

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Angel Hayes <angelhayes@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:52 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Literally on my knees begging

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you on behalf of all Alaskan school districts. Never have we needed help financially than now. I believe the one time BSA increase of \$1000 needs to be voted in, for such a time as this.

Teachers are quitting jobs they were born to do because of burnout, and frustration. As the cost of living has risen over a year ago my district has not been able to give pay increases to meet the need, show their appreciation or show that they value their staff members. Students are suffering from the loss of some of the most gifted instructors in the United States of America. Students are not meeting their full potential and going the route of homeschooling. They are not being challenged to critically think and to strive for high quality work. Their education from home is a basic Abc, 123, rhetoric. New concepts and ideas are being excluded leaving students at a huge disadvantage. Alaskan students matter, and so do their teachers! Help alleviate the load off of the teacher's backs so that they can focus on what they do best; TEACH! And help Alaskan students by providing them with the very thing Alaska promises them; HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION!

Increase the BSA. Alaska is depending on you to do the right thing!

Angelica Hayes  
Paraprofesional

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Marka Anne Brooks <brooks.markaanne@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:16 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Marka Anne Brooks  
**Subject:** Alaska Education Funding

Senate Education Committee

First of all, thank you very much for your work on behalf of Alaskans. I am writing to encourage you to raise the base student allocation by at least \$1000. I would very much like the increase to make up for the years of cuts and inflation, but understand it is a challenging proposition. Our most important resource are our children. Our most important service to those children is to provide them with an education. We need to attract the best, brightest and most innovative teachers. Without providing them a competitive salary and benefits, we cannot keep them in Alaska. We need to continue to provide a strong public school system.

The need for funding does not end with public schools, but also extends to the University and beyond. I am an engineer and years ago worked to increase engineering and STEM education funding so we can grow our own engineers. At the time, it was estimated that it cost thousands of dollars (\$75,000 comes to mind) to recruit and train an engineer to work and move them to Alaska. As employers quickly found out, these engineers often did not stay in Alaska, but moved back to the lower 48. The reasons were many, but it became obvious that we needed to educate our own.

The same is true for teachers, truck drivers, engineers, scientists, health care workers, lawyers and many other essential jobs in Alaska. We need a comprehensive review of wages and salaries to find a way to pay competitive salaries and benefits.

We have become a state of its all about me, it's all about me getting the largest pfd. If we lowered the size of the pfd and funded services, especially the important employee benefits that retain people in Alaska, we would greatly help Alaska and future generations.

To find the money, let's not fund another mega project, or buy into the carbon credits idea. Let's find a way to get our fair share of our oil and mining resources. Perhaps not is not the time to increase salaries to key state officials when we've cut or eliminated so many jobs.

Anne Brooks, P.E.,  
1704 Rogers Park St, Anchorage, AK 99508  
brooks.markaanne@gmail.com  
907-242-6405

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Anna Polonowski <annawaan@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:47 PM  
**To:** gov.alllegislators@alaska.gov; Education; gov.pressoffice@alaska.gov  
**Subject:** Please Raise the BSA!!!!

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

I support the Jan. 30th 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

As a parent, I have deep concerns about the impact that large class sizes, teacher shortages, and program cuts like language immersion will negatively have impact my children as students and your community.

Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive to students, teachers, parents and our communities at large.

Do you expect better morale and performance in your workplace while treating your employees with disrespect and demand your employees work more hours for the same pay???

Please raise the BSA!

Anna Polonowski

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ashley Dewey <ashley.dewey@k21schools.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 24, 2023 12:19 PM  
**To:** Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Sen. Matt Claman; Sen. Forrest Dunbar; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. James Kaufman; Sen. Scott Kawasaki; Sen. Jesse Kiehl; Sen. Kelly Merrick; Sen. Robert Myers; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Mike Shower; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Löki Tobin; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Sen. David Wilson; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Jennie Armstrong; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. Ashley Carrick; Rep. Julie Coulombe; Rep. Mike Cronk; Rep. Maxine Dibert; Rep. David Eastman; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Zack Fields; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Alyse Galvin; Rep. Andrew Gray; Rep. Cliff Groh; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Kevin McCabe; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Donna Mears; Rep. Genevieve Mina; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Josiah Patkotak; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. George Rauscher; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Calvin Schrage; Rep. Laddie Shaw; Rep. Will Stapp; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Louise Stutes; Rep. Jesse Sumner; Rep. Cathy Tilton; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski; Rep. Sarah Vance; Rep. Stanley Wright; Senate Education; Senate Finance; House Education; House Finance  
**Subject:** What's the Point?

What is the point of anything?

What is the point of eating?

What is the point of working?

What is the point of exercising?

What is the point of educating?

What is the point of learning?

What is the point of building?

Building our homes, our families, our communities?

The point is tomorrow. People carry on, to be ready for tomorrow. Tomorrow is the immediate future, but there is a distant future. That distant future has our Kindergarteners grown and running businesses and towns. They will be your medical providers, your military members, your teachers...

Is the future important to you? Do you care about the place you call home? The country as a whole? It all starts with that Kindergartener. And every day and every year- counts. It is not just about SEEING the value. You must INVEST in the value for it to reach full potential.

Alaska schools are sorely under-funded. Inflation hasn't been considered. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, your future will be impacted if we don't take the investment in our children's education seriously.

Basic Student Allotment needs to be raised.

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Ashley Dewey

Fawn Mountain Elementary - Health Aide

(907) 228-2201



*Gunalcheesh, to the first people of this land. We pay respect to those, past and present, who have stewarded Tlingit Aanii since time immemorial. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional first people of this land, the Saanya Kwaan and Taanta Kwaan.*

## Michael Mason

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**From:** pastorino@gci.net  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:24 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB52

I am a retired educator and have personally experienced the year-to-year chaos brought about by lack of and uncertain educational funding. My kids and grandkids all attended schools in the Juneau School District, and I have taught both in Juneau and Anchorage; and I can assure you that our students would do better if the stress for teachers regarding funding was not an issue and they were able to actually adequately plan from year-to-year. Crisis management for education must end. Raising the BSA is not only a wise decision, it is long over-due. Raising it \$1,000 would provide stability that is so desperately needed. Using general funds meant for the classroom to fun other needs should not be an option. The classroom is where teaching and learning happens for our children. They need to be our number one priority; they will be making these difficult decisions in the future. So, I ask you to consider and support SB52. Thank you for your service, and, particularly, for your interest and support for education.

I hope I am not too late for this; I was traveling.

Barbara Pastorino

Juneau Resident

907-500-2390

## Michael Mason

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**From:** btyndall <btyndall@protonmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 5:15 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Dear Senator:

I am contacting you today in opposition to SB 52. Throwing money at our ineffective education system has not helped in the past and will not do so at this time. We need accountability and proof of outcomes attached to any money we send to our schools. Most of the allocated funds go for administration rather than the classroom and that is a travesty.

Alaskans continue to pull their children out of our public schools and are moving toward homeschooling with much better outcomes.

Please reject raising the BSA this year and put in place a system that will actually fix the problems.

Thank you,  
Barbara Tyndall  
North Pole

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Benjamin White <whiteb@sitkaschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:54 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Hello Education Committee,

My name is Ben White and I wanted to send a quick message **strongly encouraging** you to support senate bill 52. Alaskan schools and their students need this funding to provide the best education possible for the future of our state! I also asked that you support the January 30, 2023 memo from the legislative budget and audit committee that indicated that the BSA would need to be raised by **MORE** than \$1000 to restore public education funding to levels from eight years ago!

Please, please, invest in the future of our great state by investing in the students of our great state! Thank you for your time and commitment, it is greatly appreciated.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Beth Short-Rhoads <bethshortrhoads@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:10 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Sen. Bert Stedman  
**Subject:** Please support SB 52

Dear members of the Senate Education Committee,

I'm writing with strong support for SB 52 and raising the BSA for Alaska's schools. As a parent who has seen the impact that education has on the entirety of a child's life, it is astonishing that the BSA has been stagnant since 2017. Inflation alone has made the current funding level shockingly outdated and equivalent to not merely flat funding but a sizable funding cut.

One real-life casualty of this cut to education funding in Alaska is our middle school library here in Sitka. This library no longer has a librarian and is open for a very limited amount of time each day. At a time when students should be learning how to do research and use new technologies for the 21st century, children at Blatchley Middle School have almost no library access and zero access to a trained librarian.

Alaska's schools can't continue to lose funding year after year and still educate our kids in a way that makes them competitive with the rest of the country. Please pass SB 52 and raise the BSA.

Thank you for your service,

Beth Short-Rhoads  
Sitka

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Robert Love <bjmelove@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:53 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Re: Senate Bill 52

Alaska Legislators ,  
Just want to communicate what big supporters of the \$1000.00 per student for the BSA. As retired Alaskan Teachers who put in three decades in working with students we see the need for increased resources.  
Thank You for what you do!  
Bob & Jan Love

Sent from my iPad

## Michael Mason

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**From:** wxjunkie@juno.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 14, 2023 8:19 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I oppose SB 52

Dear Senators,

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 52, raising the BSA by \$1000. I have followed the trend in per pupil spending and proficiency rankings for several years now and find it appalling that there is a lack of accountability in the State education system. Alaska routinely ranks in the top seven states in the amount of money spent per student. However, it ranks in the bottom 5 states in proficiency rankings

(<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=2&sub=RED&sj=AL&sfj=NP&st=MN&year=2022R3>).

With such a discrepancy noted by the Federal Government, I cannot help but question where all of the money is currently going in the State's school systems. Having worked in the local school district, I know a lot is spent on administration, yet teachers sometimes have to go without essential supplies. This crisis needs to be addressed before any additional funding is granted to school districts. Each district must be held accountable and audited to make sure that the vast majority of funding goes toward a student's education, rather than lavish benefits for administrative staff.

Sincerely,

Aaron Stierle  
6515 Reconstruction Rd.  
Fairbanks, AK 99709

My name is Brandy Harty, and I am life long resident of Fairbanks and a proud product of its local public schools. I am a mom to two elementary-aged students enrolled in our local public schools, a certified Special and Elementary education teacher, and a current member of our local School Board.

My husband is a civilian medivac pilot and member of the Alaska Army Guard. As an aviator, we had many options as to where we could choose to live and raise our family. He was not originally from Alaska, but due to the excellent education I was afforded as a student here and the access to world-class outdoor recreation, we chose to raise our family here.

However, that choice to remain in Alaska becomes harder to make each year. As both the product of our local schools, an educator in them, and now a parent, I have had a front-row seat to the steady decline in the services and quality of educational offerings due to seven years of flat funding our schools. As a child, I had a robust offering of music, art, and after-school sports and activities. I came from a low-income home, accessed our free and reduced lunch program and still was able to play the drums in band starting in 3rd grade, learn the fundamentals of art from teachers like Mr. Lentine and be a member of a competitive jump rope team started by our PE teacher... and all of this was just in elementary school! It was this amazing world-class education that inspired me to become a teacher myself.

The current reality of our schools stands in stark contrast to what I received as a student in Fairbanks 30 years ago. The school where I attended elementary, Joy School, was closed last year due to budget cuts. The elementary art program I remember so fondly was eliminated last year as well. There is no more Orchestra or Band in our elementary schools. Programs like my jump rope team are few and far between because we cannot pay educators well for the additional contract hours needed to sustain them. In short, my own children are receiving an education nowhere near the caliber that I did.

The proposed \$1000 BSA increase is an excellent start, but even an increase of that size will just cover current programs without providing any needed funds to bring back what was lost or provide meaningful and well-deserved pay increases to our educators. Alaska has a teacher recruitment and retention problem, and we will not be able to find staff for our schools without being willing to invest in our educators both through salary and retirement. I thank you for your time and commitment to Alaska and its students. Please know that the decisions you make here will have a profound impact on every community in Alaska. Please put Alaska's children first by increasing the BAS to no less than \$1860.



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Brian Smith <brmsmith6@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 3:25 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for increasing the Base Student Allocation

Hello,

I tried to call in to give my testimony, but the provided phone number didn't work, so I am emailing my testimony instead.

I just wanted to add my voice to those calling for increasing the Base Student Allocation by \$1,000 or more. Our great state needs to fund education as a priority, and we can't expect to maintain a strong education system without at least funding it to a level to keep up with the pace of inflation.

To provide our personal perspective: My wife and I moved our family from Washington state to Alaska two years ago. She is a (phenomenal) public school teacher, and she had to take a pay cut to move jobs from WA to AK at that point in time.

In the two years since we moved, the pay gap between her previous position in WA and her current position in AK has widened significantly because WA has increased teacher pay to try to keep pace with inflation, whereas AK has not.

If we as a state want to attract and retain high quality educators in the long term, we need to properly fund education. Increasing the BSA is the way to do this.

Thank you for your time.

Brian Smith  
405 S Nordic Dr.  
Petersburg, AK

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Carly Lehnhart <calehnhart@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 6:23 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increasing BSA

To whom it may concern,

My name is Carly Lehnhart, and I have been a kindergarten teacher for the Juneau School District for 10 years. I was born and raised in Juneau, I got my masters in Education at the University of San Francisco, and came back to Juneau to teach. I chose to come back to Juneau, because I love the unique qualities of Southeast Alaska, and the connectedness of this community. I would love to stay here in my community and continue to teach in the place I was raised. I love teaching and come from a multi generational family of teachers, but in the last 2 years I have found myself questioning if this job is sustainable for me. I am not alone in this. Teachers are leaving, leaving the profession, or leaving the state to go teach somewhere else. With flat funding for education and inflation rising 21% since 2017 it is breaking our school systems down. Wages have not kept up with inflation, teacher retention is low, programs are being cut, support staff is being cut, and prices are rising for every item on the schools budgets. We are at a breaking point. The continued cuts to education funding are unacceptable. I have watched our class sizes rise to 40 in our middle schools, and to 28 in my kindergarten class with very limited para professional support if any at all. These are our babies, they are 5 and they deserve to have an adult who has the capacity to listen to their stories, zip their coat, tie their shoes, help them learn to read write, etc. This is not what is best for our kids, and not sustainable for our state and our future. Teachers can't sustain these levels of stress, and the students are seeing it and feeling it every day. Is that what we want for our children and the future leaders of our community? This is directly connected to the BSA. I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students. I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago. We need to value our future, and to do that, we need to fund our schools.

Thank you,  
Carly Lehnhart

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Carol Carman <d29@mtaonline.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 17, 2023 3:21 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA

House and Senate Education Committee Members,

I have recently learned the Senate Education Committee plans to increase the BSA by \$1000 this year, which would increase the education funding by more than \$500M. The increase is actually more per student because there is a decrease of 2000 students.

Our state doesn't have the extra money to spend especially during a recession. The State Education department has requested a \$30 per student increase, which is still more than I like but definitely more reasonable.

**How about holding School Districts accountable to successfully educate our children rather than continue to give them more money?**

A good thing for you to do would be to reorganize districts. We have 56+ districts and administrative costs for each. Hawaii has 1 district with twice our population. I think we should have 2 districts: rural and bush (road system and off road communities), as their needs are so different, but similar to other communities in those two types of region.

Sincerely,

*Carol Carman*  
*D29 Chair*  
[d29@mtaonline.net](mailto:d29@mtaonline.net)  
*907-746-8670 (home / msg)*  
[Facebook](#)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** casey mapes <YAK2YOU2@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 3:45 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Yvonne Baker; Carol Pate  
**Subject:** SB 52 comment

Hello,

My name is Casey Mapes, I am a member of the Yakutat school board of education in Yakutat, and I am a concerned parent of an Alaskan student .

I wish for my comment to be considered regarding SB 52, which moves to increase the base allotment per student. AASB's request for an increase of not less than 860.00 per student, is the barest of minimums that should be considered. It is my personal feeling it should be a good deal more than this amount. Inflation has more than doubled nearly all expenses in Yakutat in just one year's time, meanwhile, the per student base has remained flatlined without a raise at all since 2017. This is absolutely unacceptable. We have a responsibility as Alaskan adults whom, many of us were given an opportunity to receive a good quality education here in this state. We owe it to paying this forward to the next generation, and we absolutely are not doing so at this time. I can attest that without this proper funding, our school budget has suffered tremendously. We are forced as a district to not fill much need positions, that would have diversified the classes offered to students, or has caused us to double, even triple classes under one teacher. This is just not the right way at all for us as a people. Education simply HAS to become paramount in your budget planning, if we are to remain a functional society into the future. Give our kids the best education we possibly can, and it will pay in spades, every time.

In addition to giving a fair and solid raise to the base per child allotment, I feel proper consideration should be given towards an additional offset to outlying bush communities that have less children enrolled than bigger schools, and also have an even much steeper inflation rate. Because these kids come from small districts, does not, and should not mean that they should receive less opportunities to access quality education. Fuel is many times more expensive here, housing for teachers is also, our district is struggling. As a result, so are our students testing scores. They aren't given a fair chance to succeed in the secondary schooling system.

Please, make Alaskan kid's education first, Thank you in advance for taking my comment to heart, and giving it fair consideration.

Casey Mapes

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Martin Niemi <cmniemi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:05 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Public School Funding

I support raising the BSA by at least \$1,000 as the LBA Committee reports is needed to restore Public Education to funding levels from 8 years ago. Flat funding is not supportive of our students & thereby unacceptable. Also, I support restoring defined benefit retirement plans for teachers (TRS) & other school employees (PERS) to recruit & retain staff. It's time to stop punishing our public school students & staff.

Thank you.

Christine Niemi from Douglas, Alaska  
& grandmother of 3 young children who are future Alaska public school students.

## Michael Mason

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**From:** CJ Koan <CJ.Koan@pm.me>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 18, 2023 11:18 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Stop the BSA increase!

Senate Education Committee Members,

Please stop the increased spending!

I have recently learned the Senate Education Committee plans to increase the BSA by \$1000 this year, which would increase the education funding by more than \$500M. The increase is actually more per student because there is a decrease of 2000 students! Why do the schools need more money with less students? Why do we keep rewarding poor outcomes? Why are you not looking for ways to hold the school districts accountable for poor performance?

Our state doesn't have the extra money to spend especially during a recession. The State Education department has requested a \$30 per student increase, which is still more than I like but definitely more reasonable.

Sincerely,

CJ Koan  
Wasilla

## Michael Mason

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**From:** D A <davidcharlesalexander@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Public Comment Bill SB52

I am writing in support of increasing the Base Student Allocation by \$1,000. The BSA has not had a significant increase in many years. As a direct result, our schools are currently underfunded and our borough (Denali) is being forced to consider closing two community schools.

A quality public education system is a key element in attracting and retaining residents to our community and to our state.

Please support this increase to the BSA.

David Alexander  
Denali Park, Ak 99755

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Dawn Adams <dawnadams@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 10:53 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB 52 and BSA increase

Dear Senators -

Thank you for your service to the current and future citizens of Alaska.

As a school board member in the Denali Borough, our board like many others is struggling with balancing our annual budget with our commitment to doing what is best for the students.

I am writing to advocate for increasing the Base Student Allocation and tying future increases to inflation. The AASB resolution for an increase of at least \$860 would go far in helping our district to meet our commitment to students and teachers.

Without a BSA increase we are faced with the reality of needing to close schools which will crush the hopes of families in those communities. No community school will diminish the interest of future families to move into those areas if their children are faced with long bus rides to attend a brick and mortar school.

Please make up for the impact of inflation after 6 years of flat funding. Our borough assembly has maxed out it's financial support, we have to look to the state to fulfill its responsibilities to the children.

Respectfully yours,

Dawn Adams  
Seat G, District 4  
Denali Borough School District



## Michael Mason

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**From:** deb.naspinsky@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Deborah Naspinsky  
<deb.naspinsky@everyactioncustom.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 25, 2023 11:00 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please vote YES on SB 43: Sex Ed

Dear Alaska Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to encourage you to support SB 43, the bill to require sex ed in Alaska schools.

Young people deserve age-appropriate, medically accurate information about sex, reproduction, and concepts like consent, respecting boundaries, and who to turn to for help. However, many students in Alaska do not have access to the information and skills they need to protect their health and safety because public schools in Alaska are not required to provide comprehensive or medically accurate sexual health education.

Over 90% of Alaskan voters agree that sex education should be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and should cover healthy relationships, consent, and communication skills.

Please support young people in Alaska by voting YES on SB 43.

Sincerely,  
Mrs Deborah Naspinsky  
23345 Muley Cir # 670088 Chugiak, AK 99567 deb.naspinsky@gmail.com

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Dominic Canale <dcanale@denaliborough.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:32 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Written Testimony Public Hearing SB 52

To the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Dominic Canale and I live in the community of Cantwell, AK. I also serve on the Denali Borough Assembly representing the community of Cantwell, District 1 seat A.

Please accept this email as written testimony in SUPPORT of SB 52, increasing the Base Student Allocation by \$1,000 to \$6,960. This increase in funding is critical for the Denali Borough to maintain viable public education for all communities served by the Denali Borough School District (DBSD). Without this increase, DBSD is faced with a critical shortfall in funding for FY2024 that could likely result in the closing of not only the one school here in Cantwell, but also the school in the community of Anderson 75 miles to the north.

The closing of the school in Cantwell (and Anderson for that matter) will have potentially devastating consequences for our community as families that cannot afford to transport their children to Tri-Valley School in Healy approximately 45 miles to the north will have no other option but to move out of the community in order to seek viable public education. People should not be forced to move from a community due to a lack of available public education as a result of the State of Alaska not fulfilling its obligation to appropriately fund public education. With a priority of providing higher PFD checks to Alaska residents rather than directing those funds to providing critical services like education, it is apparent these priorities are not aligned to what residents of Alaska truly need. If the logic is that higher PFD checks will provide residents the income they need to pursue private education, that logic is sorely misguided.

The Denali Borough has fully maintained its commitment to provide its share of annual funding capped by federal statute at 23% of annual revenue despite a significant down turn in our revenue base (overnight accommodation taxes driven by seasonal tourism) during the pandemic years 2020-2022. But without the State of Alaska as true funding partner, the Denali Borough alone cannot close the funding gap with a flat Base Student Allocation year over year.

So I respectfully request the State Legislature pass SB 52 and increase the Base Student Allocation by \$1,000 to \$6,960. Doing so will not only maintain viable public education throughout the Denali Borough but also ensure our rural communities like Cantwell and the city of Anderson can thrive as well.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Dominic Canale  
Assemblyman District 1, Seat A  
Denali Borough

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Edelweiss Serlin <edubak82@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 24, 2023 9:21 PM  
**Cc:** Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Sen. Matt Claman; Sen. Forrest Dunbar; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. James Kaufman; Sen. Scott Kawasaki; Sen. Jesse Kiehl; Sen. Kelly Merrick; Sen. Robert Myers; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Mike Shower; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Löki Tobin; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Sen. David Wilson; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Jennie Armstrong; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. Ashley Carrick; Rep. Julie Coulombe; Rep. Mike Cronk; Rep. Maxine Dibert; Rep. David Eastman; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Zack Fields; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Alyse Galvin; Rep. Andrew Gray; Rep. Cliff Groh; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Kevin McCabe; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Donna Mears; Rep. Genevieve Mina; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Josiah Patkotak; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. George Rauscher; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Dan Saddler; Rep. Calvin Schrage; Rep. Laddie Shaw; Rep. Will Stapp; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Louise Stutes; Rep. Jesse Sumner; Rep. Cathy Tilton; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski; Rep. Sarah Vance; Rep. Stanley Wright  
**Subject:** Increase BSA

Dear Sir or Madame,

I am writing to ask that you support and vote to increase the Base Student Allocation. The BSA has not been raised since 2017 and has NOT kept pace with inflation. To not raise the BSA is short-sighted and creates consequential long-term impacts. Without increased funds, my district is looking at significant losses in student learning and well-being due to layoffs of highly talented young teachers and program cuts, a brain drain of talent and skill in teaching when laid-off teachers leave the state or profession, and long-term cost increases caused by deferred building maintenance. It is absurd that in a district and state where there is a teacher shortage in the best of times, we are facing layoffs. I humbly say that I have a talent for teaching and have invested significant time and resources into my own growth as an educator as I strive to be the teacher I want for my own children. But I am facing the harsh reality of possible layoff as a non-tenured regular education preschool teacher. My district has put forth a plan to lay off non-tenured staff if funding doesn't come through from the state. This presents a huge brain drain of talent and enthusiasm for teaching. I can't afford to sit around in layoff status and will be forced to look for employment elsewhere. What then? I absolutely love teaching and it would break my heart to have to tell my students' families I cannot be their teacher next year. It is high time the legislature increases the BSA and now more than ever it is needed. I am asking you to increase the BSA and consider the value of public education and show your support for the future of our students and communities through a quality education that can only be achieved through proper funding.

Thank you, Gunalchéesh, Háw'aa, Nt'oyaxsn!

Edelweiss Serlin  
Preschool Teacher  
Fawn Mountain Elementary School  
Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District  
907-523-5266  
[edubak82@gmail.com](mailto:edubak82@gmail.com)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Elizabeth Bagley <elizabeth.a.bagley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 8:02 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for raising the BSA

Dear elected officials,

Thank you for serving Alaskans.

I write to you today to ask you to support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources needed to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaska's students.

I support the January 30, 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than \$1000 to restore public education funding levels from eight years ago.

As a parent of 10 and 13-year-old boys, I ask that you support their educational opportunities and the opportunities of all Alaskan students.

With gratitude,  
Elizabeth Bagley

510 O Cain St, Sitka, AK 99835  
608-358-0664

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Eric and Tricia Miller <millerstead@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:29 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase student base allocation

I am writing in support of increasing the student base allocation. We would like to see class sizes decrease and more aides and counselors available to help the teachers who have an incredibly difficult job. Providing for the myriad ways that individual students learn and process cannot be achieved with large class sizes and no aides. I do not want to see an exodus of amazing teachers from the profession because we choose not to support them. I would rather my PFD support my family's school than support snow machine and gun sales. Thank you. --Eric Miller, Fairbanks, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** PSD Superintendent <supt@pcsd.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 11:56 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB 52

Good morning from Petersburg, Alaska. My name is Erica Kludt-Painter and I am the superintendent in the Petersburg School District. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 52, which would provide a \$1,000 increase to the Base Student Allocation for the upcoming 23-24 school year. Thank you for your forward thinking and strong acknowledgment of the financial challenges school districts are facing around the state. The BSA has only seen a \$30 increase from the \$5930 amount in FY17 to the projected \$5960 amount in FY 24. Your support in raising the BSA will provide the necessary resources to recruit and retain quality teachers, implement lasting intervention services and enrichment programs, meet the requirements of the READS Act, and sustain academic growth for all Alaskan students. This additional funding is a powerful step toward leveling the playing field for students struggling to recover from Covid learning loss, and will provide relief for districts facing astronomical fuel and electricity costs.

Thank you for your courageous leadership in supporting Alaska's public schools during this challenging time.

Respectfully,

Erica Kludt-Painter, Superintendent

*MISSION: Petersburg Schools will advocate for continuous growth, promote a healthy environment, and provide diverse educational opportunities where all students achieve.*

Erica Kludt-Painter  
Superintendent  
Petersburg School District  
P.O. Box 289  
Petersburg, AK 99833

Phone and Fax: 1-877-526-7656

E-mail: [supt@pcsd.us](mailto:supt@pcsd.us)

Website: [www.pcsd.us](http://www.pcsd.us)

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Erin Hollingsworth <e\_holli@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 1:02 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 base student allocation

Dear Senators,

I am writing in strong support of SB 52. Alaska is in the midst of an educational crisis. Districts are not financially supported at a level that is sustainable. Inflation has driven up the cost of everything and it is Alaskan students who are being hurt. The funding has only increased \$30 in the past 5 years. In today's dollars, \$30 does not purchase much, even less in the bush.

A failure to increase student base funding will have detrimental impacts on the state in the future. The potential brain drain and economic toll is huge. Families are leaving the state, looking to find educational advantages for their students. Alaska used to have the highest paid teachers, with only the most qualified professionals tasked with educating our students. Now, it feels like we are lucky if our schools are mostly staffed and our children have the ability to ride a bus a few days a week. This is not how the system should function. Our children deserve better.

Base allocation needs to be addressed. Children need to be our priority. This is a bipartisan issue. All parents want what is best for their children. All parents want their children to have the most advantages heading into life. I am not a parent, but I see the benefit in funding education. Today's students are going to be my doctors, lawyers, senators - they are the future and I strongly support investing in Alaska's future. Please move forward with properly funding Alaska's public education system.

Quyanaq. Thank you.

Erin Hollingsworth  
Utqiagvik, AK 99723

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Gaye Wright <piglet\_1956@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 11:50 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** PFD

We already have a portion of the state budget that is for the education budget. So now instead of tightening your education belt, like the rest of us have to do, you are stealing more money from the PFD amount!!!! Our Education is going downhill and all you people know how to do is give them more money!! Some of us don't have kids in the school system and we are still being gouged by a group of people who have no clue how to spend money wisely or cut their budget like the rest of us need to do from time to time!!! Instead of acting like no one depends on the PFD to pay bills or buy fuel for the winter, how about realizing that a lot of Alaskans need that PFD to actually make it through the winter!!

Stop playing games with money and care about the effect it will have on the rest of the citizens of this state!!

Gaye Wright  
Piglet\_1956@hotmail.com

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S22+ 5G, an AT&T 5G smartphone  
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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Glenn Cravez <Glenn@cravezlawak.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 6:35 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support SB52

I support increasing the SBA by at least \$1000. Alaska vastly underfunds education, which undercuts our future. If we're serious about growing our economy we must make Alaska an attractive place for young families to live, as it once was.

Thank you. Glenn Cravez. 2810 Kingfisher Drive, Anchorage 99502.

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Grant Guy <gguyak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 3:18 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support SB52

To Whom it May Concern,

I am in support of Senate Bill 52 and raising the BSA. While I would like to see an increase of 1200 dollars to at least keep education funding in line with inflation, I recognize that our state's revenue is limited. As a parent with two students in public school, I am very concerned about the huge increase in class size over the past ten years. Class sizes have increased by an average of 4 students over the grade level bands. I have a daughter at West Valley High School and next year the PTR will be 32. My son is a middle schooler and his PTR will be 30. That is entirely too many students to have in a single class period. Not only does it become untenable for the teachers trying to manage the behaviors of that many students, they can not provide meaningful, exciting instruction. How can we continue to expect teachers to do more with less and then wonder why our test scores are lower? Having visited classrooms in both of those schools, the physical space hasn't changed and yet we want to try to shove 32 students into a classroom. My son had a class where there is not enough room for every student to have a desk and students are forced to sit on the floor. My daughter rushes to her classes at the High School so she can have a desk as well. This is unacceptable and not what I want for my kids or any other student in Alaska. We need to increase the BSA and while 1000 dollars is not enough, it is a huge step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Grant Guy  
1211 Tammy Terrace  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
99712

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Hannah Dolphin <HDolphin@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 4:39 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Increase

Good Morning,

I am writing to you as the assistant principal of Mountain View Elementary in Kenai, Alaska. Like many schools, we have been appreciative of the additional funding that came with COVID relief and Governor Dunleavy's one-time additional funds. As you may know, these funds cannot sustain us moving forward in Alaska's education.

Anyone who is paying attention to the climate of education nationwide knows that teacher recruitment and retention is at an all time low. We are battling with states and districts all over the country for teachers. Teachers are leaving the profession before retirement. Our high-quality veteran teachers are still recovering from the effects of a global pandemic. Teacher stress levels are at an all time high. The state is doing some wonderful things for education including the passage and implementation of the Alaska Reads Act. However, with changes comes more load on teachers' backs. My teachers are looking at a new literacy curriculum, new assessment system, and new record keeping practices, which are all great things, but the learning process takes time and effort.

My district's greatest cost is in paying employees a livable wage and providing benefits. When we are operating with a deficit in the budget, positions are lost and the pupil/teacher ratio goes up.

Teachers are already striving and working relentlessly to ensure students are learning. At the start of the year, my fifth grade teachers had students who were just starting to learn how to read and students who are reading at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade (or higher) reading level. We have students who are transferring in who have never been to school before. We had third graders start who could not identify their letters. My teachers are experts at differentiating instruction, providing intervention support, and personalizing learning, but at some point the lift is too heavy, and students don't get the highest level of instruction they can. As class sizes rise, and teacher numbers decline, student learning will decline as well.

We need adequate funding to ensure teachers are supported in their positions. They need a reasonable class size. We need specialists like interventionists, tutors, and counselors to help negate the negative academic and social/emotional effects that stemmed from the previous years of functioning in a global pandemic. Teachers need a livable wage in the face of inflation. Teachers are taking on a lot to ensure that students' needs are being met. It is time that we look at teachers' needs so that we can retain these quality teachers and continue to provide high-quality education to our students in a rapidly changing world.

Please help Alaska retain and recruit high-quality teachers and staff members by approving an increase to the BSA. The future of our students depends on it.

*Hannah Dolphin*

**Assistant Principal**  
**Mountain View Elementary**

**(907)283-8600**

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Heather Bardarson <hbardarson@protonmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 11:08 AM  
**To:** Senate Education; House Education  
**Subject:** Advocacy for Seward's Pool

March 12, 2023

Greetings from Seward,

I have lived in Seward all my life. My husband also. Like most Alaskans we were born in Anchorage but Seward has and always will be our home. In the time that we have grown up here we have seen many things come and go from our community. Lately, it seems, most things are leaving creating less and less opportunities for our community and the next generation of Seward children. My husband and I have three beautiful children: Freja (10), Bjorn (8), and Elsa (6). Our entire family has learned how to swim in the Seward High School Pool thanks to Miss Sylvia Ingram who was a constant and steady pool manager until her recent retirement this last year. Thanks to Miss Sylvia, I am the first woman in my family to learn how to swim. Now all of my children know how to swim thanks to opportunities provided by Miss Sylvia's persistent swim lessons and the presence of the Tsunami Swim Club. My two oldest children, Freja and Bjorn, have been on the Tsunami Swim Club since 2021. This last Friday, Elsa, my youngest, swam a full lap across the pool for the first time AND jumped off the diving board. Elsa has recently excelled after multiple swim lessons, and will be able to tryout for the team later this month. I cannot tell you how much joy it brings my husband and I to see all of our children swimming in the pool! It took a lot of time, money, and dedication to get to this point. Neither of us were good swimmers and we were never in the Tsunami Swim Club ourselves. The fact that we can provide something for our children that we didn't have or didn't have the financial means to be able to experience is also a big accomplishment for us. We chose swimming for our children for a number of reasons: swimming is a lifelong sport, it can save a life, if not your own, and a big plus for us Alaskan parents is that it is a activity that can be done year round regardless of the weather outside. In Seward, the Tsunami Swim Club is the only after school sport for my children's age group that is available nearly year round. For a mom of three high energy children, this was the only activity that I could find that was consistent for my children, safe, and appropriate for the developmental stage that they were in.

In the last ten years, I can recall three times that the Kenai Peninsula School District has threatened to close our pool due to lack of funds. Despite the excellent management of our local pool, the abundant use of it by community members, the opportunities for teaching generations of Sewardites how to learn a life saving skill, AND the fact that our little pool produced a Olympic Gold Medalist, Seward's only pool is yet again on the chopping block due to financial constraints. Seward Schools provided a wonderful education to my husband and I. As alumni and long Seward residents, we both agree that Seward Schools cannot afford to lose anything else. Losing the pool would be a HUGE blow to our community and may very well be the catalyst for many families to leave Seward for good. In addition to being the first woman in my family to learn how to swim, I am also a first generation college student all thanks to the opportunities that the Kenai Peninsula School District provided for Seward Schools. My husband and I are so thankful for the opportunities that we both got to experience at school and we hope that our voices will help bring strength to all leaders on the Kenai Peninsula who are in a place that can fiercely advocate further for our community at a state level. It is clear that the Kenai Peninsula School District needs further funding in order to meet the needs of our region's next generation of Alaskans. In conclusion, I implore you to be strong, courageous, and steadfast on pursuing further funding for future Alaskan educational opportunities. Seward, in particular, can no longer continue to persist in this constant state of cuts that will limit access to a better future. Please do not close or discontinue more educational or sport related resources in Seward Schools.

Thank you for all that you do for all the communities on the Kenai Peninsula,

Leif and Heather Bardarson

Seward High School Alumni 2005 and 2004

P.S. I attached a picture of my two oldest children, Freja and Bjorn, right before starting the Tsunami Swim-a-thon. The Tsunami Swim Club raised over \$30,000.00 this year thanks to the Swim-a-thon! I also attached a picture of my youngest daughter, Elsa, jumping off the diving board for the first time.









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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Heather Conn <hconn@pcsd.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 4:11 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support SB 52

Good morning from Petersburg, Alaska. My name is Heather Conn and I am the principal at Stedman Elementary in the Petersburg School District. I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 52, which would provide a \$1,000 increase to the Base Student Allocation for the upcoming 23-24 school year. Thank you for your forward thinking and strong acknowledgment of the financial challenges school districts are facing around the state. The BSA has only seen a \$30 increase from the \$5930 amount in FY17 to the projected \$5960 amount in FY 24. Your support in raising the BSA will provide the necessary resources to recruit and retain quality teachers, implement lasting intervention services and enrichment programs, meet the requirements of the READS Act, and sustain academic growth for all Alaskan students. This additional funding is a powerful step toward leveling the playing field for students struggling to recover from Covid learning loss, and will provide relief for districts facing astronomical fuel and electricity costs.

Thank you for your courageous leadership in supporting Alaska's public schools during this challenging time.

Respectfully,

Heather Conn, Principal

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Heather Conn, Principal

Stedman Elementary School

[hconn@pcsd.us](mailto:hconn@pcsd.us)

877-526-7656

<http://www.pcsd.us>

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** heathermcgee.ak@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Heather McGee  
<heathermcgee.ak@everyactioncustom.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 26, 2023 8:19 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please vote YES on SB 43: Sex Ed

Dear Alaska Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to encourage you to support SB 43, the bill to require sex ed in Alaska schools.

Young people deserve age-appropriate, medically accurate information about sex, reproduction, and concepts like consent, respecting boundaries, and who to turn to for help. However, many students in Alaska do not have access to the information and skills they need to protect their health and safety because public schools in Alaska are not required to provide comprehensive or medically accurate sexual health education.

Over 90% of Alaskan voters agree that sex education should be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and should cover healthy relationships, consent, and communication skills. If the state feels compelled to regulate abortion, the least it can do is take the steps to require the type of education that reduces the need for abortion in the first place.

Please support young people in Alaska by voting YES on SB 43.

Sincerely,

Ms. Heather McGee

7635 E Woodview Way Palmer, AK 99645-8956 heathermcgee.ak@gmail.com

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jasmine Maurer <jazmaurer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 7:45 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase K-12 school funding

Hello,

I am writing to express my support of increasing K-12 school funding. Our students and Alaskas future deserve access to funding to support excellence in education through well trained and supported staff, music, art, and STEM classes activities.

The Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage concluded that by 2019, even though Alaska pays more than any other state on a per-student basis, the cost of living here is so high that once that factor is included, public schools here received less money than the national average.

Don't delay another year increase school budgets now.

Thank you

Jasmine

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jason Gasper <jgasper0114@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 23, 2023 4:31 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Rep. Andi Story  
**Subject:** Responsibility to the future generation of Alaskans

Dear Committee Members,

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of funding education to the maximum possible amount. I moved to Alaska in 1997 and found the Alaskan community to be great for families and it was clear State politicians generally seemed to value education at that time. Alaska was heading in a good direction. However, having attended the university system during a long-period of fiscal/political change (UAF PhD 2011, UAS BS 2002, and 1 year at UAA) and now having a family of my own, I feel that support for education has eroded. This is demonstrated by a reduction in funding for our public schools (once inflation is considered), leading to a university and public school system in crisis and annual crisis management at both the State and local levels.

I believe this crisis is, in part, fueled by political rhetoric I hear from certain State reps and past actions by the Governor. For example, the recent statement by Representative Eastman about child abuse is appalling and could not believe what I was reading (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64726727>), but was also, sadly, not surprised to see this come from an Alaskan republican. While that is an extreme example, less extreme examples abound, such as the horrible forward-funding lawsuit that happened because K-12 wasn't going to be adequately funded (e.g., <https://www.dermotcole.com/reportingfromalaska/2019/11/8/dunleavy-counts-on-alaska-amnesia-as-his-strongest-political-ally>). Clearly forward funding was a problem based on the court ruling, but the fact it got to that point demonstrates the dysfunction. All this self-serving political rhetoric sure suggests that families are held in contempt by some conservative parts of this State (assuming their representatives are representing) because families require both funding support and constitutionally mandated government services. Unfortunately, the message that we all benefit from our education institutions doesn't seem to make it into the rhetoric or dialog I hear from some Representatives.

Taking care of our future and our families requires funding beyond just distributing a PFD or sending kids to private/home schools. The "accountability" argument I often hear conservatives use when linking to funding holds no water either- I see what goes on in the classrooms. We have many dedicated and excellent teachers that need funding, and I see the growth in kids due to the work of these teachers, support staff, and our education institutions everyday. It sure would be refreshing to hear discussions from the hill about supporting above the baseline amounts, to fund

these institutions at levels beyond the bare minimum, rather than toxic rhetoric that uses schools and families as political weapons and is aimed at tearing down rather than building towards our future. What an amazing world that would be to live in! Make no mistake, the "accountability" argument when paired with funding needs is aimed at tearing schools down and marginalizing families rather than building them up.

The Governor said in his State of the State that he wanted to make Alaska a pro-family state. I can confidently say that this State is not yet pro-family. If he hopes to go beyond abortion issues and actually support families, we need well-funded education from early childhood all the way through the University system. Alaska's future depends on it. I have a 5 year old in kindergarten and my hope is to keep my family in Alaska, but if the education crisis continues, we'll have no choice but to leave the State of Alaska. I am not the only parent with these thoughts (I know a few who have left) and clearly this cannot be the way forward for Alaska. Even the conservatives have to admit the population growth and economic conditions in Alaska are not great- we need to help ourselves towards the future.

In closing, funding schools is not discretionary and they should be funded to the full extent based on expert advice. This is something in your power to fix: please fund teachers, school programs, and child care providers; they form the backbone of our support systems and future. These things must be a priority. **Alaska is a difficult environment for many reasons to attract and keep people: we need all the help we can get to attract and retain the best!**

Thanks for your time,

Jason Gasper

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jeanne Anderson <anderson.jeanne87@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 12:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** It's time to increase funding!

To whom it may concern,

I just read an article that indicates the per student allocation has not been raised since 2016. Our students deserve better. They are growing in a rapidly changing world in the time of a pandemic and classroom teachers are worried about trying to share boxes of crayons. Our teachers need to be able to buy supplies and support their classrooms in order to focus on giving kids the care and attention they need while we address the residual effects of schooling during COVID. PLEASE increase the per student allocation. PLEASE.

Thanks for the consideration,

Jeanne Anderson (occupational therapist in a KPBSD school)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** jeff budd <jbudd3500@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:55 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support Senate Bill 52

Dear Senate Education Committee, I support Senate Bill 52. Please make sure our children all across Alaska get the best education they can possibly get. This is a great start. Thank you. Jeff Budd, Sitka, AK



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jeni Mason <jenimason@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am a mother, leader, educator, and community member. I have been in education for 22 years and a mother for 14 years. Being a principal in our small district, I have felt the impact of the flat funding for the past six years. We are geographically spread out in our district with three brick and mortar schools minimally 45 miles apart and then two homeschool offices residing outside of our borough. Even through our district is small, flat funding had already affected our schools. We have very small schools, ranging from less than ten to 30 students as well as a larger school of less than 200 students and a homeschool program with less than 900 students. Our staff is exceptional, and we find resources that work for us as well as resources that are financially affordable. Each year, we have to look at how we can continue to keep all the schools open and have the staff and resources we need for all of our students. Sadly, this upcoming year, two of our three brick and mortar schools are in jeopardy of being shut down. These schools are a hub for our small communities. These students would need to transfer to another school, in another town for next year if our doors cannot be left open. Staff would need to uproot their work locations and either move or drive daily to work in the school(s) that remain open. This is very hard on each individual person and as a whole community. With an increase of base student allocations, we could perhaps be able to keep our small schools open in order for the community that the kids grow up in, to continue to learn in. As a leader, I want what is best for all of our students. I want them to have a rich and rigorous education, grow to be responsive and responsible humans with rich character that is tied to their communities. As a parent, I also wish for the same; a vibrant educational experience that is rigorous and culturally deep within the community we reside. With flat funding, all of our students suffer. Our students might have to be uprooted to a new community to learn and feel the fall out of program cuts and staffing decreases across all sites. With flat funding, our communities will suffer. Flat funding has to come to an end. AASB has resolved for an increase of not less than \$860. Increase the base student allocation.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity for voice.

Sincerely,

Jeni Mason  
Regional Principal and Special Education Director  
406-460-0629  
Denali Borough School District  
PO Box 280, Healy, AK. 99743

[jenimason@dbsd.org](mailto:jenimason@dbsd.org)

Working together to nurture, empower, and inspire today's student to positively shape tomorrow's world.

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jennifer Grant <grantj@sitkaschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:05 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

To the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing as both a parent and an educator. I've been teaching in the Sitka School District for the past 16 years, and EVERY year it seems that we face budget shortfalls and cuts to staff. The process is always extremely stressful for teachers. This year, again, we have been told by our superintendent that we are looking at a deficit of more than \$2.5 million in our small district. This translates to larger class sizes, fewer resources for students, cuts to programs, limited access to reading and math intervention, and so much more.

Last year at my school we lost our science program, and we've been told that we likely won't ever get it back. This put the burden of teaching science on classroom teachers (grades 2-5), yet we were given no materials or curriculum with which to teach science. The result was teachers spending a lot of time and our own money finding quality science lessons and materials. This is just once small example of how we are continually being asked to do more, with less.

As a parent of three children, I am concerned about the future of education funding. My youngest is a freshman in high school; my older two graduated in 2018 and 2021. Even though that is a relatively short span of time, I have noticed a more limited selection of classes at the high school level. I feel we could be doing more to prepare our high school students for college and the workforce.

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaska Students. I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

## Jennifer Grant

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary  
(907) 966-1711

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jerry Babcock <jbabcock@nenanalynx.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:13 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Nenana City School District School Board Legislative Liaison in order to address our education funding needs. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read my thoughts.

Our current funding levels have been flat for far too long. Our board finance committee has worked with our district leadership to work some miracles to keep us educating our children in this funding environment over the past decade, but this is an unsustainable method of operating. I have outlined some of the most glaring impacts of loss in buying power in the attached word document. Our school not only educates our local children, but through our boarding component, children across the state in many of our state's legislative districts. Our programs are influencing the children of Alaska in ways which impact not only their individual preparation for adulthood, but the health and welfare of our state as well. In her recent address to state legislators, Senator Lisa Murkowski highlighted that Alaska is currently #49 in the nation for keeping folks here in the state. Education experiences creating opportunities for our children DIRECTLY impacts their decisions to out migrate. In Senator Murkowski's words, "We shouldn't be 49th in anything except statehood!"

We have been asked to do more with less for entirely too long. We ask you to help bring our purchasing power back to levels we had two decades ago. We also ask you to encourage your colleagues to work to forward fund education so we are not guessing at our annual budgets. Please support SB52 and push hard to pass it! Our children deserve our best efforts and they haven't gotten that in these times of wild inflation.

I am available to discuss anything you may have questions about or to help in any way. Please feel free to contact me at:

[jbabcock@nenanalynx.org](mailto:jbabcock@nenanalynx.org)  
(cell) 321-863-1800

Thank you!

Jerry Babcock  
School Board Member  
School Board Legislative Liaison  
Nenana City School District

## Michael Mason

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**From:** JOSHUA ROCKEY <Joshua.Rockey@matsuk12.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 12:10 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 Written Public Testimony

Esteemed Senate Committee,

Thank you for considering my submission. I write to you as the principal of a K-5 public school in the Mat-Su Borough. Now could not be a more important time to raise the Base Student Allocation. As an administrator, I have seen my staffing reduced in various areas each of the last 5 years as a result of the budget while working at the same school. Enrollment has not significantly changed, but the money coming is being “flat” means that there is less to go around because costs have increased. We have reached the point where we essentially cannot weather any further reduction in funding/staffing because there is nobody left to absorb the duties that fall outside of what is expected.

We have all kinds of staff members that are helping out in extra ways to cover duties just to make sure that the day moves along. We have a PE teacher and a custodian helping with lunch, SPED PreK Aides helping with reading interventions for kids not at their level, office staff and the principal covering as Nurse when they need to work at another building, and due to an unforeseen bubble that has grown as the year has gone on, a single 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class of 31 students.

Couple this with the addition of duties during COVID, some of which have remained (like sanitation), lack of bus service (not just for our district), lack of substitutes, lack of applicants for positions (we currently have 4 vacant positions in the building with no applicants), and a growing frustration from the public with the job we are doing, it is no wonder that teachers and education staff are burned out in our profession.

We love and care about students and continue to do what is needed, but anytime something gets added, our heart breaks for the lack of effective education that is delivered to the students, and we groan with the duties being piled on top of what we already were expected to accomplish.

When that is all added together with the current retirement situation, it is no wonder that we are not attracting staff to fill these vacancies, and that folks who can are leaving to either retire, or find work in other fields.

While I would love to advocate for further support on the transportation side and the retirement side as well, I realize that those are separate issues. However, they do impact our ability to do our jobs on a daily basis.

Thank you for your humble consideration.

Please call me if you would like further details on difficulties, or further details on ways we are trying to adjust even further on our end to continue to meet needs (not just asking you to fix it for us).

Educationally,

Joshua Rockey

**Joshua Rockey** – *Butte Elementary School, Principal*  
**Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District**  
Ph: 907-861-5200 | Direct: 907-861-5202  
[www.matsuk12.us/bte](http://www.matsuk12.us/bte)

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Judy Carstens <perfectparents@ak.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 24, 2023 9:58 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA

Thank you all for listening when we as school board members and students met with you all in early February.  
Thanks to all for working for  
All of us as we try to  
Provide a top quality education to all students in our wonderful state

Judy Carstens  
Board of Education Vice President  
Kodiak island Borough School District

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Justin Mason <justinmason@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 10:52 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am a father, tech employee, and community member in the Denali Borough. I have been in education for 4 years and a father for 14 years. Being a tech employee in our small district, I have seen the impact of flat funding for the past number of years. We are geographically spread out in our district with three brick and mortar schools minimally 45 miles apart and then two homeschool offices residing outside of our borough. Even though our district is small, flat funding has already affected our schools. We have very small schools, ranging from less than ten to 30 students as well as a larger school of less than 200 students and a homeschool program with less than 900 students. Our staff is exceptional, and we find resources that work for us as well as resources that are luckily financially affordable. Each year, we have to look at how we can continue to keep all the schools open and have the staff and resources we need for all of our students. Sadly, this upcoming year, two of our three brick and mortar schools are in jeopardy of being shut down. These schools are a hub for our small communities. These students would need to transfer to another school, in another town for next year if our doors cannot be left open. Staff would need to uproot their work locations and either move or drive daily to work in the school(s) that remain open. This is very hard on each individual person, student, and community. With an increase of base student allocations, we could perhaps be able to keep our small schools open in order for the community that the kids grow up in, to continue to learn in. I want what is best for all of our students. I want them to have a rich and rigorous education, grow to be responsive and responsible humans with rich character that is tied to their communities. As a parent, I also wish for the same; a vibrant educational experience that is rigorous and culturally deep within the community we reside. With flat funding, all of our students suffer. Our students might have to be uprooted to a new community to learn and feel the fall out of program cuts and staffing decreases across all sites. With flat funding, our communities will suffer. Flat funding has to come to an end. AASB has resolved for an increase of not less than \$860. Please increase the base student allocation.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity for voice.

--

Justin Mason  
Tech Aide  
Denali Borough School District



## Michael Mason

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**From:** kathleen shoop <kathleenshoop@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 4:16 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 NO!!!

Dear Senate;

I live in Alaska and I DO NOT want SB52 to pass, this is a terrible idea and completely unsustainable and corrupt!  
You already waste too much money and the people need their PFD!  
SB52 is evil and will make Alaska even a worse place for people to live.

Public education has no accountability and all the money you steal from the people goes for administration that we do not need.

Public education in Alaska is not preparing students with quality education.

Cut the number of school districts from 54 to one!

I hope everyone starts to use the homeschooling programs because they provide quality education and the public sector is very corrupt, and no place for children.

NO on SB 52!

The 844-586-9085 is not working.

I believe this was conspired to not work.

Kathleen Shoop  
907-746-7769  
907-727-6566

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Katie Aspen Gavenus <katie.aspen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2023 2:07 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase Student Base Allocation

To the Members of the Senate & House Education Committees:

My name is Katie Gavenus, of Homer, AK. **I am writing to urge you to increase the student base allocation for Alaskan schools.**

Alaskan students deserve effective teachers, reasonable class sizes, and extracurricular activities that build their character, confidence, and community. This isn't only the right thing to do -- research shows that the investments we make in youth and education pay huge dividends not just in future contributions to our state but also in short-term (and long-term) savings in costs associated with things like violence, petty crime, drugs, and alcohol.

As others have said much more eloquently than I have, resources like pools and theater enrich our schools, communities, and lives in ways that are meaningful and often life-saving. I remember going to the pool in both elementary school and again in high school to practice putting on survival suits, treading water in a group, and clambering aboard a rescue raft pod. When I think about how many of us work in commercial or charter fishing, on water taxis or research vessels, I realize the critical work and life skills these classes taught. Even for those that don't work regularly on the water, so many head out on the Bay or the Inlet to catch food or have fun with friends and family. Closing the pool - and losing training like that -- is a dangerous choice.

While it might be a little more indirect, I know that theater too has probably saved a few local lives and definitively made so many lives better. All you have to do is attend a community ballet performance, elementary school holiday concert, or during the dark dreary months to see the smiles the theater brings to audience and performers alike. I had classmates for whom music, theater, or dance were the only things that kept them coming to school. And for some, it was a lifeline through struggles with depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

Our schools need to be funded sufficiently so that students have good teachers, reasonable class sizes, sufficient support staff, extracurricular activities, and facilities like pools and theaters. Closing the pool to pay the teachers is not a viable option. Closing the theater to ensure there is a nurse on-site is not a viable option. To function well for most students, most of the time, all of these pieces need to be in place. And in order for that to happen, the state needs to increase the student base allocation.

That is the big picture. I'd like to also share a personal story.

I grew up in Homer and attended Paul Banks Elementary, the Homer Intermediate School for 1 year before it closed and the new West Homer Elementary opened up, Homer Middle School, and Homer High School. During that time, I benefited from amazing educators, committed school staff, excellent field trips, and wonderful extracurricular activities.

After graduating with good grades and good test scores, and with a resume full of cool activities and meaningful service, I was accepted at a number of universities/colleges and chose a college that was able to provide much of what I needed to mature into a well-rounded, thoughtful, kind, and contributing adult. And I was able to secure financial aid and scholarships so that I had \$0 in loans when I graduated from college.

My degree and activities in college solidified my interest in outdoor and science education. I've worked across many states, but choose to return year after year to Homer and to the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies.

7 years ago, I left Homer to complete a Master's Degree in science education through the University of Washington. In the first year of my degree, I met my now-husband. I knew I wanted to make Homer our home, but that move has been slowed by some family situations and the exorbitantly high property prices in the area. For the past 4 years, I have been spending about 7 months of the year in Homer (away from my family except for short visits they make to Homer) and 5 months working remotely from Washington while I spend time with my husband and stepdaughter.

We have finally saved up enough to make the big move. We are excited for the move. I am eager to be able to contribute more to Homer -- being there year-round opens up possibilities as a coach, a mentor, and serving on local committees/councils/commissions that I haven't been able to commit to in the past few years. My husband has a variety of salient skills: building/construction, boats, farming, videography, basketball referee. He will be a great addition to Homer. Now, as we prepare for the long-awaited move I am beginning to doubt that KPBSD is where I want my stepdaughter to go to school. She, like all students, deserves a good education that goes beyond the barebones of a teacher, a desk, and a textbook.

My husband and daughter will go ahead and move to Homer, partly because we have no other choice at this point, partly because I love Homer and do very much want to contribute to this community that has given me so much, and partly because I am choosing to believe that you and others in the state will do the right thing and increase the SBA. But my very real concerns about the education system should be a warning to you -- if the state doesn't invest more in K-12 education, young Alaskan families will move away and other young families will choose not to move to the state. Our economy and communities will suffer the consequences.

So please, **increase the SBA at least \$400 this year and \$700 next year.** That is what is needed to avoid closures of important facilities, increasing class sizes to unreasonable numbers, or stripping schools of critical support staff like nurses and counselors.

Sincerely,  
Katie Gavenus

P.O. Box 1752  
Homer, AK 99603  
907-299-0983

## Michael Mason

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**From:** K <novcaskir@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:08 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Please do not support Senate Bill 52.

There are thousands of less students in the Anchorage School District. That happened for a reason, a large part because of the dismal scores showing a broken education system. In 2019, that last year I could find data, we ranked the 5th lowest in 4th grade Math and last in 4th grade reading. That is appalling! We spend much more per student than most other states and yet here we are in the ranking.

Money will not solve this problem. We need to reach out to the teachers and aids, the workers on the ground, for suggestions/ideas on creating a more effective education system. Many admin people just do not have the experience to be effective in seeing what is most effective with the students.

The following can also help solve the problem of low education outcomes in our public schools.

1. Good teachers being allowed to use effective ways of teaching, like maybe going back to phonics (a process most students excel at) and whatever else they have found to be effective.

2. Teachers need more support from the administration to stand up and be the adult in the school where there are disciplinary issues. I've talked to a few teachers who have been physically assaulted in the class room. They also talk about the few unruly children in the classroom that make it difficult for the other children to pay attention to learn. Those disciplinarian issues also can take up massive amounts of classroom time while the teacher tries to find a way to deal with that student in a way the administration will allow and support. Again, the administration needs to stand up and be the adult in the school instead of rolling over when confronted by a pc issue or an irate parent. I've spoken to a vice principal who acknowledged the challenge of disciplining kids and not having parents support the discipline. The administration needs to stick up for the effective running of the school and then over time those trouble makers will either have to find some other place to go or they will grow up and decide to become a functioning part of the school.

If one looks around society, we see that improvements usually come from areas where there is some competition. Then everyone wants to do better so they can capture a larger part of the community in whatever they are participating. The education system of our children is no different.

**By giving the failing schools more money per student we are enabling a broken system and increasing the chances of things staying the same or getting worse. Let the admin/teachers become more innovative, show how those innovations have become successful over a period of at least a year and then if they need more money to continue and build on that path, then consider increasing funding.**

I truly hope you will consider what is in the best interest of the education of our Alaskan children.

Sincerely,  
Katie Novcaski

Senate Education Committee,  
Distinguished Senators

For the record my name is Kevin Shove, I am a school board member for the Haines Borough School District and constituent of Senator Kiehl

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on education funding for Alaskan children. SB 52 would be a game changer for Alaskan schools. Increasing the BSA by \$1000 would show Alaska's commitment to education and future generations of Alaskans. This would help fund the programs, activities and salaries needed to keep pace with other states. Also, this would attract educators and families looking for a place to raise their children. People are leaving the cities and moving to more rural areas. I have met a few that have moved to Haines. A lot of these folks work from home and want safe neighborhoods and superior school systems.

Inflation, as you know, is at a forty year high. I work in the grocery industry and it has not showed any sign of slowing down. Eventually it will, but the need to "inflation proof" the BSA is very important. Inflation ran 1-2% for years until the recent astronomical increases, I would assume this would be the norm again in the future. It would be better to do this and have smaller increases on a yearly basis than a huge increase in five years like now. Reliable, Consistent funding would also help school boards better plan and set goals.

I want to commend you on your commitment to Alaska's children and the future of education in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration  
Kevin Shove

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kimberly Bakkes <kbakkes@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:08 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Bill 52

I strongly support passing Senate Bill 52.

Costs have climbed significantly since school funding was last increased in 2017.

As a parent with two kids in school, this issue is very important to me. Currently, I feel satisfied that I can live in Alaska and work a professional job in medicine related to the fact that they are getting what they need from school in education and development. But they cannot afford additional cuts.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Bakkes, MD

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kimberly Leslie <KLeslie@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 10:36 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** HB 52 Testimony

Public school students grow up to BE the community, to BE the workforce, to BE the neighbors, to BE the leaders, to BE the solution finders, to BE the productive, kind, citizens of Alaska. Of course we should throw every resource we can at our schools. Of course we should provide ample time and consistency in our support.

Thank you,

*Kim Leslie*

Pronouns: she, her, hers  
Science Teacher  
High School iChoice Team  
KPBSD  
907-224-9082  
Twitter: @KNRLeleslie



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kirstin Hills <savethesquirrels@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:52 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

I am writing against stealing the PFD to raise the BSA for education. It is unfair to steal the PFD from those who do not have children in public education. If the legislature plans to raise the BSA, 1. Find it from a different source, and 2. Restructure education so that the parents are in charge of how their money is spent instead of school districts frivolously wasting it on a subpar education.

Sent from [Outlook](#)



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kristi Wood <bikemoredriveless@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:21 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please inflation proof the BSA

Please increase the BSA. The proposed \$1,000 is a good start, however I don't think that is enough, as it doesn't bring up the BSA to match our historic inflation. As a long term resident of Alaska who loves it here and has always assumed I would remain here, I'm very concerned about the outmigration of working age Alaskans. Will I want to retire in Alaska if this outmigration continues and the lack of investment in Alaskan's education further contributes to the shrinking of our skilled workforce? What will happen to the value of my home if my neighborhood school closes due to lack of funding? Why should my teenage son remain in Alaska if there isn't a robust local university system for him and why should he return to Alaska to raise his own family if there isn't a robust school system for his children? How on earth can we expect Alaska to have a healthy economic future if we aren't willing to invest in that future?

Thank you,  
Kristi Wood  
Anchorage resident

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Log Cabin Creations <Logcabincreationsak@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 4:03 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Testimony SB 52

Mr/Ms. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Krystie DePue, from Eagle, AK and I am representing myself as a parent with 2 school aged children. I am opposed to adding extra funds to the Department of Education. We need reform not added funds, if we can see some real changes being made to the education of our Alaskan students then more money maybe beneficial. At this present time I urge you not to deplete our state or PFD coffers to further this fiasco.

Respectfully,

Krystie DePue  
PO Box 123  
Eagle, AK. 99738  
907-547-2306

# KUSPUK SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 49  
Aniak, Alaska 99557  
(907) 675-4250  
Fax (907) 675 4305

**Dr. Madeline Aguillard**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
(907) 675-4250, Ext.#123

February 10, 2023

## **RE: SB52 - Increase Base Student Allocation**

Members of the Senate Education Committee:

For the record, my name is Dr. Madeline Aguillard, Superintendent of the Kuspuk School District. The Kuspuk School District is located along the Kuskokwim River and includes nearly 350 students in 7 communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.

### **I am writing in support of Senate Bill 52.**

This bill is a step in the right direction, to increase the BSA for sufficient and sustainable funding. As I listened to public testimony lately, I realized an important voice seemed to be missing, and that's the voice of rural and remote Alaska educators.

Kuspuk School District supports a BSA increase in order to address overarching challenges across our remote district. Experiences and perspectives unique to rural and remote educators that a BSA increase would positively impact include: current loss of purchasing power, retention and recruitment strategies, and improving school facility conditions.

A loss of purchasing power is exacerbated for those individuals living in a village in remote Alaska. For example, in Aniak, our district hub, *one gallon of milk is \$15.00, one apple is \$5.99, and fuel is projected to be more than \$12.00 per gallon by this coming summer.*

For comparison, a first-year teacher in KSD is projected to earn \$54,575 and a first year Instructional Aide is projected to earn \$15.00 per hour. The current BSA hinders KSD's ability to pay livable wage.

With the national teacher shortage and our district's inability to pay a competitive, livable wage, we have had to recruit internationally. Right now, ***more than half of our district's teachers are international teachers on a J-1 visa.***

# KUSPUK SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 49  
Aniak, Alaska 99557  
(907) 675-4250  
Fax (907) 675 4305

The Kuspuk School District is working to foster relationships with Alaska's Universities to develop "grow your own teacher programs," however, many of their programs are in the developmental stages. Additionally, to retain and recruit educators we offer some grant funded incentives such as a longevity bonus and this year a resiliency bonus, but those grants come and go and they are not permanent, sustainable retention and recruitment options and without available grants, the district is unable to maintain hiring incentive programs due to flat funding.

The lack of adequate teacher housing in rural districts, such as ours, further exacerbates teacher retention and teacher recruitments. Many of our communities do not have the infrastructure available to provide the space for teachers to secure housing. Thus, the district must provide housing, but often times the same issues exist. Sometimes the district is unable to provide housing in communities which leads to teachers living in the schools. ***We have had teachers living in our schools for two years!*** Not only are students spending the majority of their day in our school buildings, but our teachers are literally spending their entire day and night in the building.

Many of our school buildings are more than 40 years old, and have withstood harsh winter conditions. These buildings require extensive repairs, in order to be in acceptable condition to facilitate student learning. As an example, our school in Sleetmute, AK, Jack Egnaty Senior School, has been on the Major Maintenance list for 13 years! We are happy to report the project is now listed #15 on the FY2024 Major Maintenance Priority list and we fully support legislative funding for the project.

In closing, thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to enter this testimony.

**Please support Senate Bill 52 as a starting point to increase the BSA for sufficient and sustainable education funding.**

Sincerely,



Dr. Madeline Aguillard  
Superintendent  
Kuspuk School District

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lars Hansen <lars.hansen@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 10:21 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please increase the BSA!

Hello

I've been a Fairbanks chemistry and physics teacher at Hutchison High School for the past 15 years, and have seen the number of teachers in my school steadily decrease, while the number of students remains the same (or has increased).

In science, that means larger lab groups, and more resource consumption per year. I have been cutting back on chemical purchases by repurposing those chemicals that can be reused, as well as finding local sources for some of them. I would continue to do this regardless, because it just makes sense, but what to me doesn't make sense is the cutting of teacher positions as time goes on.

Whatever can be done to maintain at least a constant population of teachers in the schools must be done, and if increasing the BSA helps to achieve this, then that's a step in the right direction.

Please help our schools!

Thanks,  
Lars Hansen

Thank you Madam Chair, President Stevens, and the rest of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Lem Wheelles and I am a lifelong Alaskan. I grew up in Anchorage, and graduated from AJ Dimond High School, where I met my wife, Lyndsay. I used my UA Scholars scholarship to earn a BA in Political Science, and a Master of Arts in Teaching from UAA. I then returned to Dimond High, where I have taught US Government and History for 19 years. Our two daughters are currently a freshman and a senior at Dimond High. Suffice to say, I am a product of the Alaska public education system, and I am highly invested in it.

I'm appearing before you today to testify in support SB52. Alaska's schools are in dire need of a significant increase in the BSA, and the \$1000 increase proposed in SB52 would go a long way toward correcting the damage done by flat funding for the last several years.

I have enjoyed working at one of the best high schools in Alaska over the past two decades. However, in the past 4 years, my school has lost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of its teaching FTE due to flat funding, and in that time period, more than half of the staff positions at Dimond have turned over. In talking to my colleagues as they have departed, I've heard three common reasons:

1. Increasing workloads
2. Inadequate wage increases relative to inflation
3. Lack of a pension

I'd like to briefly address each of these today.

The past few years have been the hardest of my career. First there was the year of the earthquake. The next two years, it was the pandemic, requiring major adjustments to how we teach and supporting students through unprecedented anxiety, depression, illness, and uncertainty. This year, things are starting to get back to normal, but class sizes have increased year after year due to budget shortfalls, caused mostly by flat funding of the BSA. Even with the federal COVID funds, rising costs due to inflation mean fewer teachers, larger class sizes, more papers to grade, and ultimately more work for every educator.

Meanwhile, educator wages have not kept pace with inflation. The last several years, I've seen raises of 1-2% a year, against inflation rates for 3% in good years, or 9% in bad years. Regardless, my real wages have decreased, even as my district gives me more students to teach. Other professionals get raises when they are given more responsibility in their jobs. Teachers are told "do more with less" as if that is even possible.

Finally, while I am fortunate to have been hired in 2004 and have a defined benefit plan myself, most of my colleagues do not. More than half of all teachers in Alaska are in TRS Tier 3, with neither a guaranteed pension, nor social security as an option. We call it "the death tier," as you essentially have to work until you die, or risk running out of money in retirement. This needs to change.

Senators, I'm tired of seeing great teachers leave my school, my district, and our state, because we are not investing adequately in our schools. I applaud you for taking the lead on a BSA increase, and I hope you will work with your colleagues in the House to get this bill passed and to the Governor's desk. The time to invest in education is now!

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lila Lee Little <lilaleelittle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 11:01 AM  
**To:** Sen. Gary Stevens; Rep. Sarah Vance; House Education; Senate Education; boardofeducation@kpbsd.k12.ak.us  
**Subject:** School Funding

Dear Members of the KPBSD School Board, the Assembly, and State Legislators,

As parents, we are directly impacted by funding decisions for our schools. We encourage you to reach out to us to learn our stories and understand what school funding decisions mean in our lives. Together we agree on the following priorities:

- \* We support and encourage an increase in the Base Student Allocation that, at a minimum, maintains the status quo for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD). We understand from the District that this would require a \$700 increase once federal covid money is gone next year.
- \* We support and encourage the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly funding KPBSD to the cap.
- \* Please do not increase classroom sizes for elementary grades.
- \* Our teachers are the most valuable asset in our schools. We strongly support timely signing of contracts and whatever other tools the District has to not only attract but \*retain\* teachers. Consistent teacher turnover is costly on just about every level.
- \* Schools do not just teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. In school, our kids learn to work with others and solve complex problems - including social and emotional ones! In an ideal world, all of our kiddos would have full support and resources at home and in the broader community to help navigate growing up in a social world. Unfortunately, that just isn't reality and whether we want it or not our schools and our classrooms are the common denominator where all of our kids come together - regardless of their resources at home, traumatic experiences, anxieties, etc. Providing school counselors, sports and extracurriculars, swimming pools, theater, and other outlets for learning and supporting our kids in multiple ways creates a stronger community and a better overall school environment for learning and success.

Finally, please remember that we parents are the working families that help fuel the local economy. We work at grocery stores and restaurants, in the marine trades and fishing industries, we are your doctors and lawyers, we are building houses and fixing your plumbing. Supporting quality schools supports quality towns by supporting families and showing dedication to helping Alaska be a place where we not only want to raise our children, but where we feasibly CAN raise our children for a bright future.

Thank you for considering increasing the BSA, funding schools to the cap, and making hard decisions to prioritize spending with our voices in mind.

Sincerely,

Lila and Nate Johnson

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lisa Paesani <lpaesani@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:23 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase the BSA

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA for our schools. I am wanting you to listen and abide by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee to raise the BSA by at least 1000.

If Alaska does not insure our schools are properly funded, in order to acquire and keep good teachers and have smaller class room sizes, our population will continue to decline, especially those in educated fields. Already we have a worker crisis in Alaska. People will not move here or stay here if they see their children can not get a good education here. This issue applies to all Alaskans. Please find our schools by increasing our BSA by at least 1000.

Thank you,  
M Lisa Paesani, MSW

Sent from my iPhone





## **Senate Education Committee Support for SB52 - Testimony**

**Lon Garrison, Executive Director  
Association of Alaska School Boards.**

**February 8, 2023**

Good afternoon madam chair and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

I am here today to express the firm support of the Association of Alaska School Boards for the passage of SB 52, which would increase the Base Student Allocation for FY24 by \$1,000.

AASB's Resolution #2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION supports Senate Bill 52, which specified an increase to the BSA of "not less than \$860."

AASB just finished hosting its annual legislative fly-in and Youth Advocacy Institute, which was attended by 170 school board members, students, and superintendents. Some of the most compelling stories and testimony we heard was from students that described the loss of learning opportunities and those programs or activities that build strong connections between the school and their commitment to learning.

AASB thanks you for introducing SB 52 and looks forward to continuing to strongly advocate for this critical financial support of Alaska's public education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Lon Garrison,  
Executive Director, AASB

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lori Thomson <lcthomson18@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:41 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please increase school funding

Dear Senate Education Committee members,

I strongly urge you to increase the base student allocation by \$1,000 for both economic and educational reasons.

As a parent, every week I hear about my seventh-grade daughter having to spend one to three hours a day in the gym doing absolutely nothing because of a lack of substitute teachers. Warehousing children in the gym due to the sub shortage occurs one to three times a week. Increasing substitute pay and staff positions is critical. It's not uncommon to hear that more than 50 students are in one class because one teacher is out sick and there is no one to replace him or her. Sub shortage aside, class sizes are frequently 35 to 40 kids in each middle school classroom. We all know that large class sizes seriously diminish learning and contribute to teacher burnout, which is at an all-time high.

As an economic researcher involved in workforce and employment studies, I can also attest that Alaska employers frequently have great difficulty finding qualified employees at all levels, from trades to upper-level management. I have interviewed many employers who struggle while running their businesses because of the shortage of employees with even the most basic of skills.

Investing in education is investing in Alaska businesses. We cannot have a strong workforce without having strong schools.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this important issue. Please increase school funding.

Sincerely,  
Lori Thomson

610 W. 9th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lynn Bernheim <alaskalynn1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 12:24 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education funding

To whom it may concern,

I have been a teacher in high school for 14 years. When I first started the typical amount of students in a class was 24. If you added just one or two more, you would not be able to get through the same amount of content as in a smaller class. This is because just adding a few more students, you have more opinions, and more distractions so you cannot get through as much content. Last semester I had a class with 33 students. I had to find more desks and chairs because they could not all fit in. The students had to have more people to a table or desk than it was designed to hold. I also could not get through as much content as I wanted and expected to get through. On top of that, due to Covid, many of the students are years behind in their writing skills. Of that 33 students, I had 4-5 who could write at their grade level. If we do not increase funding we are setting up our study for failure.

Thank you,

Lynn Bernheim (Fairbanks)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Madisen Lundamo <mclundamo04@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 7:10 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Written Testimony in Support of SB 52

Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am Madisen Lundamo from Ketchikan and a senior at Ketchikan High School. Today I am writing to represent myself as a student in Alaska and a child of an educator. I am in full support of Senate Bill 52 because education is the very foundation of our communities and society. My mother has taught for 23 years in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District as an elementary teacher, and now is the Dean of Students at Houghtaling Elementary. Through her, I have witnessed the dedication every great teacher gives to every unique student in their school.

In the case of my mother especially, school is much more than a building full of classrooms, but rather a second home. Her classroom is bursting with flairs of her personality and embellished with seasonal decorations. Every seat is different and offers unique comforts. She has a large tank with two red-ear slider turtles swimming about. The overhead lights are never used as the room is illuminated with holiday twinkle lights and lamps. There's an essential oils diffuser going off every so often, filling the air with calming scents. For some time she even had a reading loft in a corner of her room! What an amazing environment to learn in, right?

Every single one of these items was paid for out of pocket by my mom because her stipend barely covered the extra comforts of an excellent classroom. This is the case with every single beyond-typical classroom in that elementary school. My mom's colleagues have used their own personal funds to improve the educational environment of their students for years.

Every single classroom in Alaska could be as comfortable and prosperous as those in the elementary school I grew up in with sufficient funding.

In my high school, students' education is taking a drastic hit due to underfunding. Teachers are in and out. Programs have uncertain futures. While my generation has been labelled as "resilient," we are seeing more and more struggles to bounce back after each hit. There is a stark shortage of substitute teachers which leads to classes being held in the library, overburdening our librarians. I have sat in the library with at least four other classes and it is not a civil picture. The environment is headachingly loud, the librarians are stretched so thin that administrators are in and out checking on the students, and there certainly is no learning happening. Programs such as Advanced Placement or AP classes are at risk to be cut due to a lack of qualified teachers. Our language classes are subpar at best due to poor quality teachers. I, a passionate and dedicated student, have found myself dreading the eight hours a day I spend at school.

There is a butterfly effect caused by a lack of funding in our education system. The school district is doing as much as they can with the little money they have, teachers are unable to provide opportunities to students, the students dread school, their education takes a hit, and in the years to come we will be made fully aware of the negative impacts. Students and teachers thrive in fully funded schools, causing our society itself to thrive. We cannot fight nor prevent great tragedies and societal illnesses such as violence, mental health crises, bullying, racial and cultural injustices, suicide, abuse, addiction, and more without prosperous schools.

Thus I urge you to remain in support of SB 52, an act to increase the BSA, and consequently an act to ensure the future of our education system and Alaska as a whole.

Thank you and Sincerely,  
Madisen Lundamo

[mclundamo04@gmail.com](mailto:mclundamo04@gmail.com)

(907) 617-0417

237 Cranberry Road  
Ketchikan, AK 99901

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Mara Sheakley-Early <marakearly@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 12:22 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Raise the BSA

Dear Education Committee:

Our students and public schools are in crisis. Schools are closing, Alaska students are losing educational opportunities, and our state is no longer competitive in the national educator job market. I urge you to take bold and immediate action to provide relief to school districts through a Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase and develop long-term education funding solutions.

Since 2017, inflation has risen by 15% which has steadily diminished school districts' buying power. Meanwhile, the BSA has only increased by 0.5% over that same period. Some estimates have suggested that in order to keep up with inflation, the BSA should be \$1,300 more than it is right now. Regardless of how we calculate inflation or the right amount for the BSA, one thing is clear: our public schools need help now.

I urge you to do everything in your power to set aside political differences and focus on providing relief to our public schools. Governor Dunleavy and legislators of all political persuasions have indicated their openness to increasing the BSA. I hope I can count on you to join them in finding common ground to pass a meaningful budget increase.

You can be a hero for Alaska's public schools this legislative session. Please don't let us down.

Sincerely,

Mara Sheakley-Early, teacher at Thunder Mountain HS in Juneau, Alaska and mom of two young children

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Marilyn Guhl <marilynguhl721@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 10:46 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Make Alaska's School the Very Best

Dear Senators of Alaska,

I am writing to you to express my support for raising the BSA for the public education program in Alaska. Our children are in great need of receiving the best education possible. They are Alaska's future citizens!

Covid has been a major setback to the education received by our students and our education program is lacking the ability to improve and enhance their learning to give them the attention they deserve. This inability, or choice, to not fund schools at the funding at least equal to or better than the level from 8 years ago, is a tragedy!

I urge you to do what is best for Alaska's students, raise the BSA to at least the amount equal to 8 years ago, and give our students the opportunity to excel and fulfill their potential!

Sincerely,  
Marilyn Guhl  
Sitka, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Mary Krusen <maryclarakrusen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 7:59 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education testimony

Dear Senate,

· I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

· I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

· Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive and is akin to expecting better morale and performance in a workplace while treating one's employees with disrespect while simultaneously demanding that your employees work more hours for the same pay.

**Thank you for your time,**

**-Mary Krusen**

907-395-7022  
1521 Atkinson drive  
Anchorage, AK 99504



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Sent from Gmail Mobile



## SEWARD MIDDLE SCHOOL

304 Sea Lion Ave, Seward AK 99664  
(907) 224-9000

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Matt Potter and I am the Principal at Seward Middle School and Moose Pass K-8 School. I would like to simply say that with the increasing cost of education and the need for better educational outcomes, it is essential to increase the BSA in Alaska.

One of the main benefits of increasing the BSA is that it would provide more resources for teachers and students. Additionally, schools would be able to hire more support staff, such as guidance counselors and tutors, to provide students with the individualized attention they need to succeed. Another benefit of increased BSA funding is the ability for schools to provide more diverse educational opportunities for students. With additional resources, schools can offer more advanced courses, extracurricular activities, and vocational programs. These opportunities can help students explore their interests and develop the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. Moreover, schools would also be able to offer programs that address the unique needs of different student populations, such as English language learners and students with special needs.

At Seward Middle School, we have no dedicated Elective Teachers. Any electives that are offered, are taught by our classroom teachers on top of their core classes. While it is positive that our students get to see teachers in a different setting it stretches even more teachers who are already being asked to do more than ever before. We also split a counselor and an interventionist between Seward High and the middle school in a time where we know students are struggling with their mental health and suffering from learning loss and gaps, both of which need to be addressed.

For all these reasons, I would like to ask the Senate to move forward with SB 52 and approve a long overdue increase in the BSA.

Thank you

Matt Potter  
Seward Middle School Principal  
mpotter2@kpbsd.k12.ak.us  
(907) 224-9025- office  
(907) 570-1505- cell

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Senate Education  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 22, 2023 7:22 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** In Support of HB 65, or SB 52 in lieu of HB 65

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**From:** Megan Martz <meganmmartz@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 21, 2023 9:22 PM  
**Subject:** In Support of HB 65, or SB 52 in lieu of HB 65

Dear Legislator,

My name is Megan Martz. I am a resident of Cantwell, in the Denali Borough, where my husband and I recently purchased land and built a home. I am a former educator, and the parent of an 11-month-old baby girl.

I am writing in support of HB 65, proposing to increase the BSA by \$1,250 to \$7,210. In lieu of an ability to increase education funding that significantly, I would strongly advise passing SB 52, which proposes to increase the BSA by \$1,000 to \$6,960, as a minimum allocation for the 23/24 school year.

Education should be our state and nation's number one priority. Children are our future, and there can be no greater investment than to support them and encourage them to grow and become educated, contributing members of our society. I was disappointed to learn that the Denali Borough School District was considering closing the Cantwell school, located in our local community for next school year, as a direct result of funding that has not kept up with inflation or supported increased school costs in recent years. **Such a school closure would be devastating for the entire community of Cantwell.**

A community that is already struggling economically, Cantwell continues to have a draw for new residents such as myself because the vistas are amazing, the outdoor recreation opportunities are unmatched, the community is a supportive and interesting place, and land/home purchasing opportunities are few and far between in the borough as a whole. If the school were to close, real estate prices in Cantwell would drop further, children would need to be bussed more than a one hour drive each way to Healy for school (10 hours/week!), and there would be less incentive and draw for others to come and revitalize our area.

At a recent school board meeting I saw so much hope. There are several new parents in the area; there is young, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial blood in the room, but even we - who have a significant investment in the area, having just built our own home here, will think about moving on if there is not a local school option as our daughter gets to be school aged. The school is the heart of this community. There are real and present impacts to not funding education at a rate that will maintain spending levels, and I'm writing to beseech you to please not only increase funding, but increase it significantly to help revitalize the schools that have been making cuts and making do since the last raise in 2017.

Residents and former attendees of the Cantwell School detailed what staffing levels used to be like when they were in school - they told of a school with several teachers, with extracurriculars, with newly painted and cared for facilities and updated playground equipment. Now we are staring at a school that will have only one teacher for K-12 next school year, and no other teachers, principals, or adults with whom to interact in that giant, quiet school. We have a chicken and egg situation here where if we can bring back staffing and show a vibrant school with resources, energy, and opportunities for direct interaction in a small setting, I feel sure the community could attract more residents and attendees. But as the resources at the school dwindle, so too do the prospects of attracting new attendees who will

bring increased funding. The fate of this entire community truly rests in the legislatures' hands and decision to fund (or not fund) education in the years ahead.

**Please buy into our children and support HB 65 to increase the BSA significantly and show our priorities are in the right place.** I recognize there are challenges with ensuring the state's financial future remains stable, but this is one fiscal responsibility that cannot bear compromise.

Thank you for taking the time to review my thoughts and many thanks to you for serving your community and state in the legislature. I know only a small piece of the pressures and challenges you must face in that seat and appreciate that you're up to the task of keeping these many plates spinning.

Sincerely,  
Megan Martz

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Mackenzie Pope  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 28, 2023 9:00 AM  
**To:** Michael Mason  
**Subject:** FW: Be a Hero for Alaska's Public Schools

-----Original Message-----

From: betterwithart@everyactionadvocacy.com <betterwithart@everyactionadvocacy.com>  
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 11:33 AM  
To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>  
Subject: Be a Hero for Alaska's Public Schools

Dear Senator Loki Gale Tobin,

Budgeting is not my strong suit and I do not envy the work needed for changes to occur but I can tell you that the expectations of a teacher in a room with 30 or more 5th graders is absolutely UNATTAINABLE. There is no way to know, connect with, provide for, and properly engage and teach that many students in rooms designed to hold 20-24 students. We have no room for belongs, not to mention their personal lives and how they impact learning. We as teachers have more and more expectations and less and less support in our buildings. We are having students write messages of self harm in their notebooks and have literally no one to support them, no counselor, no assistant principal, no school psychologist, and for the lucky few we might have a nurse that if not busy can at least provide a safe room for the student to be. This is just one example of how our schools are under performing due to lack of funding that can very much lead to loss of life not to mention loss of interest in learning, personal growth, and an inability to create equitable healthy futures for our community citizens.

Our students and public schools are in crisis. Schools are closing, Alaska students are losing educational opportunities, and our state is no longer competitive in the national educator job market. I urge you to take bold and immediate action to provide relief to school districts through a Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase and develop long-term education funding solutions.

Since 2017, inflation has risen by 15% which has steadily diminished school districts' buying power. Meanwhile, the BSA has only increased by 0.5% over that same period. Some estimates have suggested that in order to keep up with inflation, the BSA should be \$1,300 more than it is right now. Regardless of how we calculate inflation or the right amount for the BSA, one thing is clear: our public schools need help now.

I urge you to do everything in your power to set aside political differences and focus on providing relief to our public schools. Governor Dunleavy and legislators of all political persuasions have indicated their openness to increasing the BSA. I hope I can count on you to join them in finding common ground to pass a meaningful budget increase.

You can be a hero for Alaska's public schools this legislative session. Please don't let us down.

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

Sincerely,  
Meghan Bundtzen  
600 W 11th Ave Anchorage, AK 99501-4331 betterwithart@gmail.com

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Melissa Burnett <melissa.burnett@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 3:01 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB52

Hello,

My name is Melissa Burnett and I am currently a member of the Board of Education for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. I am writing in support of SB52 – Increase Base Student Allocation. Education as a whole is currently suffering. School Districts are facing drastic measures statewide when it comes to budget. Closing of schools. Losing valuable and much needed Teachers and support staff. Statewide teacher retention and recruitment is struggling. This year the Fairbanks North Star Borough School district is facing cuts to our teaching staff, our support staff, our safety and library assistants, our admin, and curriculum just to name a few. Last year we closed 3 schools.

Without properly funding education and increasing our BSA our education and test scores will continue to dwindle as teachers will continue to become hall monitors and babysitters rather than educators.

We in Fairbanks believe in providing an excellent, equitable, education, in a safe and supportive environment so that all students will succeed. A belief that every year is getting harder and harder to believe due to the cuts and budget problems we are facing with the loss of revenue. We have amazing Teachers, We have amazing programs, and to cut them further is a disservice to our community and to our children, who will one day maybe sit in the very seat which you hold.

The Alaska Constitution Article 7 section 1 states “The legislature shall maintain public schools”. Please, don’t make the same mistakes of short selling the future of Alaska.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board calls on every single one of you to help fund education by increasing the BSA by no less than \$6960. We also ask Governor Dunleavy to quickly sign and distribute increased funding to each school district in time for the 2023-2024 school year.

--

*Melissa Burnett*  
*Board of Education*  
*Fairbanks North Star Borough School District*  
*907-699-7034*  
[\*melissa.burnett@k12northstar.org\*](mailto:melissa.burnett@k12northstar.org)

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" - Ghandi

## Michael Mason

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**From:** MICHAEL RIPKE <Michael.Ripke@matsuk12.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 1:01 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

To Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Michael Ripke and I am a special education teacher in the Matanuska Susitna Borough School District. I am speaking in favor of passing SB 52. Speaking as a special education teacher I'd like to give a little background information about why it's important to fund public education in Alaska.

In 1975 congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that provides a free and appropriate public education to students with a disability. With passage of IDEA the federal government committed to pay 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure for special education. That pledge has never been met, and from a current estimate funding is at just 15.7 percent. According to the National Education Association, last year's shortfall for funding nationwide was \$23.58 billion.

For every dollar for which our federal and state government falls short of funding here in Alaska, that leaves local education agencies having to pay more than their fair share to keep pace with rising costs and inflation from year to year.

Knowing where current funding is at for IDEA, let's look at what could happen if base allocation funding was increased for public schools next year and into the future. School districts may not have to pull as much money from their general education budgets to meet the law mandates for IDEA. Also, school districts may not have to combine special education and general education money to offset the shortfall of previous funding from the state's base student allocation formula.

What would this mean for education here in Alaska if Alaska's base allocation was increased? School districts could fund special education and general education programs at a more proportionate level. School districts would have the opportunity to develop and increase needed school programs, decrease class sizes while increasing the ratio of teachers to students in the classroom by competitively attracting and retaining qualified school personnel.

What does this mean for special education if base student allocation funding was increased? Special education teacher caseloads could be reduced. Student individualized education programs (IEPs) and their plans could be appropriately formed to meet student needs. The type and number of services students receive would not be based on the availability of personnel, programs, or resources.

By increasing the state's base student allocation funding this year, it will increase educational funding at a local level and help our educators continue to provide a quality education to all our students. These are the reasons I am in favor of SB 52.

Respectfully,

Michael Ripke  
Special Education Teacher  
Butte Elementary  
Matanuska Susitna Borough School District



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michael Wald <info@arcticwild.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 4:03 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Hello Senators

Thank you for making education funding a priority at the start of the legislative session. This is a critically important issue not only for students but for our entire state. We desperately need to increase the BSA by a minimum of \$1000.

Education funding has not increased for years and the cost of nearly everything has increased dramatically. The state has slowly defunded our schools and many are now at a breaking point. Districts that have been solvent and responsible for decades are unable to pay utility bills. Our urban schools are moth-balling buildings. We have hundreds of unfilled job vacancies for teaching positions across the state. Our school districts need more money from the state. The funding is over due and a \$1000 increase will not even keep up with the accumulated inflation.

I urge you to increase the BSA by at least \$1000. What is more important for the future of Alaska than our youth?

Thank you for serving on the legislator.

Michael

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Michael Wald  
Owner Arctic Wild  
[Michael@arcticwild.com](mailto:Michael@arcticwild.com)  
907-479-8203  
[www.arcticwild.com](http://www.arcticwild.com)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** michal <michal\_1939@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Education; Sen. Matt Claman  
**Subject:** I support increased funding for our public schools

Dear legislators:

Please support our students and teachers. Our students fare very poorly in standardized testing. School funding has been flat for a decade. Increasing funding for our public schools gives our kids a better education and invests in their future and that of Alaska. Please know that I support increasing funding for our school, at the expense of other government programs and the PFD dividend. I would also support state taxes to have excellent public schools in Alaska. As a parent of two elementary school kids in Anchorage, quality public education is a priority for me.

Thank you for your time.

Michal Stryszak  
Anchorage, AK 99517

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michele Elfers <michele@alaskaflyfishinggoods.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:36 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 - Raise the BSA

Good afternoon,  
Please vote to support raising the BSA a minimum of \$1000 per student. We need more funding than this for our students.

I have a daughter in middle school and one in elementary school. Their class sizes are 28-35 students per class with one teacher. I hear stories from my middle schooler of kids jumping on tables and breaking them, balls being thrown, basically chaos in class because the teacher cannot control the class with so many kids. She is not being challenged because the teachers are not able to address all the varied needs and learning levels in such large classes. She sits in the gym on many days because teachers are out and there are no substitute teachers.

Next year, she goes to high school and the highschool closest to us has a part time art teacher and kids can't get into art classes. She wants to be a designer - engineer/architect, so she is looking for math and art classes. In this same school, they are struggling to keep their CAD program.

Our schools are in crisis and there is nothing I can do for my kids, we don't have any other options. Please provide more funding now.  
Michele Elfers

## Michael Mason

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**From:** thusual@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Michelle Weaver  
<thusual@everyactioncustom.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 25, 2023 4:38 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please vote YES on SB 43: Sex Ed

Dear Alaska Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to encourage you to support SB 43, the bill to require sex ed in Alaska schools.

Please provide Alaskans with the opportunity to be well rounded and as educated as possible. This benefits people individually and Alaska as a whole. Young people deserve age-appropriate, medically accurate information about sex, reproduction, and concepts like consent, respecting boundaries, and who to turn to for help. However, many students in Alaska do not have access to the information and skills they need to protect their health and safety because public schools in Alaska are not required to provide comprehensive or medically accurate sexual health education.

Over 90% of Alaskan voters agree that sex education should be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and should cover healthy relationships, consent, and communication skills.

Please support young people in Alaska by voting YES on SB 43.

Sincerely,  
Miss Michelle Weaver  
4520 Eagle St Apt 2 Anchorage, AK 99503-7328 thusual@gmail.com

Testimony notes, February 8, 2023

Hi, I'm Mike Bronson, speaking on behalf of the education committee of the Anchorage branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I'm a volunteer with the NAACP here in Anchorage, and to make it clear, I'm not related to the mayor.

The NAACP is concerned because instruction levels are leaving students statewide at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to reading and math performance. On average, Alaska students are a year behind kids in the Lower 48. To catch up in one year, for example, they'd have to gain two years of academic growth.

As part of the solution, we're interested in Senate Bill 52's proposal for an additional \$257 million dollars per year for the Base Student Allocation.

However, I'm sure the Senate will get questions about it. Like, "How do you know it's the right amount?"

Here are a couple answers if you're interested in trying them on for size:

An education adequacy study was done for the Anchorage School District in 2016. Based on that study, Dr. Bishop, the superintendent, reported that adding teachers and support staff to raise academic proficiency up to successful schools Outside would cost an additional \$109 million dollars per year. If you extrapolated from Anchorage's 43,000 students to all 128,000 Alaska students, you'd find that academic improvements statewide might cost in the neighborhood of \$300 million per year. That's pretty close to SB 52.

Another way to approach SB 52's proposal is to ask how many new teachers could it hire to raise students' reading and math proficiency? For extra hours of remedial reading instruction for first, second and third graders alone, you'll need 600 or 700 new teachers statewide. That's because 20,000 kids need Tier II and III small-group reading instruction. You'll also need hundreds of new pre-K teachers for many of the 10,000 four-year olds that could use pre-K. That many new early elementary and pre-K teachers alone will cost roughly \$100 million per year.

That says nothing about helping the 50,000 older students who've fallen to less-than-proficient. It also leaves out teacher housing improvements, bus transportation, or major changes in teacher retirement you've been hearing about.

Let me finish with the question how we'll know the BSA is right? The NAACP suggests that the BSA will be enough when you see Alaska public school students reach the middle of the pack in the United States in reading and math proficiency.

Thank you.

Please see slides 5 and 6:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ak/asdk12/Board.nsf/files/ASEVRR81A1CC/\\$file/10.23.2017%20Superintendent%20Update%20Funding%2C%20Staffing%2C%20Class%20Size%20pptx.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ak/asdk12/Board.nsf/files/ASEVRR81A1CC/$file/10.23.2017%20Superintendent%20Update%20Funding%2C%20Staffing%2C%20Class%20Size%20pptx.pdf)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Molly Hayes <mollymul@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 11, 2023 5:54 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Please support an increase to the student base allocation. As a parent and is an educator I am concerned about the future of our educational system. Lack of funding, makes it difficult to retain teachers and provide a high-quality education to our children. Teachers have no incentive to stay, and families have no reason to stay in the state without educational opportunities for their children.

Thank you for doing was is needed to support the future of the State of Alaska!

Sincerely,

Molly Hayes

Anchorage, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Molly Krehlik <mollyannekrehlik@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 1, 2023 4:12 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Fund our schools!

I support a significant increase to the Base Student Allocation, in an amount that will adjust for inflation and end a decade of effective flat-funding.

Fund our schools, fund our students, fund Alaska's future!

Molly Tarby



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Nancy Mendenhall <mendenhallnancy01@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:26 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** HB52

This is the most important Education bill for you to get passed. I have lived in Western AK since the early Sixties and most of this time in Nome School District, associated with teachers through my work on boards, committees and jobs. It is obvious how low funding has affected maintenance of our old buildings, classroom numbers size, and teacher retention. The retention problem is also related to lack of adequate housing for teachers as well as salaries not keeping up with COL. Some vacant positions funded could not get applicants this fall. The message families are getting is that the state doesn't care about the children, the working citizens of tomorrow. I know that's not true, but that's how it comes across. Thank you for fighting hard to get a significant bill passed to relieve this situation.

**Nancy Mendenhall**

<http://nancydanielsonmendenhall.strikingly.com>

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Nathan Erfurth <nerfurth@kpea-kpesa.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 5:09 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 Testimony

Senators of the Education Committee:

Below is my written testimony since the meeting had to be adjourned. Thank you all for your work.

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Good afternoon. I am Nathan Erfurth, President of the Kenai Peninsula Education Association.

I am testifying today in favor of SB 52 because for once, we educators are starting to see a glimmer of hope. You know the reasons why we need this, and I really want to address the way that we talk about assessment and student data in this state so that we can better capture reality, but let me share why today matters.

Educators operate on what can be made from what we have. I can sum that up into three categories; resources, passion, and hope. All of these are finite.

Our tool boxes are full of resources of many kinds. These include our initial training, our creativity, our supportive friends and family, and the strengths of our colleagues. We must also rely on what our districts are able to offer us in terms of facilities, curricula, support, and of course, competitive salaries and benefits. There are far too many educators, and *especially* support staff, that will be heading off to another employer sometime this week to make up the difference in the economy we live in.

Our passion consists of our love for the craft of education, our sincere belief in the societal and individual benefits of public education, and our sheer determination and willpower. These are the things that brought us to work for our students in the first place, and they're what make us resilient in the face of endless challenges.

All of these factors interlock with each other to create the net that we land on when things are going poorly. Whether that's a tough lesson, or it's learning about a student's challenges and struggling to help them, or it's the simple day-to-day grind of seemingly non-stop lessons and grading. It's also the meetings and hundreds of parent contacts, changing district expectations, or the ebb and flow of the public's love and hate for public educators. As we hear complaints about best practices because they're different from what some folks want education to be cut down to. Our net of support helps us weather much of this - though I'd argue much of it could be fixed or limited. Our unions are another resource that we rely on for that. But as our districts have tightened, as our officials have kicked us around, as our willpower has slowly drawn down and our hope has waned, more and more of us have left the profession and many more are poised to do so.

That's because we've been running out of hope. Hope has suffered as we've seen cuts and threats of cuts, either directly to budgets or through attrition as the base student allocation remained flat and inflation continued to strangle our districts. It has been in short supply over the last several years as elected officials at every level have lambasted education and kicked it around for sport. The public has bought into every manufactured crisis and has generated secondary crises as a result, tearing our focus from our mission. We have heard over and over of the supposed and contrived evils happening in our public

schools, and despite our full knowledge that none of that nonsense is happening, and that our students are growing not just as students but as people *every day*, we have persisted and advocated. Our hope has taken quite the beating.

That's why today matters.

This bill - and comments like Senator Tobin's that we don't just want to stop the bleeding but inject life into our education system - have begun to refill our reservoirs of hope in ways that water might refresh someone walking across the desert. We might have a chance to properly support our students - bring back arts and music, actually provide what our special education students are legally entitled to, and start building the schools we could have had this whole time.

This struggle is in no way over, and we don't know what the ultimate outcome will be, but I want to thank the committee for not only saying our students and educators are worth the investment, but also for acting on it.

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That concludes my testimony.

Thank you, and have a great evening. I am always available to converse on these topics, and can be reached at 907-420-7707. I hope to see you in Juneau soon.

Best,

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**Nathan Erfurth** | President  
Kenai Peninsula Education Association  
[nerfurth@kpea-kpesa.org](mailto:nerfurth@kpea-kpesa.org)  
[kpea-kpesa.org](http://kpea-kpesa.org)  
[fb.com/KenaiEducators](https://fb.com/KenaiEducators)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Norman & Toby Campbell <ak.campbells@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 2:42 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB 52

Hello dear Legislators:

I am a retired school teacher and my husband is an artist. We are thrilled about the bipartisan Senate majority vote on Senate Bill 52 to increase the Base Student Allocation by \$1000 per student.

We are in great support of this so that schools will not have to cut important programs and staff, keep class sizes reasonable, as well as helping the City of Sitka with the amount allocated from their budget for our schools.

Thank you for ALL of your incredibly hard work and for supporting this important bill.

Best regards,  
Toby and Norm Campbell  
123 Knutson Drive  
Sitka, Alaska 99835  
(907)738-2684

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Pamela Samash <christloveheals123@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:39 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Another idea for SB 52

Good morning 🌞

Thank you for your service to the great state of Alaska.

Regarding SB 52, I wasn't able to testify yesterday because of the Yukon Dog race here in Nenana, so I'm writing to you today.

It seems to me that many people have pulled their kids out of the public schools for one reason or another, and that has contributed to the decreased money going to the districts.

Before throwing money back into something that the public doesn't want, why not do a public survey like we did on the Aging Commission?

You can ask questions like,

- 1) What are your concerns with public school?
- 2) What method of education do you prefer for your kids?
- 3) Why do you prefer that type of education?
- 4) How can education be improved in the state of Alaska?
- 5) What areas in education should public funding go to and why?

Also, Alaska has a low score on private schooling options as compared to Nationwide.

And last, as a Homeschooling parent with my daughter enrolled in a state correspondence program, the allotment I get for my daughter is heavily regulated and I don't personally appreciate that because I'm the teacher and if that money is available as so much per child, I feel like I shouldn't have to explain what I do with it, penny by penny. I should have full access to do what I want for her education without constantly having to get permission for every dime of it.

So overall, my testimony is to wait on distributing that money until the public has a chance to express their ideas and concerns in a public survey like the Aging Commission did in the senior survey. Then the money can be sent to the areas that it can be the most beneficial. And above all, please do not touch the PFD because that's necessary for the rural people, seniors and families alike. There's no reason to strip everyone of their PFD for a school system that's clearly failing the parents and their kids.

Listen to the people of Alaska.

Thank you for your time.

Pamela Samash

Nenana, AK

907-322-2201

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Patricia Dick <sooktushaa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 4:18 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52 BSA

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am writing this to strongly support your approval of Senate Bill 52 for raising the BSA to at least \$1,000 per student. Alaska, like all states is going through a covid inflicted education crisis where we are playing the "catch up" game with many students that fell behind academically during the pandemic. In addition to that, BEFORE the pandemic Governor Dunleavy and the Alaska Legislature chose not to fund education by raising the BSA blaming it on the price of oil. Every year that the BSA has not been raised to meet the cost of inflation, our Sitka School District has lost teachers, programs, and educational opportunities for our students. The BSA has not been raised since 2017 that means for the 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 school years prices of educating Alaskan students have gone up but the state has abandoned our Alaska educational system.

How did Alaska education get tied to the price of oil? So if the price of Alaska's oil decreases then the Alaska students have less of a need for education? That's not right. **Education funding, specifically the BSA needs to have a built in education increase that matches the inflation for each year!** I could sit here and list all the education services that our Sitka students no longer receive like the middle school librarian/technology person, all 2-5 grade science classes CANCELLED forever, and I could go on and on. Voting for Senate Bill 52 raising the BSA **AND** putting in place an inflation proofing system so we don't find ourselves in this situation again is a **MUST DO!!**

The success of our state depends upon the success of our educational system! Thank you for all the Senate Education Committee Members do every day to improve the education of our Alaska students.

Sincerely,  
Patricia L. Dick  
Retired Alaska Teacher (that is still teaching)  
907-321-1927  
[sooktushaa@gmail.com](mailto:sooktushaa@gmail.com)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Eric and Tricia Miller <millerstead@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:56 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please raise the base student allocation

Dear members of the Alaska legislature,

I'm writing as a parent to urge you to raise the base student allocation this session. Kids in Alaska NEED YOUR HELP. Our children have fallen behind since Covid and the only thing that can help them get back on track is more support. And support is not free. I have two school-aged students in Fairbanks. My son suffers from a sensory processing disorder that makes it very hard for him to function in school. He's not alone. There are many kids who have similar challenges that make it more difficult and more work for them if they are to succeed. My son's school and his teachers are amazing. But they can't provide extra support because the school doesn't have funding to provide extra classroom aides. They do the best they can with what they have, but it isn't enough. Children who aren't receiving the extra support they need in the classroom suffer, but so do the rest of the kids, because their learning experience is constantly disrupted.

Because the base student allocation has remained frozen despite the enormous challenges of the last few years, education is being hamstrung in this state. Class sizes are ballooning. Cuts are affecting every single student in this state. Since children ARE the future, we are shorting the future of Alaska by this massive disservice to our kids.

Yes, I know, money is tight everywhere. But let's look at the long approach- supporting education for our kids has got to be our number one priority.

I urge you to do the right thing and vote to increase the base student allocation.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Miller  
Fairbanks, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Patty Wisel <pwisel07@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 11:59 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Good morning:

My husband and I OPPOSE SB52. We do not believe that adding \$250 million into our failing public education system will help. And NOT at the cost of our PFD. Without accountability, i.e. dollars spent = increased graduation rates, testing scores, reading scores etc., there is no reason to throw more money after something that is already failing. Again, we OPPOSE SB52.

Respectfully,

John & Patty Wisel

Fairbanks, AK

907-460-4344



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Paul Rioux <paulg.rioux@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:03 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Committee members,

I'd like to offer non partisan praise for SB52.  
Alaska education system is currently hamstrung by inflation.  
Please support this bill.

Yours,  
Paul Rioux  
Sitka, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ralph Crosslin <ralphc@yakutatschools.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:52 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 – Increase Base Student Allocation

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

It is the sincere wish of the YSD Board of Education, staff, parents, community members and students that the Committee will endorse a minimum of \$860.00 to the SBA. Among the most pressing needs our district faces are:

- Teacher recruitment and retention - two of our 7 teacher staff are serving under a retirement or emergency teacher certificate.
- Yakutat has inadequate housing to attract and retain new teachers.
- Funding basic programs is increasingly difficult.
- The district cannot afford a school lunch program.
- The district cannot afford a music or art program as it did in the past. The lack of these programs has caused parents to leave our community.
- The district does not have a school counselor to address the expanding needs of our students.
- Our school buildings are in desperate need of roof drain repairs.

Despite these deficiencies, we are proud of our accomplishments and remain optimistic that after several years of flat funding, the Senate Education Committee will endorse a significant increase in the SBA. Such an increase will, at a minimum, allow our district to continue existing programs with the hope of addressing the needs highlighted above.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ralph Crosslin, Superintendent  
Yakutat School District

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Ralph Crosslin, Temporary Superintendent  
Yakutat School District

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Donald Trometter <drtrom@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 3:39 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education

Dear legislators,

Please do not take our PFD funds to enhance the education budget. If you go back to the basic education of science, math, reading, etc. We do not need all the extra money into the education budget If you would get rid of the non-essential curriculum in the schools.

Kindly,

Rita Trometter  
907 978 0768

## Rogers Park Community Council Resolution in Support of Full Funding of Public Education

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska Constitution provides that one of the core responsibilities of State and Local Governments is to provide for public education,

WHEREAS, State Statutes provide that home rule municipalities have the authority and responsibility to provide support for public education,

WHEREAS, the Municipality of Anchorage, under its home rule authority, has accepted the authority and responsibility to act on behalf of the people in its community to ensure full funding of public education up to the State of Alaska imposed funding caps on local public education funding,

WHEREAS, investments in public education, including pre-K and smaller class sizes with high quality teachers, have increasingly been found to be a cost-effective investment in providing students and their families with the foundation they need to both help extend their education and secure larger economic opportunities<sup>1</sup>,

WHEREAS, investments in public education have increasingly been found to be associated with measurable improvements in student achievement results<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS, increased investments in public education will be critical to help remediate the wide range of learning losses that arose during the pandemic<sup>3</sup>

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has fallen way behind Washington State where they have been increasing their investment in public education and significant investments are needed to catch up with salaries across Washington State where Anchorage competes to attract and retain highly qualified and effective teachers,

- WA State Avg. Teacher Salary Increase FY1718-FY2223 (5 years) = 50%
- Anchorage CPI-U Inflation Increase FY1718-FY2223 (5 years) = 20%

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<sup>1</sup> R. Chetty, "Opportunity Insights: Education: How Do We Amplify Education as an Engine of Mobility? Using big data to help children get the most from school," <https://opportunityinsights.org/education/>, retrieved November 27, 2022

<sup>2</sup> C.K.Jackson, C. Wigger, H. Xiong, "Do school spending cuts matter? Evidence from the Great Recession", American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 12(3), 304-335, (2021); C.K. Jackson, C. Mackevicius, "The distribution of school spending impacts", Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Education Working Paper 21-357

<sup>3</sup>K. Shores, M. Steinberg, "Fiscal Federalism and K-12 Education Funding: Policy Lessons from Two Educational Crises" (Great Recession and COVID-19), Educational Researcher Policy Forum (2022)

- AK State Avg. Teacher Salary Increase FY1718-FY2223 (5 years) = 8%, rapidly falling behind local inflation

WHEREAS, Governor Dunleavy, in his February 16, 2019, revised budget submission to the Legislature, eviscerated public education funding levels [cut State K12 Aid to School Districts by 24%] while proposing minuscule support for early reading [cut \$10.00 in K12 Budget for each 1c proposed for early reading], setting the stage for a dramatic decline in the real, inflation adjusted state financial support of public education over his first term in office,

WHEREAS, declining state financial support of public education simultaneously lowers the State of Alaska imposed funding caps on local public education funding (Anchorage), unduly limiting our local community's ability to increase funding to address local challenges,

WHEREAS, Governor Dunleavy, lead the successful effort to eliminate state support of school bond debt reimbursement which had helped enable local communities to sustain local school facilities with major component replacements, roofs, heating/ventilation systems, seismic upgrades, aging water/wastewater system, sprinkler and lighting system replacements, and increasing space to meet the needs of the students whose needs were formally recognized in the George W. Bush Administration's Americans with Disabilities Act, exacerbating a growing backlog of needed facility repairs and replacements which have led to compromises in local classrooms, e.g, leaking roofs, aging heating and ventilation systems, old lighting systems.

WHEREAS, inflation in Anchorage has increased by 14.4 % over the past four years [BLS, Anchorage CPI-U, October 2018-October 2022 percentage increase] and dramatically eroded local purchasing power for our schools, teachers, students and families in our community,

WHEREAS, several States have significantly increased their support of public education over the past four years and are looking to continue to do so, including making major investments in teacher compensation to enable them to attract and retain highly qualified and effective teachers

- Education Week, Teaching Profession, "Teacher Salaries Aren't Keeping Up with Inflation", April 27, 2022:
  - "When adjusted for inflation, the average teacher salary decreased by an estimated 3.9% over the last decade"
  - "Some states have passed significant pay raises this year...Mississippi teachers... an increase of more than 10 percent...Alabama will receive raises that range

from 4 percent to nearly 21 percent...**New Mexico teachers will see their base salary levels increase by an average of 20 percent**

- National Association of State Budget Officers, Budget Blog, July 29, 2022:
  - **“The strong growth in tax collections and revenues exceeding forecasts led many states to report their largest surplus in state history, with governors calling for...additional investments in areas including education and infrastructure...”**

WHEREAS, the most recent University of Alaska Institute of Social and Economic Research Teacher Compensation Study [UAA ISER, Salary & Benefits Schedule and Teacher Tenure Study, Table 2, 2014 data, November 13, 2015] indicated that Anchorage needed to increase teacher salary schedules by 10% [from 1.24 to 1.38 X Washington State’s average teacher salary, adjusted for Alaska and Washington State purchase power parity]; extending the findings of that teacher compensation study to 2022 teacher salaries, indicates that Anchorage *now needs to increase the local teacher salary schedule by 44% in order to become competitive with Washington State teacher salaries* [MAFA Analysis of Alaska and Washington Teacher Salaries, 2014-2022]

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the Rogers Park Community Council supports the full funding of public education to the level required in Alaska to enable our teachers, students, families and communities to recover from:

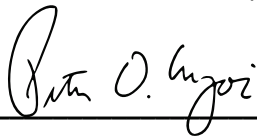
- the significant decline in real inflation adjusted loss of purchasing power for our schools,
- the significant decline in real inflation adjusted Alaska and Anchorage teacher compensation levels, especially as compared to Washington State, which has historically provided Anchorage and Alaska with a supply of new highly qualified and effective teachers,
- the decline in student learning growth rates and complications arising from mental health challenges that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- the increase in class sizes to:
  - 50% above recommended levels in the critical early K-3 Elementary grade levels
  - 28% above recommended levels in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels

- which significantly hinders aggregate class instructional pace and effectiveness<sup>4</sup>
- a decline in teacher professional development and classroom support services which enable our teachers to help our students learn and grow,
- a decline in support staff salaries and benefits relative to competitive alternatives which has led to high staff vacancy rates which have had a negative impact on students and their families, e.g., bus driver compensation failed to attract/retain an adequate supply of drivers leading to significant and disruptive rationing of bus service this fall in Anchorage

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) requests that the **Anchorage School District** advocate for the full funding of the preK-12 public education budget required to meet the needs of our students and families with the Governor, Legislature, Assembly and Mayor to enable Anchorage students and families to recover from funding and pandemic deficits and get back on track for strong, sustained academic growth and preparation for success in life,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) requests **our Anchorage Assembly and Mayor** advocate for full funding of public education with the Governor and Legislature to enable our children, families and community to begin to recover from funding and pandemic deficits and get back on track for strong, sustained academic growth and preparation for success in life.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) requests **our Anchorage Legislators** advocate for full funding of public education with the Governor and their colleagues in the Legislature to enable our children, families and community to begin to recover from funding and pandemic deficits and get back on track for strong, sustained academic growth and preparation for success in life. The Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) would anticipate full funding of education to be a first priority of bills passed by the legislature this session.



Pete Mjos, Rogers Park Community Council President

Date: December 12, 2022

Votes For: 32

Votes Against: 2

Abstentions: 2

<sup>4</sup> MAFA Comparison of Fall 2022 class size to ASD Evidence Based Public School Funding Model (2016); MAFA Review of R. Chetty, et al, Opportunity Insights and referenced education research on benefits of smaller class size/ challenges of larger class sizes presented to Alaska State Senate Finance Committee and joint meeting of the Alaska State House/Senate Education Committees, 2019

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sandi Trumbower <strumbower@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 16, 2023 12:13 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Committee Members,

I am writing asking for your full support for Senate Bill 52 which proposes to raise Base Student Allotments by \$1,000.

Student Allotments have not been since 2016. Inflation has increased, cumulatively, 24.65% since that last increase. It is astounding to me that even if the full \$1,000 is passed it still will not meet the level of inflation since the previous increase. Our students are our future. Invest in them!

Thank you for your attention.

Sandra Lee Trumbower  
246 A St  
Anderson, AK



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sandy Blomfield <aksandyb@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 7:07 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Sandy Blomfield  
**Subject:** BSA Funding

Senators,  
(Education Committee)

Your committee has the opportunity to change the role of education in Alaska.

As you consider the increase in BSA per student funding, I respectfully request that you consolidate all education funding to follow the student rather than the local school districts.

We have all witnessed the dramatic decline in educational scores for Alaskan kids despite more legislative funding. Elementary students are subjected to a liberal and dangerous agenda from many local school boards.

Now is the time to TIE the BSA funding allotments and district monies directly to the parent/students for SCHOOL CHOICE!

You have the power to make positive changes in our youth statewide with funds appropriated directly to students. The Senate Education committee must take this bold stand now to ensure we offer our Alaskan children the best education possible by allowing SCHOOL CHOICE through funding.

I have been an education advocate for many, many years and will continue to work on behalf of our vulnerable children. If you need assistance, please refer to the lower 48 states that have already allowed, through statute, funding following the student.

This is our responsibility and I hope you take it seriously.

Thank you,  
Sandra Blomfield

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sandy Blomfield <aksandyb@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 17, 2023 2:21 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Cc:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52/HB65 BSA FUNDING

Legislators,

I would strongly encourage you to strengthen educational opportunities in Alaska for all students.

You have been tasked to change the BSA amount per student during this legislative session. Be courageous! Take this opportunity to tie student funding to the student rather than the school district.

The time has come, post Covid, to digest what has taken place for our students over the past few years. The local public school may not be the most prudent educational system for some students. This was certainly apparent in the standardized testing results where Alaskan kids are falling far short of reading and mathematics; at some public schools students don't even register on the chart for competency and literacy.

So many opportunities are now available for parents and students to choose the educational method that works best for them along with promoting their own family value systems.

By you directing the money to the STUDENT every student will be at the same level for education opportunities. This creates equity in education!

Where there is competition, the best programs will strive and survive. We all want our children to have the best educational opportunities available to them.

I strongly encourage you to take the step, as many other states have already done, and increase BSA funding and allotments tied directly to the Students in the great state of Alaska.

I await your email responses and will be available for further discussion.

Sincerely,  
Sandy Blomfield

## Michael Mason

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**From:** fam randall <907randalls@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 21, 2023 5:05 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase the BSA

Hello,

As a mother of 6 ASD students, a past foster mom and Anchorage resident for 11+ years I support and encourage you to increase the Base Student allotment.

This increase to match inflation is long overdue.

Because the BSA hasn't been increased ASD is now forced to close 5 Elementary schools in the poorest parts of town further limiting these most at-risk kid's support systems putting them in a larger school farther from their home also making it harder for them to get to school or forcing some kids to walk through dangerous parts of town past homeless camps.

ASD is also now forced to choose between which sports to drop (swimming and diving currently on the chopping block which if it is only offered as club then that will further limit at-risk kid's abilities to get to and pay for their only chance to swim on a swim team).

Now 6th grade band and orchestra is also on the chopping block which will limit numbers of musicians feeding into middle school.

As my son who swims and plays the trombone said when he learned about these possible cuts-"they're cutting all the ways we cope!"

The list goes on and on.

Please do all in your power to do what's best for kids- especially those most at-risk, increase the BSA!

Sincerely, Sarah Randall

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Angel Hayes <angelhayes@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:52 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Literally on my knees begging

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you on behalf of all Alaskan school districts. Never have we needed help financially than now. I believe the one time BSA increase of \$1000 needs to be voted in, for such a time as this.

Teachers are quitting jobs they were born to do because of burnout, and frustration. As the cost of living has risen over a year ago my district has not been able to give pay increases to meet the need, show their appreciation or show that they value their staff members. Students are suffering from the loss of some of the most gifted instructors in the United States of America. Students are not meeting their full potential and going the route of homeschooling. They are not being challenged to critically think and to strive for high quality work. Their education from home is a basic Abc, 123, rhetoric. New concepts and ideas are being excluded leaving students at a huge disadvantage. Alaskan students matter, and so do their teachers! Help alleviate the load off of the teacher's backs so that they can focus on what they do best; TEACH! And help Alaskan students by providing them with the very thing Alaska promises them; HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION!

Increase the BSA. Alaska is depending on you to do the right thing!

Angelica Hayes  
Paraprofesional

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Marka Anne Brooks <brooks.markaanne@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:16 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Marka Anne Brooks  
**Subject:** Alaska Education Funding

Senate Education Committee

First of all, thank you very much for your work on behalf of Alaskans. I am writing to encourage you to raise the base student allocation by at least \$1000. I would very much like the increase to make up for the years of cuts and inflation, but understand it is a challenging proposition. Our most important resource are our children. Our most important service to those children is to provide them with an education. We need to attract the best, brightest and most innovative teachers. Without providing them a competitive salary and benefits, we cannot keep them in Alaska. We need to continue to provide a strong public school system.

The need for funding does not end with public schools, but also extends to the University and beyond. I am an engineer and years ago worked to increase engineering and STEM education funding so we can grow our own engineers. At the time, it was estimated that it cost thousands of dollars (\$75,000 comes to mind) to recruit and train an engineer to work and move them to Alaska. As employers quickly found out, these engineers often did not stay in Alaska, but moved back to the lower 48. The reasons were many, but it became obvious that we needed to educate our own.

The same is true for teachers, truck drivers, engineers, scientists, health care workers, lawyers and many other essential jobs in Alaska. We need a comprehensive review of wages and salaries to find a way to pay competitive salaries and benefits.

We have become a state of its all about me, it's all about me getting the largest pfd. If we lowered the size of the pfd and funded services, especially the important employee benefits that retain people in Alaska, we would greatly help Alaska and future generations.

To find the money, let's not fund another mega project, or buy into the carbon credits idea. Let's find a way to get our fair share of our oil and mining resources. Perhaps not is not the time to increase salaries to key state officials when we've cut or eliminated so many jobs.

Anne Brooks, P.E.,  
1704 Rogers Park St, Anchorage, AK 99508  
brooks.markaanne@gmail.com  
907-242-6405

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Benjamin White <whiteb@sitkaschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:54 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Hello Education Committee,

My name is Ben White and I wanted to send a quick message **strongly encouraging** you to support senate bill 52. Alaskan schools and their students need this funding to provide the best education possible for the future of our state! I also asked that you support the January 30, 2023 memo from the legislative budget and audit committee that indicated that the BSA would need to be raised by **MORE** than \$1000 to restore public education funding to levels from eight years ago!

Please, please, invest in the future of our great state by investing in the students of our great state! Thank you for your time and commitment, it is greatly appreciated.

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Robert Love <bjmelove@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:53 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Re: Senate Bill 52

Alaska Legislators ,  
Just want to communicate what big supporters of the \$1000.00 per student for the BSA. As retired Alaskan Teachers who put in three decades in working with students we see the need for increased resources.  
Thank You for what you do!  
Bob & Jan Love

Sent from my iPad

## Michael Mason

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**From:** casey mapes <YAK2YOU2@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 3:45 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Yvonne Baker; Carol Pate  
**Subject:** SB 52 comment

Hello,

My name is Casey Mapes, I am a member of the Yakutat school board of education in Yakutat, and I am a concerned parent of an Alaskan student .

I wish for my comment to be considered regarding SB 52, which moves to increase the base allotment per student. AASB's request for an increase of not less than 860.00 per student, is the barest of minimums that should be considered. It is my personal feeling it should be a good deal more than this amount. Inflation has more than doubled nearly all expenses in Yakutat in just one year's time, meanwhile, the per student base has remained flatlined without a raise at all since 2017. This is absolutely unacceptable. We have a responsibility as Alaskan adults whom, many of us were given an opportunity to receive a good quality education here in this state. We owe it to paying this forward to the next generation, and we absolutely are not doing so at this time. I can attest that without this proper funding, our school budget has suffered tremendously. We are forced as a district to not fill much need positions, that would have diversified the classes offered to students, or has caused us to double, even triple classes under one teacher. This is just not the right way at all for us as a people. Education simply HAS to become paramount in your budget planning, if we are to remain a functional society into the future. Give our kids the best education we possibly can, and it will pay in spades, every time.

In addition to giving a fair and solid raise to the base per child allotment, I feel proper consideration should be given towards an additional offset to outlying bush communities that have less children enrolled than bigger schools, and also have an even much steeper inflation rate. Because these kids come from small districts, does not, and should not mean that they should receive less opportunities to access quality education. Fuel is many times more expensive here, housing for teachers is also, our district is struggling. As a result, so are our students testing scores. They aren't given a fair chance to succeed in the secondary schooling system.

Please, make Alaskan kid's education first, Thank you in advance for taking my comment to heart, and giving it fair consideration.

Casey Mapes



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Glenn Cravez <Glenn@cravezlawak.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 6:35 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support SB52

I support increasing the SBA by at least \$1000. Alaska vastly underfunds education, which undercuts our future. If we're serious about growing our economy we must make Alaska an attractive place for young families to live, as it once was.

Thank you. Glenn Cravez. 2810 Kingfisher Drive, Anchorage 99502.

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Hannah Dolphin <HDolphin@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 4:39 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Increase

Good Morning,

I am writing to you as the assistant principal of Mountain View Elementary in Kenai, Alaska. Like many schools, we have been appreciative of the additional funding that came with COVID relief and Governor Dunleavy's one-time additional funds. As you may know, these funds cannot sustain us moving forward in Alaska's education.

Anyone who is paying attention to the climate of education nationwide knows that teacher recruitment and retention is at an all time low. We are battling with states and districts all over the country for teachers. Teachers are leaving the profession before retirement. Our high-quality veteran teachers are still recovering from the effects of a global pandemic. Teacher stress levels are at an all time high. The state is doing some wonderful things for education including the passage and implementation of the Alaska Reads Act. However, with changes comes more load on teachers' backs. My teachers are looking at a new literacy curriculum, new assessment system, and new record keeping practices, which are all great things, but the learning process takes time and effort.

My district's greatest cost is in paying employees a livable wage and providing benefits. When we are operating with a deficit in the budget, positions are lost and the pupil/teacher ratio goes up.

Teachers are already striving and working relentlessly to ensure students are learning. At the start of the year, my fifth grade teachers had students who were just starting to learn how to read and students who are reading at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade (or higher) reading level. We have students who are transferring in who have never been to school before. We had third graders start who could not identify their letters. My teachers are experts at differentiating instruction, providing intervention support, and personalizing learning, but at some point the lift is too heavy, and students don't get the highest level of instruction they can. As class sizes rise, and teacher numbers decline, student learning will decline as well.

We need adequate funding to ensure teachers are supported in their positions. They need a reasonable class size. We need specialists like interventionists, tutors, and counselors to help negate the negative academic and social/emotional effects that stemmed from the previous years of functioning in a global pandemic. Teachers need a livable wage in the face of inflation. Teachers are taking on a lot to ensure that students' needs are being met. It is time that we look at teachers' needs so that we can retain these quality teachers and continue to provide high-quality education to our students in a rapidly changing world.

Please help Alaska retain and recruit high-quality teachers and staff members by approving an increase to the BSA. The future of our students depends on it.

*Hannah Dolphin*

**Assistant Principal**  
**Mountain View Elementary**

**(907)283-8600**

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jasmine Maurer <jazmaurer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 7:45 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase K-12 school funding

Hello,

I am writing to express my support of increasing K-12 school funding. Our students and Alaskas future deserve access to funding to support excellence in education through well trained and supported staff, music, art, and STEM classes activities.

The Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage concluded that by 2019, even though Alaska pays more than any other state on a per-student basis, the cost of living here is so high that once that factor is included, public schools here received less money than the national average.

Don't delay another year increase school budgets now.

Thank you

Jasmine

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jeanne Anderson <anderson.jeanne87@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 12:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** It's time to increase funding!

To whom it may concern,

I just read an article that indicates the per student allocation has not been raised since 2016. Our students deserve better. They are growing in a rapidly changing world in the time of a pandemic and classroom teachers are worried about trying to share boxes of crayons. Our teachers need to be able to buy supplies and support their classrooms in order to focus on giving kids the care and attention they need while we address the residual effects of schooling during COVID. PLEASE increase the per student allocation. PLEASE.

Thanks for the consideration,

Jeanne Anderson (occupational therapist in a KPBSD school)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** jeff budd <jbudd3500@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 8:55 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support Senate Bill 52

Dear Senate Education Committee, I support Senate Bill 52. Please make sure our children all across Alaska get the best education they can possibly get. This is a great start. Thank you. Jeff Budd, Sitka, AK

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jeni Mason <jenimason@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am a mother, leader, educator, and community member. I have been in education for 22 years and a mother for 14 years. Being a principal in our small district, I have felt the impact of the flat funding for the past six years. We are geographically spread out in our district with three brick and mortar schools minimally 45 miles apart and then two homeschool offices residing outside of our borough. Even through our district is small, flat funding had already affected our schools. We have very small schools, ranging from less than ten to 30 students as well as a larger school of less than 200 students and a homeschool program with less than 900 students. Our staff is exceptional, and we find resources that work for us as well as resources that are financially affordable. Each year, we have to look at how we can continue to keep all the schools open and have the staff and resources we need for all of our students. Sadly, this upcoming year, two of our three brick and mortar schools are in jeopardy of being shut down. These schools are a hub for our small communities. These students would need to transfer to another school, in another town for next year if our doors cannot be left open. Staff would need to uproot their work locations and either move or drive daily to work in the school(s) that remain open. This is very hard on each individual person and as a whole community. With an increase of base student allocations, we could perhaps be able to keep our small schools open in order for the community that the kids grow up in, to continue to learn in. As a leader, I want what is best for all of our students. I want them to have a rich and rigorous education, grow to be responsive and responsible humans with rich character that is tied to their communities. As a parent, I also wish for the same; a vibrant educational experience that is rigorous and culturally deep within the community we reside. With flat funding, all of our students suffer. Our students might have to be uprooted to a new community to learn and feel the fall out of program cuts and staffing decreases across all sites. With flat funding, our communities will suffer. Flat funding has to come to an end. AASB has resolved for an increase of not less than \$860. Increase the base student allocation.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity for voice.

Sincerely,

Jeni Mason  
Regional Principal and Special Education Director  
406-460-0629  
Denali Borough School District  
PO Box 280, Healy, AK. 99743

[jenimason@dbsd.org](mailto:jenimason@dbsd.org)

Working together to nurture, empower, and inspire today's student to positively shape tomorrow's world.

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jennifer Grant <grantj@sitkaschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:05 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

To the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing as both a parent and an educator. I've been teaching in the Sitka School District for the past 16 years, and EVERY year it seems that we face budget shortfalls and cuts to staff. The process is always extremely stressful for teachers. This year, again, we have been told by our superintendent that we are looking at a deficit of more than \$2.5 million in our small district. This translates to larger class sizes, fewer resources for students, cuts to programs, limited access to reading and math intervention, and so much more.

Last year at my school we lost our science program, and we've been told that we likely won't ever get it back. This put the burden of teaching science on classroom teachers (grades 2-5), yet we were given no materials or curriculum with which to teach science. The result was teachers spending a lot of time and our own money finding quality science lessons and materials. This is just once small example of how we are continually being asked to do more, with less.

As a parent of three children, I am concerned about the future of education funding. My youngest is a freshman in high school; my older two graduated in 2018 and 2021. Even though that is a relatively short span of time, I have noticed a more limited selection of classes at the high school level. I feel we could be doing more to prepare our high school students for college and the workforce.

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaska Students. I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

## Jennifer Grant

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary  
(907) 966-1711

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kimberly Bakkes <kbakkes@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:08 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Bill 52

I strongly support passing Senate Bill 52.

Costs have climbed significantly since school funding was last increased in 2017.

As a parent with two kids in school, this issue is very important to me. Currently, I feel satisfied that I can live in Alaska and work a professional job in medicine related to the fact that they are getting what they need from school in education and development. But they cannot afford additional cuts.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Bakkes, MD

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kimberly Leslie <KLeslie@KPBSD.k12.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 10:36 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** HB 52 Testimony

Public school students grow up to BE the community, to BE the workforce, to BE the neighbors, to BE the leaders, to BE the solution finders, to BE the productive, kind, citizens of Alaska. Of course we should throw every resource we can at our schools. Of course we should provide ample time and consistency in our support.

Thank you,

*Kim Leslie*

Pronouns: she, her, hers  
Science Teacher  
High School iChoice Team  
KPBSD  
907-224-9082  
Twitter: @KNRLEsleie



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kristi Wood <bikemoredriveless@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:21 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please inflation proof the BSA

Please increase the BSA. The proposed \$1,000 is a good start, however I don't think that is enough, as it doesn't bring up the BSA to match our historic inflation. As a long term resident of Alaska who loves it here and has always assumed I would remain here, I'm very concerned about the outmigration of working age Alaskans. Will I want to retire in Alaska if this outmigration continues and the lack of investment in Alaskan's education further contributes to the shrinking of our skilled workforce? What will happen to the value of my home if my neighborhood school closes due to lack of funding? Why should my teenage son remain in Alaska if there isn't a robust local university system for him and why should he return to Alaska to raise his own family if there isn't a robust school system for his children? How on earth can we expect Alaska to have a healthy economic future if we aren't willing to invest in that future?

Thank you,  
Kristi Wood  
Anchorage resident

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lisa Paesani <lpaesani@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:23 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase the BSA

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA for our schools. I am wanting you to listen and abide by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee to raise the BSA by at least 1000.

If Alaska does not insure our schools are properly funded, in order to acquire and keep good teachers and have smaller class room sizes, our population will continue to decline, especially those in educated fields. Already we have a worker crisis in Alaska. People will not move here or stay here if they see their children can not get a good education here. This issue applies to all Alaskans. Please find our schools by increasing our BSA by at least 1000.

Thank you,  
M Lisa Paesani, MSW

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Madisen Lundamo <mclundamo04@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 7:10 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Written Testimony in Support of SB 52

Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am Madisen Lundamo from Ketchikan and a senior at Ketchikan High School. Today I am writing to represent myself as a student in Alaska and a child of an educator. I am in full support of Senate Bill 52 because education is the very foundation of our communities and society. My mother has taught for 23 years in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District as an elementary teacher, and now is the Dean of Students at Houghtaling Elementary. Through her, I have witnessed the dedication every great teacher gives to every unique student in their school.

In the case of my mother especially, school is much more than a building full of classrooms, but rather a second home. Her classroom is bursting with flairs of her personality and embellished with seasonal decorations. Every seat is different and offers unique comforts. She has a large tank with two red-ear slider turtles swimming about. The overhead lights are never used as the room is illuminated with holiday twinkle lights and lamps. There's an essential oils diffuser going off every so often, filling the air with calming scents. For some time she even had a reading loft in a corner of her room! What an amazing environment to learn in, right?

Every single one of these items was paid for out of pocket by my mom because her stipend barely covered the extra comforts of an excellent classroom. This is the case with every single beyond-typical classroom in that elementary school. My mom's colleagues have used their own personal funds to improve the educational environment of their students for years.

Every single classroom in Alaska could be as comfortable and prosperous as those in the elementary school I grew up in with sufficient funding.

In my high school, students' education is taking a drastic hit due to underfunding. Teachers are in and out. Programs have uncertain futures. While my generation has been labelled as "resilient," we are seeing more and more struggles to bounce back after each hit. There is a stark shortage of substitute teachers which leads to classes being held in the library, overburdening our librarians. I have sat in the library with at least four other classes and it is not a civil picture. The environment is headachingly loud, the librarians are stretched so thin that administrators are in and out checking on the students, and there certainly is no learning happening. Programs such as Advanced Placement or AP classes are at risk to be cut due to a lack of qualified teachers. Our language classes are subpar at best due to poor quality teachers. I, a passionate and dedicated student, have found myself dreading the eight hours a day I spend at school.

There is a butterfly effect caused by a lack of funding in our education system. The school district is doing as much as they can with the little money they have, teachers are unable to provide opportunities to students, the students dread school, their education takes a hit, and in the years to come we will be made fully aware of the negative impacts. Students and teachers thrive in fully funded schools, causing our society itself to thrive. We cannot fight nor prevent great tragedies and societal illnesses such as violence, mental health crises, bullying, racial and cultural injustices, suicide, abuse, addiction, and more without prosperous schools.

Thus I urge you to remain in support of SB 52, an act to increase the BSA, and consequently an act to ensure the future of our education system and Alaska as a whole.

Thank you and Sincerely,  
Madisen Lundamo

[mclundamo04@gmail.com](mailto:mclundamo04@gmail.com)

(907) 617-0417

237 Cranberry Road  
Ketchikan, AK 99901

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michael Wald <info@arcticwild.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 4:03 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Hello Senators

Thank you for making education funding a priority at the start of the legislative session. This is a critically important issue not only for students but for our entire state. We desperately need to increase the BSA by a minimum of \$1000.

Education funding has not increased for years and the cost of nearly everything has increased dramatically. The state has slowly defunded our schools and many are now at a breaking point. Districts that have been solvent and responsible for decades are unable to pay utility bills. Our urban schools are moth-balling buildings. We have hundreds of unfilled job vacancies for teaching positions across the state. Our school districts need more money from the state. The funding is over due and a \$1000 increase will not even keep up with the accumulated inflation.

I urge you to increase the BSA by at least \$1000. What is more important for the future of Alaska than our youth?

Thank you for serving on the legislator.

Michael

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Michael Wald  
Owner Arctic Wild  
[Michael@arcticwild.com](mailto:Michael@arcticwild.com)  
907-479-8203  
[www.arcticwild.com](http://www.arcticwild.com)



## Michael Mason

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**From:** michal <michal\_1939@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:30 PM  
**To:** Senate Education; Sen. Matt Claman  
**Subject:** I support increased funding for our public schools

Dear legislators:

Please support our students and teachers. Our students fare very poorly in standardized testing. School funding has been flat for a decade. Increasing funding for our public schools gives our kids a better education and invests in their future and that of Alaska. Please know that I support increasing funding for our school, at the expense of other government programs and the PFD dividend. I would also support state taxes to have excellent public schools in Alaska. As a parent of two elementary school kids in Anchorage, quality public education is a priority for me.

Thank you for your time.

Michal Stryszak  
Anchorage, AK 99517

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michele Elfers <michele@alaskaflyfishinggoods.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:36 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 - Raise the BSA

Good afternoon,

Please vote to support raising the BSA a minimum of \$1000 per student. We need more funding than this for our students.

I have a daughter in middle school and one in elementary school. Their class sizes are 28-35 students per class with one teacher. I hear stories from my middle schooler of kids jumping on tables and breaking them, balls being thrown, basically chaos in class because the teacher cannot control the class with so many kids. She is not being challenged because the teachers are not able to address all the varied needs and learning levels in such large classes. She sits in the gym on many days because teachers are out and there are no substitute teachers.

Next year, she goes to high school and the highschool closest to us has a part time art teacher and kids can't get into art classes. She wants to be a designer - engineer/architect, so she is looking for math and art classes. In this same school, they are struggling to keep their CAD program.

Our schools are in crisis and there is nothing I can do for my kids, we don't have any other options. Please provide more funding now.

Michele Elfers

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Nancy Mendenhall <mendenhallnancy01@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 2:26 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** HB52

This is the most important Education bill for you to get passed. I have lived in Western AK since the early Sixties and most of this time in Nome School District, associated with teachers through my work on boards, committees and jobs. It is obvious how low funding has affected maintenance of our old buildings, classroom numbers size, and teacher retention. The retention problem is also related to lack of adequate housing for teachers as well as salaries not keeping up with COL. Some vacant positions funded could not get applicants this fall. The message families are getting is that the state doesn't care about the children, the working citizens of tomorrow. I know that's not true, but that's how it comes across. Thank you for fighting hard to get a significant bill passed to relieve this situation.

**Nancy Mendenhall**

<http://nancydanielsonmendenhall.strikingly.com>

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Eric and Tricia Miller <millerstead@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:56 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please raise the base student allocation

Dear members of the Alaska legislature,

I'm writing as a parent to urge you to raise the base student allocation this session. Kids in Alaska NEED YOUR HELP. Our children have fallen behind since Covid and the only thing that can help them get back on track is more support. And support is not free. I have two school-aged students in Fairbanks. My son suffers from a sensory processing disorder that makes it very hard for him to function in school. He's not alone. There are many kids who have similar challenges that make it more difficult and more work for them if they are to succeed. My son's school and his teachers are amazing. But they can't provide extra support because the school doesn't have funding to provide extra classroom aides. They do the best they can with what they have, but it isn't enough. Children who aren't receiving the extra support they need in the classroom suffer, but so do the rest of the kids, because their learning experience is constantly disrupted.

Because the base student allocation has remained frozen despite the enormous challenges of the last few years, education is being hamstrung in this state. Class sizes are ballooning. Cuts are affecting every single student in this state. Since children ARE the future, we are shorting the future of Alaska by this massive disservice to our kids.

Yes, I know, money is tight everywhere. But let's look at the long approach- supporting education for our kids has got to be our number one priority.

I urge you to do the right thing and vote to increase the base student allocation.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Miller  
Fairbanks, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Paul Rioux <paulg.rioux@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:03 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Committee members,

I'd like to offer non partisan praise for SB52.  
Alaska education system is currently hamstrung by inflation.  
Please support this bill.

Yours,  
Paul Rioux  
Sitka, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sandy Blomfield <aksandyb@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 7:07 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Sandy Blomfield  
**Subject:** BSA Funding

Senators,  
(Education Committee)

Your committee has the opportunity to change the role of education in Alaska.

As you consider the increase in BSA per student funding, I respectfully request that you consolidate all education funding to follow the student rather than the local school districts.

We have all witnessed the dramatic decline in educational scores for Alaskan kids despite more legislative funding. Elementary students are subjected to a liberal and dangerous agenda from many local school boards.

Now is the time to TIE the BSA funding allotments and district monies directly to the parent/students for SCHOOL CHOICE!

You have the power to make positive changes in our youth statewide with funds appropriated directly to students. The Senate Education committee must take this bold stand now to ensure we offer our Alaskan children the best education possible by allowing SCHOOL CHOICE through funding.

I have been an education advocate for many, many years and will continue to work on behalf of our vulnerable children. If you need assistance, please refer to the lower 48 states that have already allowed, through statute, funding following the student.

This is our responsibility and I hope you take it seriously.

Thank you,  
Sandra Blomfield

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Scott Hayden <scotthayd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 2:35 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support raising the BSA by over \$1,000

Thank you for taking up the BSA increase. We as a State have to commit to a meaningful, robust education for every child in Alaska.

Right now we are not doing that.

It is long past time for an education funding increase for Alaska. The Base Student Allocation has fallen far behind inflation, and our schools are showing it. A friend started teaching 6th grade this year at a Title 1 school with 38 kids in her 6th grade classroom. About 1/3 of those kids are special needs kids, and because of unfilled positions at the school they were not receiving their legally mandated support.

Ask yourself what kind of education those special needs kids are receiving. Without extra help on math, will they learn how percentages work? Without extra help in reading, will they even learn what a sentence is? And what about the smartest kids in that class -- with a teacher occupied by students (*who should legally* have aids assisting them) throwing tantrums on the floor, is that teacher able to teach the rest of the class to their full potential?

The Anchorage School Board is grappling with ways to solve these problems, but without adequate funding they struggle in vain. My kids are in the Anchorage School District. I do not believe they are able to reach their full potential when class sizes are over 30 kids in a classroom.

At a minimum the BSA has to be adjusted to catch up with (and keep up with!) inflation. I support an increase of *at least* \$1000 per student to the BSA. We don't just need to stop the bleeding, we need to repair the damage.

Class sizes need to be closer to 25, not 35!

We have to invest in a solid, meaningful education for these kids. With the resources currently available, they are not getting what they need.

Please increase the BSA to a level that keep our schools healthy and our kids learning.

Sincerely  
Scott Hayden  
12304 Hilltop Dr  
Anchorage AK 99515

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Sherman Caruthers <shermancaruthers@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Dear distinguished members of the Alaskan Senate.

I urge you to please consider a yes vote for the bi-partisan SB52 that is in the hopper. It has been 6 years since we have had an increase of funding per student and with the rise of inflation in recent years, I fear that the "status quo" approach of flat "flat funding" will end up with teachers and programs for our youth to be cut due to expense.

Please vote yes on SB52

Sincerely,  
Claude Sherman Weinberger-Caruthers  
Big Lake, Alaska

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**Sherman Caruthers**  
*Secretary/Vendor Coordinator*  
*Denali Peak Correspondence/Homeschool Program*  
*Wasilla Office*  
*(907) 357-2730*



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Susan Litman <litman.susan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:24 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Good Morning Members of the Senate Education Committee-

I strongly support Senate Bill 52 that would increase the BSA by \$1,000.

It has been years since the BSA was increased while inflation has continued to soar. We owe it to our students in this state to make sure their education is adequately funded.

Thank you,  
Susan Litman  
Sitka

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ayla Walker <aylawalker@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 4:11 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Student Testimony

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Tri-Valley Student Council, we strongly support the SB52 proposed House bill. As students within the Denali Borough School District, we understand the outcome of this bill will affect our school district drastically. Similarly to many other districts in Alaska, our district and school are facing a budget crisis that will significantly impact each student. There are three proposed plans for the upcoming school year, which include closing schools within the district. The first option consists of keeping all schools open with major staffing cuts at all three schools. The second option involves closing one school while keeping the remaining two open with budget cuts at both locations. Lastly, the third option would close the two smaller schools and consolidate all students and staff into one brick-and-mortar site. This proposal requires the students to bus for at least 45 minutes in winter road conditions. There is a small school within our district that is at the largest risk of closure, as it contains the least amount of students. This school resides within an Alaska Native village, and the students share a strong connection with their land and community. Consequently, closing their school and forcing the students to enroll in a different system will have a tremendous impact on their way of life and culture. Therefore, the proposed house bill will significantly benefit the Denali Borough School District and its students. Please put student education in the state as priority number one. We are counting on you for a bright future.

Sincerely,

Tri-Valley High School Student Council

## Michael Mason

---

**From:** Tyler Smoker <tyler.smoker@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 9:39 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Testimony of a former JSD employee

I was a student in the Juneau School District for 13 years and graduated from JDHS in 2004. After college I worked as a substitute teacher for 5 years, and during that time covered almost every job in the district at least once. Most days were spent in Special Education classrooms, ranging from Pre-K through Transitions. The time spent working in SpEd classrooms inspired me to pursue a Doctoral degree in Occupational Therapy, and I returned to JSD to put that degree to work in 2018. After just 4 years, I've left the district. In total, I've spent 22 of my 36 years as either a student or employee of JSD.

I left for a lot of reasons. Among them is the fact that since I started as an OT, I continually had an excessively large caseload (50-70 students) that prevented me from providing quality services. This issue has been raised with administration repeatedly by many related service providers (including OTs, Speech Language Pathologists, and Physical Therapists), with no discernable action. One of the most effective coworkers I had moved to a public school in Colorado, where their caseload is capped at 25. I know that teachers are experiencing the same problem, as their classrooms become more crowded and less manageable. It's no surprise that administration has been ineffective in addressing these issues, as there has been little opportunity for leadership from Student Services.

Most of the time I was at JSD, there was no director of Student Services. Dr. Weiss may have been the director in title, but the idea that any person could do that job effectively while also being superintendent is ludicrous. There were two other people that tried to take on that role, but neither stayed long enough to learn how to do the job effectively or make any real positive change in the department.

There has been little opportunity to engage with Student Services (my former supervisors and leaders) for at least the last two years, because their entire staff has been covering full-time teaching positions that the district has been unable to fill. It's no accident that teachers don't stay in the DEC classrooms, because the case management and paraeducator supervision workloads take up all their time. Students with intensive needs require substantial skill and time to work with safely, and perpetual vacancies in SpEd have created unethical, dangerous environments for staff and students.

There is little financial reason to make a career out of teaching in Juneau. Tier 3 retirement is a cruel joke, and the consequences of it are evident in staffing. There are many Tier 2 staff that are motivated to stay until retirement, as they've been in long enough to have climbed the pay scale and their retirement is worth staying for. Tier 3 employees have no reason to stay other than their dedication to this community's children and their love of the profession. Those only go so far, particularly when systemic issues chisel away at the reasons people wanted to become teachers in the first place. In the 4 years I worked for the district, I saw no real increase in my take-home pay, as health insurance costs rose enough annually to eclipse the meager salary increases. One of the saddest facts I encountered on beginning my career as an OT is that Anchorage educators make 10k more per year than JEA members. The fact that every state job pays more in Juneau than Anchorage should illustrate how ridiculous that disparity is.

I recognize that all these problems are not unique to Juneau. What's unique about Juneau is that we know each other, that administrators and teachers see each other at the grocery store, on trails, at parks. We are all members of the same community. What we need is administration standing with JEA to demand appropriate funding from the legislature. Many administration level staff have been working hard to keep Special Education afloat, but make no mistake, the ship is sinking.

Sincerely,



## Michael Mason

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**From:** vicki vermillion <bveaalaska@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 2:37 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** School funding

Dear Ma'am and Sir,

There is NOTHING more important than appropriately increasing public school funding.

Thank you, Vicki Vermillion  
52 year resident of Alaska and mom of 2 public school graduates

Sent from my iPad

## Michael Mason

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**From:** victory lavelle <victory.lavelle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:12 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support raising the BSA for our children.

Dear Alaska senate,

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

As a parent of a special needs twice exceptional child; I have seen many angles of this lacking budget.

My daughter went from the highly gifted classroom to a general education program. Her class increased from 13-28!

My daughter became the "bad kid" that no one could deal with. The classroom toxic for all students, teachers, aids.

That all changed when she was moved into the SBBS program. She now loves school, she is thriving, succeeding, winning awards. Teachers and staff have the opportunity to meet her needs and it is beautiful. We actually now have a hope that she may go further than high school in life.

Our family is safe, healthy, and hopeful due to the amazing coaching and staff at Kasuun elementary. It's only been one year but our daughter is thriving!!!!. I fear that with her moving into 6th grade the reinforcements and supports will be taken away if all middle school starts at 6th grade. If there is no increase in funding there will be more need for SRO (SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS).

Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive and is akin to expecting better morale and performance in a workplace while treating one's employees with disrespect while simultaneously demanding that your employees work more hours for the same pay.

The BSA hasn't been meaningfully raised since 2012. This is known as flat funding. When inflation goes up but your paycheck doesn't, you have less money to spend. This is why flat funding is really a budget cut.

Please increase the BSA, keep our children safe and healthy.

Victory Cheney

1041 e 26th Ave Anchorage AK 99508

9079526200

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Windy Thorn <windythorn@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:06 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Support

I am contacting in regards to the SB52 bill. I am a parent and paraprofessional at Cantwell School in Cantwell, Alaska. I am in support of the bill.

The Denali Borough School District has been talking about closing the Cantwell and Anderson School's since before Covid-19. The district can't afford to keep the schools in the district open with the funding they have. It may be a problem of their own making, but it still doesn't sit right that schools are closing and you have the ability to change that. I am a parent to two young kids. My family is building our forever home here. I feel that all kids in Alaska should have access to quality education in their place of residence. We have come too far to take steps back. We shouldn't be taking kids from villages and sending them anywhere. We have seen the toll that can take on the student and family for years.

You have the power, use it.

Help keep our kids on track, don't continue to derail them.

Raise the BSA and help the kids of Alaska continue to thrive.

Sincerely,

Windy Thorn  
907-841-4018

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Scott Hayden <scotthayd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 2:35 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support raising the BSA by over \$1,000

Thank you for taking up the BSA increase. We as a State have to commit to a meaningful, robust education for every child in Alaska.

Right now we are not doing that.

It is long past time for an education funding increase for Alaska. The Base Student Allocation has fallen far behind inflation, and our schools are showing it. A friend started teaching 6th grade this year at a Title 1 school with 38 kids in her 6th grade classroom. About 1/3 of those kids are special needs kids, and because of unfilled positions at the school they were not receiving their legally mandated support.

Ask yourself what kind of education those special needs kids are receiving. Without extra help on math, will they learn how percentages work? Without extra help in reading, will they even learn what a sentence is? And what about the smartest kids in that class -- with a teacher occupied by students (*who should legally* have aids assisting them) throwing tantrums on the floor, is that teacher able to teach the rest of the class to their full potential?

The Anchorage School Board is grappling with ways to solve these problems, but without adequate funding they struggle in vain. My kids are in the Anchorage School District. I do not believe they are able to reach their full potential when class sizes are over 30 kids in a classroom.

At a minimum the BSA has to be adjusted to catch up with (and keep up with!) inflation. I support an increase of *at least* \$1000 per student to the BSA. We don't just need to stop the bleeding, we need to repair the damage.

Class sizes need to be closer to 25, not 35!

We have to invest in a solid, meaningful education for these kids. With the resources currently available, they are not getting what they need.

Please increase the BSA to a level that keep our schools healthy and our kids learning.

Sincerely  
Scott Hayden  
12304 Hilltop Dr  
Anchorage AK 99515



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sherman Caruthers <shermancaruthers@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52

Dear distinguished members of the Alaskan Senate.

I urge you to please consider a yes vote for the bi-partisan SB52 that is in the hopper. It has been 6 years since we have had an increase of funding per student and with the rise of inflation in recent years, I fear that the "status quo" approach of flat "flat funding" will end up with teachers and programs for our youth to be cut due to expense.

Please vote yes on SB52

Sincerely,  
Claude Sherman Weinberger-Caruthers  
Big Lake, Alaska

--

**Sherman Caruthers**  
*Secretary/Vendor Coordinator*  
*Denali Peak Correspondence/Homeschool Program*  
*Wasilla Office*  
*(907) 357-2730*

February 14, 2023

To our Alaska Legislation:

Sitka High School student council is writing to you today to advocate for our education. We believe that Senate Bill 52 will help with mental health, keeping extracurriculars in our schools, CTE programs, teacher retention and more. By increasing the BSA it not only helps students today but future generations of students in Alaska.

As you know, Senate Bill 52 is "An Act relating to education; increasing the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date." This will raise the BSA by \$1,000, which is huge for our state and education. Our district alone would receive around \$1.3 million, which would cut our deficit down. If the BSA increases, our local government will be able to grant us additional funds.

Our first point is the importance of increasing the BSA. How much of an increase is needed? Well, just to match school funding levels in 2009, we would need to increase the BSA by around \$2,200. Think about the occurring inflation since 2009! Schools around Alaska are having to make tough decisions about what programs to keep. Here in Sitka, we are already at the bare bones. If we cut one teacher, then we cut an entire program. If a program is cut, then we will lose the interest of students who are on the fence about education to start with. Howard Wayne, the American Government teacher here at Sitka High School, says "With inflation driving up the costs of things like fuel and supplies, if we do not add to the BSA, programs will be cut, and schools will close."

Secondly, mental health is particularly important to all the students in our school. By not funding schools and forcing cuts, these programs that are considered "extra" will no longer enable students to discover their passions and easily find a reason to be happy at school. To provide additional information on mental health in Alaska, as of 2020, Alaska had the second highest suicide rates in the country, and it was the seventh leading cause of death. For many students, the highlight of their days are their extracurriculars. With limited access to mental health professionals in our school, any additional cuts on mental health services would negatively affect students. This is something we will need to face if the BSA is not significantly increased.

Finally, we would like to touch on teacher retention and retirement. Over the years, retirement programs for teachers in Alaska have continually gotten worse and worse. In fact, Alaska holds the record for the state with the worst teacher retirement package. Specifically in Sitka, the cost of living is so high that teachers who began working in the district after the year 2005 might not have enough money in their retirement savings to live off. This is because in 2006, Tier 3 began and the retirement packages were dramatically cut. Teachers are also unable to collect social security. If teachers even want to retire, "They'll have to invest their own money in the bank," is what Howard Wayne said regarding this issue. Increasing the BSA would also help teacher retention and retirement. Teacher retention is essential because of the relationships built between students and teachers over many years. Building these bonds creates safe spaces for students and allows for a better school environment. Additionally, the cost of hiring and training new teachers every year is an expensive process. By creating a competitive market for teachers, we will see higher teacher retention rates and higher quality teachers attracted to our beautiful state.

In conclusion, thank you for taking the time to read this letter. A BSA increase of \$1000 would help our schools keep teachers and programs and allow students access to mental health services. As elected members it is your constitutional responsibility to fully fund education in the Great State of Alaska. We hope you consider a significant increase to the BSA and supporting Senate Bill 52 for the future generations of students in Alaska.

With highest regards,

Sitka High School student council

*Francis*  
*Sumner*  
*Erin*  
*Erin Myers*  
*Guinevere*  
*Clivic Sean*  
*John*  
*Suvin*  
*Javira*  
*Edmond*  
*Danica*  
*Majestei*  
*Michael*  
*Angie*  
*Carl*

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Steven Shannon <steven.shannon@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 11:07 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Public Testimony HB 52

Dear Alaska State Senators,

I am writing in regards to House Bill 52 and the proposed increase in the Base Student Allocation. I have been a teacher in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District for 15 years. For nearly half of that time, there has been NO CHANGE in the BSA. We have seen every aspect of providing a quality education to our students rise in cost.

From feeding them, to keeping the lights on, to retaining quality educators in the classroom, the prices are rising, and our state is failing to meet those needs. We are teaching in buildings that are falling apart. Literally, this fall our school, Hutchison High School had to wait to open our school in August because of the failure of old electrical parts that burned out due to a windstorm in JULY. We are finding out that all of our school buildings are also relying on this same outdated equipment. Buildings' roofs are failing, mold is growing, and equipment is rotting, and quality teachers are moving on to greener pastures. What is that leaving behind for our students when the people that teach and the places where they learn are simply left on the back burner for our state's budget? I can tell you, it leaves a state that is ranked 49th in the nation for PreK-12 education.

Every year we have managed to wring water from a rock, but we can't do it anymore. My own classroom budget has nearly been cut in half since I started, while the cost of goods and class materials has done nothing but rise. Please support the SBA increase by voting for House Bill 52. Schools, teachers, students and their families need this help.

Signed,

A teacher that's tired of being overlooked.

--

Steven Shannon, M.S., NSCA-CPT

Spanish/Physical Education/English

Hutchison High School

(907) 479-2261 ex. 35144 (email preferred)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Susan Brandt-Ferguson <srjferguson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:46 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Increase

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am a life-long Alaskan, the parent of a school-aged Alaskan, and I have been a teacher for over 25 years in Sitka. I am so encouraged by SB 52! By raising the BSA by \$1,000 we will simply be putting education funding back to levels that have been eroded by inflation. Our schools need this funding to teach the children of Alaska! Thank you for making education a priority right off the bat in this legislative session. Passing this bill quickly will help schools budget appropriately for next year!

-Susan Brandt-Ferguson  
1603 Sawmill Creek Rd  
Sitka, Alaska 99835

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Susan Litman <litman.susan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 9:24 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 52

Good Morning Members of the Senate Education Committee-

I strongly support Senate Bill 52 that would increase the BSA by \$1,000.

It has been years since the BSA was increased while inflation has continued to soar. We owe it to our students in this state to make sure their education is adequately funded.

Thank you,  
Susan Litman  
Sitka

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Terri Pauls <terri.alaska@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 1:32 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Raise BSA

Senate Education Committee,

A quality education of Alaska's youth is a wise and important investment, not only for a knowledgeable and innovative workforce in the future, but also for a citizenry that can think critically, which is necessary to maintain and improve democratic governance.

Therefore, I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago. Teachers can only be effective with a reasonable number of students in a class.

SB 52, a bill proposing to raise the Base Student Allocation by \$1,000, is a good step toward ensuring that Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan students.

Thank you,

Terri Pauls, Alaskan resident since 1991



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Tiffany Damota <t.damotasupplee@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 6:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I do not support increasing

I do not support increasing the amount given, simply because we are highly funded with horrible outcomes and scores already. I will not allow my children in public school at this point, so raising the amount and taking away more money from PFD's is taking away from my student's education when we already help pay for everyone else's education and don't get to use public schools ourselves. I would love for my kids to be able to enjoy public's schools, but it's simply not an option at this point with how horrible the Fairbanks schools are. My children received a poor education when they were there, and my oldest daughter was bullied and tormented by support staff. There's propaganda in the schools, and bottom of the barrel for testing scores. They need to re focus, not throw more money at it. My kids don't get to enjoy sports and music in public schools and quite frankly no one is owed that. We can be responsible for our own children's extra curricular activities, if it means giving them another dime for a failing system. I already pay property tax on 3 properties and do not get to use schools for public education I don't need my dividend and my kids dividends stolen to give a failing system MORE money. Top 2 in the nation for funding and bottom 2 in test scores, it's time to figure something out because it's not a lack of money problem. People are walking away from public education, it's time to make them be held accountable for the money they waste already.

Thank you  
Tiffany Supplee  
Fairbanks district 34

Sent from my iPhone



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ayla Walker <aylawalker@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 4:11 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Student Testimony

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Tri-Valley Student Council, we strongly support the SB52 proposed House bill. As students within the Denali Borough School District, we understand the outcome of this bill will affect our school district drastically. Similarly to many other districts in Alaska, our district and school are facing a budget crisis that will significantly impact each student. There are three proposed plans for the upcoming school year, which include closing schools within the district. The first option consists of keeping all schools open with major staffing cuts at all three schools. The second option involves closing one school while keeping the remaining two open with budget cuts at both locations. Lastly, the third option would close the two smaller schools and consolidate all students and staff into one brick-and-mortar site. This proposal requires the students to bus for at least 45 minutes in winter road conditions. There is a small school within our district that is at the largest risk of closure, as it contains the least amount of students. This school resides within an Alaska Native village, and the students share a strong connection with their land and community. Consequently, closing their school and forcing the students to enroll in a different system will have a tremendous impact on their way of life and culture. Therefore, the proposed house bill will significantly benefit the Denali Borough School District and its students. Please put student education in the state as priority number one. We are counting on you for a bright future.

Sincerely,

Tri-Valley High School Student Council

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Tyler Smoker <tyler.smoker@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 3, 2023 9:39 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Testimony of a former JSD employee

I was a student in the Juneau School District for 13 years and graduated from JDHS in 2004. After college I worked as a substitute teacher for 5 years, and during that time covered almost every job in the district at least once. Most days were spent in Special Education classrooms, ranging from Pre-K through Transitions. The time spent working in SpEd classrooms inspired me to pursue a Doctoral degree in Occupational Therapy, and I returned to JSD to put that degree to work in 2018. After just 4 years, I've left the district. In total, I've spent 22 of my 36 years as either a student or employee of JSD.

I left for a lot of reasons. Among them is the fact that since I started as an OT, I continually had an excessively large caseload (50-70 students) that prevented me from providing quality services. This issue has been raised with administration repeatedly by many related service providers (including OTs, Speech Language Pathologists, and Physical Therapists), with no discernable action. One of the most effective coworkers I had moved to a public school in Colorado, where their caseload is capped at 25. I know that teachers are experiencing the same problem, as their classrooms become more crowded and less manageable. It's no surprise that administration has been ineffective in addressing these issues, as there has been little opportunity for leadership from Student Services.

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I recognize that all these problems are not unique to Juneau. What's unique about Juneau is that we know each other, that administrators and teachers see each other at the grocery store, on trails, at parks. We are all members of the same community. What we need is administration standing with JEA to demand appropriate funding from the legislature. Many administration level staff have been working hard to keep Special Education afloat, but make no mistake, the ship is sinking.

Sincerely,



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Uran Christensen <upiedra@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023 9:22 AM  
**To:** assemblyclerk@kpb.us; boardofeducation@kpbsd.k12.ak.us; Rep. Sarah Vance; Sen. Gary Stevens; House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** KPBSD Budget Cuts

Good morning,

I am writing as a parent regarding the funding cuts proposed for next year. The cuts proposed will negatively impact our community, and I am proposing that they not be made.

To tell you a little about myself - I am a parent of two school-age children in Homer. My oldest son is a junior at Homer High School and my middle son is a 3rd grader at West Homer. I also have a 4 year old who will join the public school system in 2024. I am a volunteer within the schools, and I am passionate about public education.

I also work in this community helping to fuel the local economy. I am CFO of Seldovia Village Tribe and my husband and I own and operate our own air taxi business (Kachemak Air Service).

As a parent and an involved member of the Homer community, I am directly impacted by the funding decisions for our schools. As a finance person, however, I understand the need to have enough funding to perform at the level needed.

Therefore I am writing to show my support for an increase of \$700 to the base student allocation. I am also requesting that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly fund KPBSD to the cap. Finally, I am requesting that we keep our district pools and theatres open. These resources are critical to our children's wellbeing.

Thank you for considering my position as a parent and proud member of the wonderful Homer community

Regards,  
Uran Christensen  
770-331-3162

## Michael Mason

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**From:** U Hoffmann <uwehoffmann@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 4:20 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Base Student Allocation Increase by \$1000

Dear Senate Education Committee,

An increase in the BSA of \$1000 will help especially small community schools with operating costs, as district budgets are tied and the danger for closing schools is real. It would be devastating for communities to lose their school. It would also close the communities to families with children to move in. In addition students would have to travel for hours to attend school in neighboring communities, cutting them out from after school activities and community involvement.

I urge our legislators to do everything to assure students can attend schools in their community by increasing the BSA to help with increased cost for schools and school curricula. Students are the future of Alaska.

Thank you,

Uwe Hoffmann

Teacher

Anderson School

Anderson, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Velvet Ivers <wvivers@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 8, 2023 9:23 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Comment

February 8, 2023

Velvet Ivers  
PO Box 42  
Yakutat, AK 99689

Dear Alaska Legislators,

My name is Velvet Ivers, and I am a retired elementary school teacher from Yakutat, Alaska. I continue to work part-time with Yakutat School District. I am writing to express my wishes for an increase in the base student allocation, under SB52. I understand that it has not had an increase since 2017, and we are definitely in extraordinarily challenging times.

When I started teaching in 1998, our school was flourishing with two school buildings filled with kids who had opportunities to learn music, art, band, computer lab, and many other classes to boost their chances at academic success. We had staff to cover the library and the computer lab, and we ran many extra-curricular programs. We were even once able to offer a school lunch program, and bus service.

Over the past decade, we have lost almost all of that. When we started losing programs, we started losing students, since families want more opportunities for their kids. The more students we lost, the more funding we lost. It is a vicious cycle. We started to lose teaching positions. Some of us had to take on three grades, and most teachers took on two grades. I can assure you it is a tremendous amount of work to give a child what he or she deserves: a quality education.

The COVID pandemic took a serious toll on our education system. Our students lost a notable amount of direct instructional time. Now that we are back full time, we need more resources to help bring students back up to meet and exceed standards.

My heart still beats for quality education for our students. I am writing to ask you recognize how vital our schools are to the future of Alaska. These students deserve our best efforts to cultivate their vast potential. These students are our future.

Please put our children in Alaska first in your budget and increase the base student allocation.

Respectfully,

Velvet Ivers

## Michael Mason

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**From:** vicki vermillion <bveaalaska@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 2:37 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** School funding

Dear Ma'am and Sir,

There is NOTHING more important than appropriately increasing public school funding.

Thank you, Vicki Vermillion  
52 year resident of Alaska and mom of 2 public school graduates

Sent from my iPad



## Michael Mason

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**From:** victory lavelle <victory.lavelle@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 6, 2023 3:12 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** I support raising the BSA for our children.

Dear Alaska senate,

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

I support the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

As a parent of a special needs twice exceptional child; I have seen many angles of this lacking budget.

My daughter went from the highly gifted classroom to a general education program. Her class increased from 13-28!

My daughter became the "bad kid" that no one could deal with. The classroom toxic for all students, teachers, aids.

That all changed when she was moved into the SBBS program. She now loves school, she is thriving, succeeding, winning awards. Teachers and staff have the opportunity to meet her needs and it is beautiful. We actually now have a hope that she may go further than high school in life.

Our family is safe, healthy, and hopeful due to the amazing coaching and staff at Kasuun elementary. It's only been one year but our daughter is thriving!!!!. I fear that with her moving into 6th grade the reinforcements and supports will be taken away if all middle school starts at 6th grade. If there is no increase in funding there will be more need for SRO (SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS).

Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive and is akin to expecting better morale and performance in a workplace while treating one's employees with disrespect while simultaneously demanding that your employees work more hours for the same pay.

The BSA hasn't been meaningfully raised since 2012. This is known as flat funding. When inflation goes up but your paycheck doesn't, you have less money to spend. This is why flat funding is really a budget cut.

Please increase the BSA, keep our children safe and healthy.

Victory Cheney

1041 e 26th Ave Anchorage AK 99508

9079526200

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Windy Thorn <windythorn@dbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 7, 2023 12:06 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB52 Support

I am contacting in regards to the SB52 bill. I am a parent and paraprofessional at Cantwell School in Cantwell, Alaska. I am in support of the bill.

The Denali Borough School District has been talking about closing the Cantwell and Anderson School's since before Covid-19. The district can't afford to keep the schools in the district open with the funding they have. It may be a problem of their own making, but it still doesn't sit right that schools are closing and you have the ability to change that. I am a parent to two young kids. My family is building our forever home here. I feel that all kids in Alaska should have access to quality education in their place of residence. We have come too far to take steps back. We shouldn't be taking kids from villages and sending them anywhere. We have seen the toll that can take on the student and family for years.

You have the power, use it.

Help keep our kids on track, don't continue to derail them.

Raise the BSA and help the kids of Alaska continue to thrive.

Sincerely,

Windy Thorn  
907-841-4018

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Zoe Grace <fosheezoelove@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2023 12:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52 Support

Dear Chair Tobin and Committee Members,

My name is Zoe Foshee and I am a senior at West Valley High School in Fairbanks Alaska. I am writing to support raising the BSA by \$1,000 as proposed in SB52. In my four years at West Valley, I have seen firsthand the effects of decreasing school budgets due to unaddressed inflation. This year, I was scheduled to take AP Language, a class I had been looking forward to after learning the skill of analytical writing the year before in AP Composition. As a result of budget cuts the student-teacher ratio in my district was increased, causing class sizes to skyrocket. On the first day of classes this year, I walked into classrooms with over 30 kids. There weren't enough desks or chairs for the number of students and for 20 minutes three students learned Trigonometry seated on the floor. In the days following, we found enough chairs, but the effects of increased class size didn't stop there. My AP Language class was cut, and only 20 students had signed up. This year I have relearned things I already knew in level English classes, wasting hours of my time on topics I was already proficient at. Not only have increased class sizes left advanced students uninterested, but it has also made our school district uncompetitive in the larger educational arena. This year I have begun applying to colleges. After being accepted into the University of Columbia Barnard, and speaking with other accepted students, it has become evident that our state's devaluation of education for years and years has left its students in the dust. Therefore I urge you to please consider increasing the BSA so that Alaskan students can begin to find their footing.

Sincerely,  
Zoe Foshee