

ALASKA STATE SENATE

Session:
State Capitol Building,
Room 418
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-4527



Interim:
P.O. Box 658
Tok, AK 99780
Tok: (907) 883-4527
Fairbanks: (907) 465-4527

Senator Mike Cronk

Sponsor Statement for SB 257

“An Act relating funding for residential schools; and providing for an effective date.”

Residential schools are immeasurably important to both rural and urban Alaskan students, communities, and families, and offer great returns-on-investment for the State of Alaska’s education dollars. Our residential schools provide high-quality career and technical education (CTE) and collegiate-level coursework through Advanced Placement and dual-credit programs, enabling students to qualify for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. These opportunities prepare hundreds of young Alaskans each year to enter the workforce, serve in the armed forces, or pursue post-secondary education. Residential schools present valuable chances to students who may not otherwise have these opportunities at home.

However, Alaska’s residential school stipend funding statute, AS 14.16.200, has remained unchanged since calendar year 2014. Recognizing the need for additional funding, the legislature and the governor provided one-time appropriations totaling \$3,633,950 over Fiscal Years 23, 24, and 25. While grateful for the FY23–FY25 one-time funding appropriations, school districts providing residential school programs continue to operate at a significant financial loss for student room and board services. Current statutory stipend funding covers less than half of what it actually costs to house and feed a student.

With no appropriation in FY26, stipend funding reverted to statutory FY15 levels, making Alaska’s residential programs the only public schools in the state receiving less funding than they did last year. Senate Bill 257 addresses the current funding inadequacies and links the residential school stipend amounts to percentages of the Base Student Allocation so that districts can fund residential school programs without cutting funding to other valuable programs.