



Anchorage School District

Education Center

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March 11, 2026

Dear members of the House Education Committee,

I write today as an individual member of the Anchorage School Board and with mixed feelings about HB 374. Please know that while I appreciate your individual and collective efforts to support Alaska's students, the \$630 figure proposed in this bill brings a line from *Oliver Twist* to my mind: "Please sir, I want some more."

I want some more for our students, please, because I've just voted to balance Anchorage's \$90 million deficit for FY27 by spending ASD's unreserved fund balance down to 1% for a *third* budget cycle in a row (so once again, I'll be hoping we have no earthquakes, volcanoes, or fires), by closing three schools for next year, and by culling roughly 10% of ASD's workforce (encompassing, but not limited to, more than 57 administrative, IT, and custodial positions; more than 71 positions dedicated to providing students with gifted, blind/deaf/visually impaired/hard of hearing, and special education services; and more than 250 K-12 classroom teaching positions).

I want some more for our students, please, because although we now have a balanced budget, their class sizes will be extraordinary.

- Next year's Kindergarten and 1st grade students will be enrolled in classrooms whose pupil-teacher-ratios (PTRs) of 27 and 28 will be 35% and 33% larger, respectively, than they were during the 2015-2016 school year.
- Middle school students will have lost an entire classroom period which would have enabled them to access CTE, foreign languages, or fine arts courses. Meanwhile, they will be enrolled in classrooms whose PTRs of 34 will be 25% larger than they were in the 2015-16 school year.
- High school students will be enrolled in classrooms whose PTRs of 36.25 will be 23% larger than the PTRs students experienced in 2015-16. Fewer teachers per pupil mean that these students will be offered radically fewer opportunities for advanced, remedial, or elective courses. Those numbers have prompted at least one high school principal to publicly entertain the concept of putting 80 students together in the cafeteria next year to ensure they can access one of their graduation requirements.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

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I want some more for our students, please, because the amount proposed in HB 374—though not without value—would fail to provide the level of investment needed for ASD to implement the target class sizes the legislature approved in HB 57.

I want some more for our students, please, because I'm concerned that the approach for establishing the amount proposed in HB 374—the mean of the largest districts' BSA-based needs to close projected deficits for next year—fails to account for the cuts and efficiencies districts have implemented over the past fifteen years.

I want some more for our students, please, because adjusting the BSA to account for inflation since FY11—the last time that occurred—now requires an increase of \$1,442 per pupil for FY27, and the amount proposed by HB 374 would only provide 43.7% of the funding needed to do so.

I want some more for our students, please, because Alaska's schools should actually be funded at a level which will accord all students a meaningful opportunity to achieve proficiency in the areas for which the state has performance standards, the state's own summative data shows that all students cannot currently do so, and the amount currently proposed by HB 374 is far too low to facilitate meaningful opportunities to do so next year.

So while I sincerely appreciate that HB 374 proposes to increase the BSA for FY27 by \$630 and would respectfully and responsibly work with my colleagues on the ASD Board to put that figure to work on behalf of our students as soon as Alaska's statute is amended, on behalf of our students, I'd like to go on record as saying this: "Please, sir, I want some more."

Sincerely,
Kelly Lessens