

From: [Meghan Johnson](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Written Testimony for Senate Bill 52
Date: Sunday, April 09, 2023 9:34:30 AM

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members

I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 52. I am a former special education and early intervention teacher. I have worked for local school district and early intervention programs at the local and state level. My current role allows me the pleasure to work with individuals from the public and private sectors and from several state departments (Department of Education and Early Development) and Department of Health) to help advance the access to high quality early childhood programs regardless of funding (Head Start, Pre-Elementary, and Community Based Child Care). I'm hopeful about the new pre-elementary supports available through the Alaska Reads Act which schools who provide high-quality pre-elementary programs would be eligible to access the BSA funding to assure continued support for pre-elementary which is strongly associated with children being better prepared for school and life.

The lack of BSA funding over the past several years is having a negative impact on children, families, teachers, and schools. Increase class sizes due to lack of education professionals and lack of professionals to support children, families, and teachers with supports such as access to counseling and/or coaching to help process the day to day stressors associated with increased class size, lack of materials, and increasing social and emotional stressors. COVID has severely impacted everyone's mental health but prior to COVID Alaska had one of the highest percentages of high ACE scores among children in the country. Top off these stressful conditions with BSA funding that has not kept up with inflation.

I am not proposing schools take on the full weight of supporting children, teachers, and families emotional help, rather that each public and private partners play a role in assuring Alaska has healthy communities, children, families, and organizations. Increasingly stressed teachers, children and families means need for more community resources. Healthy would include: sufficient access to educational, mental health, health, housing, food, etc. This includes our schools, teachers, counselors, and support staff being healthy and able to provide a high quality educational service and learning environment not plagued with children standing in back of classroom because there aren't enough desks, or students sharing books because there aren't enough materials, or teachers, counselors, and support staff spending more hrs than usual to compensate for the lack of materials, resources, and stressors their students have which in-turn increasing their stress levels.

I greatly appreciate teachers, counselors, and support staff and their amazing dedication to their profession, but if Alaska is to retain and recruit more teachers, counselors, and support staff Alaska needs to put increased funding behind a non-partisan value and belief: "children are our future and while parents may be a child's first teacher, educators, counselors, and support staff play a valuable role in shaping the minds of children and young adults." It is often a teacher, counselor or even a janitor who adults look back on as being an influential figure in their lives.

Please help Alaska to have healthy strong communities where children, families, educational staff, and public & private (non and for profit) agencies can thrive. The State educational funding formula plays a vital role in the funding needed to assure children, schools, and educators can play their role in helping Alaska's communities be the best we can be.

Please increase the BSA formula to fund what is needed now in 2023-2024 and would continue to grow and sufficiently adjust to meet annual inflation rates.

Thank you

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