spending vs solid policy and verifiable outcome based learning.

As to upcoming site visits, again, nothing as to including public testimony. I seriously doubt if there will be a site visit to the Matsu. Nor will there will not be any meeting with the voters of the Matsu, since you would not be open to listening to the people of the Matsu. Again, total lack of diversity of thought,!

In the slide presentation it was mentioned that AMD's for rural villages are higher due to costs of village schools. As an example, I worked in Hooper Bay right after the arson of the school. With Hooper Bay as an example of course it is! Per Google, there are 399 students. The cost of the new school, completed in 2006 was 25.39 million. Again through google, cost per student \$41,752. The school is 74,000 sq ft! The State spent \$45.39 Million for 399 kids! The ration of teacher to student is 19-1 with a 5% proficiency in reading and math each! Yet we build a 25 million dollar, 74,000 sq ft school and a class size of 19 per teacher with a 5% proficiency rate? Of course this task force is about funding such boondoggles as this and many more!

I challenge Senator Tobin and Rep Hemshoot to have real meaningful public input, prior to and during this upcoming session. Sadly though, as what normally happens you will disregard the voice of the people and do the bidding of the teachers unions, which is only about lining the pockets of the unions.



## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Nicole Gricius <nikki.a.gricius@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 6, 2026 10:57 AM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education; House Finance; Senate Finance Committee  
**Subject:** School Funding Decisions Affect My Family

Dear Alaska Legislators,

I'm writing as a parent and community member to urge you to do everything you can to fully fund our public schools and halt harmful cuts, consolidations, and further degradations. My kids are current students at Paul Banks and West Homer elementary. They swim on the swim team, receive services from the schools, contribute to the community, and have thrived in the KPSD school system.

There's a well-known rule in the outdoors: leave the campsite better than you found it. It's a simple ethic to govern how we show up to care for our public resources, but a powerful one, and I think it applies here. When it comes to our schools, cutting resources does not follow the campsite rule; it leaves lasting harm for the children and communities who come after us. When you accepted a role as a public servant, was that your goal? Is your legacy going to be defined by shutting down vibrant, high performing schools, taking teachers out of classrooms, and leaving everything a little worse than you got it? I hope not.

Our schools are foundational infrastructure, not a line item on a budget. There is no fat left to be trimmed, anything you take away or fail to provide is meat and potatoes. Strong schools define communities: they anchor neighborhoods, attract families, support working parents, and give children stability, opportunity, and hope. When schools are weakened, the effects ripple outward—on student outcomes, teacher retention, family well-being, and the long-term health of the entire area. If you want there to be good doctors and nurses willing to live here and provide care for you in your old age, focus on education of local children now.

There is also a direct connection between school quality and economic health. My own family is part of that story. We chose to move here and invest in this community while holding out-of-state remote jobs *because* the schools are excellent. The lion's share of our income comes straight from the lower 48 and into the local Kenai Peninsula economy, from the Credit Union that carries our mortgage to local spending, property taxes, hockey fees, and the like. The connection between the economic health of the community and the school system isn't vague or theoretical, it is concrete and immediate. If the schools didn't impress us, we wouldn't be here. Do you want to hurt the economy of your local community, or do everything you can to better it?

Balancing budgets and advancing agendas on the backs of children and educators is not a neutral act. In the face of hard choices, be thoughtful. If you are complicit in stripping the schools of what they need to thrive, you are complicit in causing real, preventable harm to your community that may never be undone and that will ripple for years. Also, make sure someone checks your math. If your solutions don't make sense in ten years, they don't make sense.

Fix the dysfunctional budget calendar. Further increase the BSA and improve the formula to account for inflation. Leave things better than you found them.

Thank you for your time and for considering the long-term impact of these choices. Your reply to this message is appreciated.

Dr. Nicole Gricius

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Peter Hoepfner <hoepfner@alaskan.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 13, 2025 2:04 PM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Cc:** Sen. Löki Tobin; Michael Mason; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story  
**Subject:** Maintenance of school buildings comes out of education dollars, a solution to losing classroom funding for deferred maintenance

Dear Education Task Force Members,

Thank you for soliciting comments on the critical issues facing Alaska's schools. I appreciate that the legislature recognizes education has been chronically underfunded over the past 17 years, with only a 5% funding increase during that time.

I write to address the serious consequences this lack of funding has created, particularly regarding school infrastructure.

### SCHOOL BUILDING CRISIS

Communities consistently prioritize teachers, educational materials, and student services over buildings. When forced to "tighten their belts," districts face impossible choices: defer maintenance in hopes of future funding, or cut student services to fix leaky roofs?

Every district now has significant deferred maintenance. According to the National Council on School Facilities, states should spend 4% of total school building value annually on capital projects. With Alaska's 500 K-12 schools valued at \$9.4 billion, we should be investing \$374 million per year.

Instead:

- Capital spending dropped sharply after 2014 (following SB 21's \$2 billion oil tax cuts)
- A TEN YEAR moratorium on school construction began in 2015
- Last legislative session approved \$38 million, but Governor Dunleavy cut \$25 million,

leaving just \$13 million—a mere 3.5% of recommended funding.

### COMMUNITY AND SAFETY IMPACT

Schools serve as community hubs and emergency evacuation centers. Allowing buildings to deteriorate puts lives at risk and eliminates safe gathering spaces during crises. (Noting LKSD currently, with typhoon remnants hitting Kipnuk and how the school has more people in the building as an evacuation center than lives in Kipnuk)

### THE COST OF DELAY

The ten-year construction moratorium has been counterproductive. Construction costs have escalated dramatically, making deferred projects far more expensive. Bans and moratoriums don't solve problems—they amplify costs and create greater financial burden for the state.

### A PATH FORWARD!! **A SOLUTION!!**

I urge the legislature to establish a dedicated School Facilities Maintenance Fund with consistent, protected annual appropriations. This would ensure predictable funding for districts to **plan** capital projects, prevent small problems from becoming expensive emergencies, and ultimately saving state

money by addressing maintenance proactively rather than reactively. Such a fund would demonstrate Alaska's commitment to safe learning environments and fiscally responsible governance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pete Hoepfner

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Robin Mulvey <robinmulvey@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 7:42 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Prioritize Education Funding

Hello Alaska Legislators,

My name is Robin Mulvey and I am a constituent living in Juneau, AK. Both of my kids attend public school at Auke Bay Elementary School. My husband taught second grade for the Juneau School District prior to his death from cancer in 2020.

I am writing to urge the state legislature to increase funding to compensate for inflation over the past 15 years. The lack of proper school funding has disrupted important programs, such as the TED program that my son was apart of until the program collapsed to nothing. This fall I worked as a substitute teacher while furloughed from the federal government. I was shocked by the low pay, which could not provide me with a living wage to cover basic living expenses for our single-income family. I treasured my time I. The classroom. It was hard, rewarding, important work and the low hourly rate reflected a low value for education i. Our community and our state.

Please do better for our students and the dedicated teachers and support staff that make the schools run. The future depends on our decisions today. Show what you value by funding public education!

Sincerely,  
Robin Mulvey  
10100 Silver St  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907-500-4962

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Samantha Evans <samanthaaa.evanssss@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 22, 2026 10:33 AM  
**To:** Task Force on Education Funding  
**Subject:** Special Education PreK Access

Dear Members of the Education Funding Taskforce,

I am writing as a parent in the Fairbanks North Star Borough to share my perspective on special education funding and what meaningful support currently looks like for my child and our family.

My son is enrolled in the special education preschool program in North Pole. He has a rare syndrome that causes childhood blindness and requires vision services as well as orientation and mobility support. In addition, he experiences developmental challenges related to speech, communication, and daily life skills. While he does not have behavioral or intellectual disabilities, he does require consistent and specialized support to access his education alongside his peers.

Like all children, my son has the right to receive special education services in an inclusive environment with peers. However, the reality of what is available has made this extremely challenging. At this time, the only special education preschool classroom option available to him is predominantly structured for children with highly complex behavioral needs, needs that my son does not have.

After extensive discussion and careful consideration with his IEP team, it was determined that he would only attend the special education classroom only one half day per week, which is outside of the typical preschool special education model. This decision was not made lightly. We were concerned that increasing his time in a classroom that does not reflect his peer group or needs could result in him picking up behaviors that are not appropriate for him and cause regression in skills and behavior.

At the same time, one day per week is simply not enough. For the remainder of the week, we have placed him in a private preschool setting so he can continue be around his peers, but he does not receive the special education supports he needs in that environment. As a result, there is a significant gap between what he requires and what is realistically available through the current system.

If the goal of the special education preschool program is to ensure that children are supported and prepared for kindergarten, I do not believe the current structure is effective for all students, particularly those with more “typical” developmental profiles who also experience a number of physical disabilities such as vision loss and mobility issues.

We also see the strain this places on educators and staff. It is clear that many care deeply and want to do more, but are limited by staffing shortages, funding constraints, and rigid program structures. Too often, we are told that “this is just the way things are,” even when everyone involved recognizes that the system is not working as intended.

I am grateful that the Education Funding Taskforce exists and is taking the time to listen to families and educators. I strongly urge you to prioritize special education funding and to explore alternative preschool program models and classroom options that better reflect the wide range of needs among children with

disabilities. Families like ours should not have to choose between inadequate services and environments that are not appropriate for our children.

Thank you for your time, your work, and your willingness to consider the lived experiences of families navigating special education in Alaska. I appreciate the opportunity to share our story and hope it can help inform meaningful improvements for all students.

Warmly,

Samantha Evans

North Pole, Alaska

Parent and Advocate

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Sara Beth Ignizio <sbskrein@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 8:14 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

Greetings Senate Finance Committee Members,

I am a proud parent of a kindergartner in Anchorage at Inlet View Elementary. As our son is new to the public school system, we didn't know what to expect at the start of the school year, especially with all the uncertainty surrounding school funding and resource allocation.

We were pleasantly surprised to discover that the kindergarten classroom sizes at Inlet View Elementary were smaller than we anticipated. This small classroom size has made the transition to elementary school a joy for our son. He has thrived, is engaged and excited to go to school each day.

I have had the pleasure of volunteering a few times in his class, and it is clear to me how instrumental the small classroom size is for all the students. The individual attention they get from their teachers is invaluable, especially for the youngest of learners.

I appreciate the work that went into supporting education throughout the State of Alaska last year, despite vetoes from the Governor's office. However, I ask that you commit to increasing the BSA to take into account the past 15 years where inflation was not taken into consideration. This cannot be kicked down the road to another year, it must be addressed now in a manner that provides school districts, teachers, and parents with the security to focus on quality education for all of our students.

Thank you for your dedication to the education of our children.

Sara Beth Ignizio (Kenai Central High School Alumni)  
3207 Woodland Park Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99517  
307-699-2318