

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 17

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Introduced: 4/10/26

Referred: Education

A RESOLUTION

1 **Recognizing the 50th anniversary of the state's regional educational attendance areas;**
2 **and celebrating the enduring contributions of the state's regional educational attendance**
3 **areas to public education, local leadership, and community life in rural areas of the**
4 **state.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 **WHEREAS** Article VII, sec. 1, Constitution of the State of Alaska, requires the
7 legislature to establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the
8 state; and

9 **WHEREAS**, in 1975, the Alaska State Legislature enacted landmark reforms that
10 established the regional educational attendance areas in rural areas of the state, creating a new
11 framework for public education in the unorganized borough; and

12 **WHEREAS** the landmark "Molly Hootch" litigation, *Tobeluk v. Lind*, 589 P.2d 873
13 (Alaska 1979), culminated in a 1976 consent decree requiring the state to provide local
14 secondary schools in rural communities, reinforcing the state's constitutional obligation to
15 offer equitable educational opportunity and shaping the modern development of locally

1 governed public education in rural areas of the state, including the regional educational
2 attendance areas; and

3 **WHEREAS** the regional educational attendance area structure was designed to
4 replace centralized administration with a model rooted in community voice, regional decision-
5 making, and public accountability; and

6 **WHEREAS** state law delegates authority to regional school boards in each regional
7 educational attendance area to operate public schools in those areas in accordance with state
8 law, recognizing regional educational attendance areas as full participants in the state's public
9 education system; and

10 **WHEREAS** state law provides that regional educational attendance areas should, as
11 far as practicable, reflect integrated socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural communities,
12 while also considering transportation and communication networks, demonstrating an early
13 and important legislative recognition that effective education governance in rural areas of the
14 state must reflect place, people, and practical realities; and

15 **WHEREAS** regional educational attendance areas are operated on an areawide basis
16 under the management and control of elected regional school boards, creating a durable
17 system of democratic local governance in communities across the unorganized borough; and

18 **WHEREAS** state law requires regional school boards to establish community
19 advisory school boards in qualifying communities, strengthening community participation and
20 helping ensure that school leadership remains connected to local priorities and students' lived
21 realities; and

22 **WHEREAS**, for five decades, regional educational attendance area school districts
23 have educated generations of state residents, served tens of thousands of students, sustained
24 schools in remote and roadless communities, and helped preserve the principle that a child's
25 access to public education should not depend on whether that child lives in an urban center or
26 a rural village; and

27 **WHEREAS** regional educational attendance areas have contributed to the state's civic
28 life by fostering local leadership, including school board members, educators, support staff,
29 and community advocates whose service has strengthened both schools and communities; and

30 **WHEREAS** regional educational attendance area educators, staff, families, tribal
31 leaders, elders, and community members have worked, often under difficult conditions and

1 across immense distances, to support students and keep schools operating through changing
2 economic, technological, and social conditions; and

3 **WHEREAS** the 50th anniversary of the establishment of regional educational
4 attendance areas is an appropriate occasion for the legislature to recognize the vision behind
5 the creation of regional educational attendance areas and to honor the people who have
6 sustained and improved the regional educational attendance areas over time;

7 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature honors the 50th anniversary of
8 the regional educational attendance areas and recognizes the regional educational attendance
9 areas as a foundational part of the state's public education system and a lasting expression of
10 the state's commitment to educational access, local governance, and rural communities; and
11 be it

12 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature expresses gratitude to the
13 students, families, elders, tribes, regional school board members, advisory school board
14 members, teachers, administrators, and school staff whose work and leadership have shaped
15 the regional educational attendance areas across five decades; and be it

16 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature reaffirms its commitment
17 to strong public schools in every region of the state and to continued partnership with regional
18 educational attendance area districts, tribes, and communities in support of student success.

19 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Dr. Deena Bishop,
20 Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development; the State Board of
21 Education and Early Development; the Association of Alaska School Boards; each Regional
22 Educational Attendance Area school district in the state; the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and
23 the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S.
24 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.