

---

**From:** Kathy Conn [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 05, 2025 3:40 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB 69

To all members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the work you are doing to make wise spending choices for Alaska, and in this case, as it corresponds to HB 69. I, as a former teacher, would like to request that HB 69, as it stands, not advance. At this point Alaska's spending on education is 25-40% more than the national average, depending on whose report you read. Our education spending has outpaced inflation by up to 50%. But just last week it was reported that again, our schools rank 49th out of 50 in actual outcome. This is outrageous! Obviously, the increased spending is not producing the desired results. To again increase the per-student spending allocation to the present education system that evidently is failing with no reforms required and no strings attached to performance is unconscionable. We owe our children more than that. Throwing money at the problem has not fixed it and will not, as we all know, fix it. We need substantial changes in our education system that evidence themselves in better outcomes for our students. We should no longer sacrifice our students on the altar of what has been. Instead we need to explore every option available for the successful preparation of our kids to meet the challenges of today's world. And not just meet minimum standards but excel. Those options are out there and Alaska should be on the cutting edge. With the money we've spent, there's no reason we should not be. Thanks for taking time to seriously consider how we might turn this ship around.

Respectfully,  
Kathy Conn  
Blessed beyond measure!  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Ray Imel [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 6:33 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB 69

It really isn't rocket science. Adequate predictable funding will improve student outcomes. No one is wasting your money, building a powerful dynasty or getting rich from this- that's happening in the oil and gas areas. Providing education for Alaskan students is in the Constitution. Economically starving it in order to fund private and religious schools is tempting, but we have a long history in this country of public education...It made us great the first time and it will make us great again.

---

**From:** Kayse Ericksen [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 4:02 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB 69 Testimony

My name is Kayse Hinrichsen and I am a parent of one child in the Anchorage School District and two more entering the school district this fall and in 2027. I am writing this because I am very worried about our schools and the future of our children.

I am urging all legislators to support House Bill 69 to fund the education of our Alaskan children. It is essential that we fund public schools so that every child can have access to high quality education not only because it is our basic moral responsibility, but also because it has a direct impact on the future of our state. If we do not provide quality education for children our economic future is dire. We need these children to grow into strong intelligent leaders who will help Alaska thrive.

My child attends a school that is joyful, supportive and provides the opportunity for children to grow and develop a love of learning. This positive environment creates children who are problem solvers that are eager to better their community. The success of their school is also evident in their high test scores.

If the Base Student Allocation is not increased the success of this school will not continue. Teachers will be eliminated, support services will be reduced, and student success will fail.

I know there are a lot of competing needs in the state budget but we have to fund education. Without a fully funded education budget the rest of the things we are fighting for will not matter. Our children are our future. Please fund our future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, our children are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Kayse Hinrichsen  
[REDACTED]

Anchorage, AK 99508

---

**From:** Michelle Harris [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 3:01 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB69

**To Whom It May Concern,**

I am a resident of Anchorage and the parent of three students in the Anchorage School District. I am writing to express my strong support for HB69, as its passage is crucial to preventing devastating budget cuts that would significantly impact the district's ability to provide a quality education for my children.

One of my children, a second-grader, is projected to be in a class with 44 students next year due to these cuts. This is not only unsustainable but also detrimental to the quality of education and the learning environment. Such overcrowded classrooms will make it difficult for teachers to give the individualized attention that students need to thrive.

As a nurse-midwife working in healthcare, I know firsthand how important it is to attract and retain a talented workforce. A strong education system is essential to ensuring that families have the opportunity to succeed, and it plays a vital role in the long-term prosperity of both Anchorage and the state of Alaska. For our community to remain competitive, we must prioritize education and provide a strong foundation for the next generation of leaders.

My family is seriously considering relocating if the state's base student allocation is not increased. As working parents, homeschooling or correspondence programs are not viable options for us. My husband and I both rely on public education to help support our family's needs and maintain our professional lives.

Before funding is allocated to any other programs, basic public education must be fully supported and adequately funded to ensure a stable future for our students and our community.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Tschida

---

**From:** Erin Bellotte [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 1:27 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Sen. Jesse Bjorkman  
**Subject:** Please Support HB 69 - Public Testimony

Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing to urge you to support increasing the BSA through HB 69 to improve consistent and reliable funding for Alaska's Public Schools.

As a parent of two young children attending Nikiski North Star Elementary, I see firsthand the profound impact that quality education has on student success. However, with ongoing budget deficits due to a lack of previously increasing the BSA to address inflation, critical school programs are at risk, and schools like Nikiski Middle High School face possible closure.

My third-grade daughter, who is currently testing for official enrollment into the KPBSD Quest program for Gifted and Talented students, exemplifies what strong educational investment can achieve. This year during the nationwide MAPS testing, she has scored in the 98th, 99th, and 94th percentiles in Math, Reading and Language Usage respectively. Her academic growth is a testament not only to her dedicated teachers, but also to the enrichment opportunities provided through programs like Quest. Without these resources, students like her will miss out on the challenges and support they need to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, the potential closure of Nikiski Middle High School would be devastating for both students and the broader community. I urge you to consider how increased funding could allow for expansion - particularly in vocational and trade programs that would equip students with the skills needed to enter Alaska's workforce. Investing in these programs now means building a stronger, more self-sufficient state economy in the future.

The choices made in this legislative session will have long-term consequences. Our children's education should never be sacrificed to budget shortfalls. I ask you to prioritize funding that protects students' learning, sustains vital programs and keeps our schools open.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership and look forward to seeing the state's commitment to education reflected in this year's budget.

Sincerely,  
Erin Bellotte  
Resident of Nikiksi, AK

---

**From:** Eve Ryan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 1:34 PM  
**Subject:** Support HB69

Hello,

Now that HB69 has reached the finance committee, I hope that you support it so that our public schools can finally get the funding they so desperately need.

Thanks,  
Eve

---

**From:** Katie Ronsse Libby [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 1:31 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** In support of SB69

I am writing in support of SB69.

Thank you for your hard work to make it possible for funding and support for lowering pupil to teacher ratios and retaining our language immersion programs which depend on stable multi-year funding.

The consequences of the proposed cuts of 5 teachers at our O'malley Elementary school include a swell of class sizes to outrageous numbers and a decimation of the O'Malley French Immersion program in which my son and his peers have thrived.

My 4 year old daughter is slated to enter the incoming **kindergarten class** which is now slated to have **30 students in her class and no teaching assistant**. In her age group, [childcare.gov](https://childcare.gov) states to allow "No more than 12 school-age children in a group or class".

Can you imagine tending to the many needs of 30 kindergarteners at once, let alone demanding that they produce "results"? Even for our kindergarten teachers, who are real-life superheroes to me--- this is unreasonable. 24 kindergarten students with a teaching assistant is at capacity but reasonable.

Secondly, Language programs take years to develop in order to find native speaking teachers and are not likely to be reinstated once dismantled. There is a window period of putting in energy to learn a language when a child's brain is malleable. At a local language competition- the O'malley French elementary students performed better than all the Advanced Placement high school students and were mistaken for being native French speakers. A pride point in Anchorage education is our emphasis on strong language immersion programs, which reflects the value of diversity in our city and helps us thrive in an interconnected world.

Thank you for supporting and financing a **meaningful** increase in the BSA, and please know parents and the next generation will be better in Alaska with making **HB69 becoming a reality**.

Thank you.

--

Katie

--

Katrina Ronsse Libby, DPT, COMT  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Jen Rigg [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 11:28 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please increase funding for public education including Chugach Optional

Dear Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed district budget and its significant impact on Chugach Optional Elementary School. Chugach Optional has been a cornerstone of alternative education in Anchorage since 1973, offering a unique and highly successful program that continues to thrive, as demonstrated by consistently high-test scores and strong measures of student growth. Our school remains a sought-after option, with a long waiting list of families eager to participate in our program.

The success of Chugach Optional is not accidental—it is built on a carefully designed educational philosophy that focuses on the whole child, purposeful multi-age classrooms, and project-based learning through integrated theme studies. Our emphasis on problem-solving and teamwork fosters a rich educational environment that helps students excel academically and socially.

However, the proposed budget cuts threaten the very foundation of our program. Under the current proposal, Chugach Optional would lose:

- Two of our eleven classroom teachers
- Half of our librarian's position
- Half of our nurse's position

These cuts would have devastating consequences:

1. Loss of Two Classroom Teachers – Our program is structured around a delicate balance of multi-age classrooms and a two-year curriculum cycle. The loss of teachers would disrupt this cycle, forcing class restructuring that undermines our project-based learning approach and significantly increases class sizes, starting in kindergarten and affecting all subsequent grade levels. This poses an existential threat to our program. My second grade son is currently in a classroom with around 26 students and he often has a challenging time moving from one space in the classroom to another because of how many bodies are in a small space. Also, it is part of Chugach's philosophy to encourage family involvement and consequently there are often parents or other adults in the room. Specifically for the first hour of classroom instruction there is often an adult present with each child. So when we are told that next year there will be 44 students in the classroom if these cuts are implemented, in order for Chugach to continue functioning in the ways that make it such a successful program, that would mean there are 88 people in the classroom in the morning with the teachers. Both of these numbers, 44 and 88 are clearly not going to lead to the educational outcomes that we all desire.

2. Cuts to Our Library Program – Our library is the heart of Chugach Optional, serving as a hub for research, group work, and social-emotional learning. The open library space



supports our “in-charge” philosophy, providing students with a safe environment to take a break, work collaboratively, and develop research and technology skills under the guidance of a librarian. Reducing our librarian’s hours would diminish these vital opportunities for our students. Our librarian also is the role that provides instruction on using technology to promote Learning and effective communication as well as internet safety skills that are so important to our children.

3. Reduced Access to Our School Nurse – Our nurse plays a critical role in student safety and well-being. Many of our families rely on this support, particularly students with severe allergies at risk of anaphylactic shock and students managing diabetes. A reduction in nursing staff puts these students at unnecessary risk.

My son has asthma and our pediatrician has recommended that our school is aware that when he is experiencing Low oxygen levels, he does not appear to be as sick as he is. I am much more comfortable knowing there is a trained nurse in the Building to monitor, assess and treat his asthma episodes as needed.

Chugach Optional is a successful and thriving program, and these budget cuts would irreparably harm its structure and effectiveness. I urge you to reconsider the impact of these reductions and explore alternative solutions that do not jeopardize the integrity of our school and the well-being of our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your commitment to supporting all schools in our district and hope you will prioritize preserving the unique and proven success of Chugach Optional.

Sincerely,

Jen Rigg

Parent of 3 Chugach Optional students

---

**From:** Michael Dale [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 7:55 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB69

I'm asking you not to pass HB 69 as it is currently written. Throwing money at a problem doesn't solve anything. There must be accountability. When Alaska ranks near the bottom for reading and math yet we are near the top for expenditures per student, there's a problem that needs to be addressed properly first and that is accountability. Take the steps to do what's right and help our kids.

Michael Dale  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Christina Chamberlain [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 20, 2025 7:52 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB 69

Dear Representatives Neal Foster, Andy Josephson, and Calvin Schlage,

I urge you to support House Bill 69, which will provide a much-needed and long-overdue increase in the BSA funding for Alaska's schools. Since this funding has failed to keep pace with inflation for too many years, our schools are being forced to consider painful cuts that will adversely affect their students and our communities all over the state.

Also, I hope you will effectively resist the Governor's efforts to increase public money being provided to home schooling and private schools (especially private religious schools, which is patently unconstitutional), and focus instead on enacting public policy that benefits kids attending public schools.

Thank you,

Christina Chamberlain  
[REDACTED]  
Anchorage, AK 99501

ent from my iPad

---

**From:** Holly Brooks [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 8:32 PM  
**To:** House Finance; House Education; Senate Education; senator.mia.costello@akleg.gov;  
Rep. Julie Coulombe; james@senatorkaufman.com  
**Subject:** Accountability & OUTCOMES for correspondence programs!

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to ask for some accountability for the roughly 47 millions dollars (nearly 1/2 of our current budget shortfall) we spend annually on correspondence education. Per the recent ADN article it's my understanding that only 14% of those students engage in testing. **HOW DO WE KNOW THEY ARE LEARNING ANYTHING?**

The argument *against* additional funding for public education is because "*we're lacking results and outcomes.*" This is a gross double standard! **I would love for the Governor and those who are proponents of *his* bill (and opponents of HB69) to report on OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION.** I have seen none.

Respectfully,  
Holly Brooks

--

Holly Brooks (she/hers), OLY, LPC, PMH-C  
Owner/Practitioner

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Anchorage Alaska 99503  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Instagram: [REDACTED]

Facebook: [REDACTED]

**CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT:**

Please note that email communication cannot be guaranteed to be secure. If you are choosing to send personal information via email, you thereby waive confidentiality of said information. Clients are discouraged from using email communication for purposes other than scheduling for this reason. Holly Brooks cannot be held responsible for ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of this email message. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by return email and delete this communication and destroy all copies. Thank you.

---

**From:** Judith Miller [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 1:21 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Kim Burrows; Barbara Haynes  
**Subject:** Support HB 69

**From:** Judy Miller [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** HB 69  
**Date:** February 18, 2025 at 1:16:28 PM AKST  
**To:** "house.finance@akleg.gov" <house.finance@akleg.gov>  
**Reply-To:** Judy Miller [REDACTED]

Please support increasing the BSA as proposed in HB 69. Our public schools need adequate funding to thrive. Schools have been underfunded for many years due to failure to keep up with inflation. The one time funding increases for the next 3 years, plus indexing to inflation will get our schools back into more suitable funding levels and will serve to keep our schools open and programs ongoing

**Judy Miller -** [REDACTED]

Homer, AK 99603

---

**From:** molly rettig [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 1:09 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please increase BSA

Hello,

My children attend public school in Fairbanks, and I'm asking you to please support our schools by permanently increasing the BSA. As I watch our friends' schools close and class sizes go up, I seriously question if this is the best place to stay and raise a family. Though I've lived here fifteen years, and my husband grew up here attending Fairbanks public schools, it's harder to justify staying when we see education getting cut repeatedly. Please invest in the future of Alaska by increasing the BSA.

Thank you,

Molly Rettig

---

**From:** Danika Hamm (AASG President) [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 9:46 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** My Testimony on HB 69 - Danika Hamm, AASG

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG) and as the president of AASG to express our full support for House Bill 69. This bill represents a crucial step in addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our state's education system—issues that affect students, educators, and communities across Alaska. The financial strain placed on our schools in recent years has led to harmful consequences, including school closures and critical teacher shortages. These issues, along with the unequal access to resources, have become major obstacles to the success of students throughout Alaska. AASG believes that House Bill 69 can play a significant role in addressing these problems.

One of the central reasons AASG supports this bill is its focus on securing consistent and adequate funding for our schools. Funding cuts over the past several years have forced many school districts to make difficult decisions that ultimately impact students. From school closures to the reduction of educational programs, these cuts have left students with fewer opportunities to succeed and have created instability for families who rely on schools as a vital community resource. Several AASG member schools, such as Ben Eielson High School and Thunder Mountain High School have closed due to failures within our funding policy system, and I know several individuals through AASG, including members of our current and previous executive board, that attended the aforementioned schools before their closure. HB 69's efforts to stabilize funding for Alaska's education system are essential for reversing this trend and ensuring that all students—no matter their location—have access to quality education.

Additionally, the lack of sufficient funding has directly contributed to teacher shortages, a problem that has reached crisis levels in many parts of the state. Our educators are underpaid, overworked, and often lack the support needed to succeed in challenging teaching environments.

As a result, many teachers are leaving the profession, and it is difficult to attract new talent to our schools. The long-term impact of teacher shortages is undeniable—students lose out on quality instruction, and the burden on remaining staff increases, making it harder to provide individualized attention to students. AASG believes that HB 69's provisions addressing funding for recruitment, retention, and professional development for teachers are vital for ensuring that schools have the staff they need to meet the diverse needs of our student population.

In addition to funding and teacher shortages, AASG also supports the bill's focus on mental health services and school safety. Many students in Alaska face unique challenges, from isolation in rural areas to struggles with mental health. Providing additional resources to support mental health programs in schools will not only improve the well-being of students but also contribute to a positive learning environment where students can thrive. Ensuring that all students have access to these services is critical for maintaining a supportive and safe school culture.

Finally, the flexibility that HB 69 offers school districts to tailor solutions to their specific needs is essential in addressing the unique challenges faced by schools across the state. While each community in Alaska has its

own set of circumstances, this bill provides the necessary framework for addressing those challenges while maintaining a focus on equity and quality education for all students.

On behalf of the thousands of students represented by AASG, I urge you to support House Bill 69. This bill is a critical investment in the future of our state, ensuring that students have the resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed. I believe this bill will have a profound impact on the education system, especially for those students who have been most affected by funding cuts, school closures, and teacher shortages.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the importance of HB 69 further, I am happy to provide more information.

Sincerely,  
Danika Hamm  
President, Alaska Association of Student Governments

--

Danika Hamm  
she/her/hers  
AASG President



---

**From:** Krystal Crawford [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 18, 2025 6:43 AM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Support HB69

Hello,

I am a parent of children at Chugach Optional Elementary in Anchorage. Our school is at risk of losing teachers unless you take action. This is urgent; Alaska's future depends on fully funding schools. Please fight for a significant and sustained increase in the BSA (HB69 or other legislation).

Thank you,  
Krystal Crawford  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Anchorage 99508-2919,

---

**From:** Kimberly Dugas [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2025 8:59 PM  
**To:** House Education; House Finance  
**Subject:** Public testimony

My name is Kim Dugas, I am representing Watershed Charter School where 3 of my children attend and a 4th will enter next year. I am asking you to please support a permanent increase to the BSA. Our children our truly the future of Alaska. They will soon be part of Alaska's workforce all the way from our government, to law enforcement to our pilots, to our doctors, nurses and other medical personnel. Our children deserve to have quality education and that just can't happen without proper funding. They need the school related opportunities that enhance their well being and inspire them to engage in meaningful activities that will lead to a positive future. Our children are faced with many more challenges today (screen addiction from young ages, distracted and disengaged parents) and for many the positive experiences and relationships they find at school is their lifeline to success and wellbeing as they move towards adulthood. Please provide this essential lifeline to our society's children by enabling them to attend properly funded schools.

Sincerely,  
Kim Dugas

---

**From:** Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 16, 2025 4:16 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Education bills

Thank you for your service to Alaskans.

I'm sure you are aware of the public education crisis in our state. There are two bills coming before you that would help turn the ship around.

HB 69 would give our schools funds that they desperately need. HB 78 would reform the public pension system to help public employees including educators. Please pass both of these bills to help children from all over our state and keep the Alaskan economy going.

Thanks for listening to constituents,

Cheryl Lovegreen

---

**From:** Amy Beane Rayess [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 16, 2025 3:18 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Please support HB 69

It is time, it is overdue, please fund our schools!! The future of Alaska depends upon good, quality education. It is not reasonable or possible to do this with less teachers. I have already heard of families, that will be leaving if the state continues to not do anything to help out the public education. We cannot afford more brain drain in this state!

It is imperative you fund education. It is our constitutional right. I am a proud parent of 2 children at Chugach Optional School.

Thank you,  
Amy Rayess

---

**From:** Susan Steele <ssteele@lysd.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 23, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Susan Steele  
**Subject:** Lower Yukon School District Resolution- Support for Key Educational Priorities  
**Attachments:** Resolution\_ Support for Key Educational Priorities.pdf

Good evening,

Thank you for your service and commitment to Alaskans. In September, our school district, Lower Yukon School District, submitted a resolution to the Alaska Association of School Boards highlighting our priorities. At our recent RSB meeting this month, we were also asked to share this resolution with you.

I've attached the resolution for your convenience. We hope this legislative session is productive and beneficial for Alaska's public education students, their families, and the dedicated educators who serve them.

Respectfully,

--

**Susan R. Steele, Ed.S.** – Director of *Special Projects*

**Lower Yukon School District (LYSD)**

Cell Ph: 865-742-1112

[lysd.org](http://lysd.org)



---

**From:** Tracy Fischbach [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 31, 2025 10:27 AM  
**To:** House Education; House Finance  
**Cc:** Rep. Carolyn Hall  
**Subject:** Please support HB69 to raise the BSA  
**Attachments:** Fischbach HB69 Testimony Copy.docx

Hello,

The following is a copy of my testimony from the education hearing on Wednesday. I was heartened to hear so many advocates for Alaska's educational system. Raising the BSA will help everyone in the state, and especially, our kids. Nothing is so disheartening to a kid as to try and make that connection with a teacher, but to be dissuaded because they have to compete with a crowd. We've all been there. You want to meet someone or ask a question, but there's a crowd around that person. Are you the kind of person that feels confident enough to push through or do you say, "Wow, they're really busy. I'll try again later." But honestly that later never comes. That's been the case for my kids. They see all the other kids' needs and don't feel like they can push to the front to make themselves heard.

For my son at West High, this has meant almost missing the ability to get the classes he needs for his senior year and not getting credit for classes he took at Steller as a freshman. For my daughter, it means that she leaves her once-a-week night school class at Benny Benson with no input from any teacher. It's not the teachers or counselors faults. There are 7 counselors at West High for over 1600 students. That's one counselor for almost 230 students. My daughter is enrolled in the Night School program because of a medical disability that keeps her from attending all-day classes, but that program is also for students who have young people who work full-time and some of these students have children of their own. Those with high needs take up a lot of time. There is only one teacher to support the students in that evening program and my daughter is highly-gifted with a lot of support at home. She's not the priority in a triage situation. That's just the truth of it. These programs are amazing, but without funding that provides adequate staffing, these programs are not able to fulfill their potential.

And one last point. I have heard people say that they don't want to raise the BSA without knowing that it will be put to good use or that there will be guaranteed results. That is like asking someone to read the eye chart correctly to earn a pair of glasses. It makes no sense. Our schools are full of dedicated, talented, and passionate people. I trust them to make good decisions and I urge you to do the same.

This is my number one funding priority for the state. Yes, that means I value education spending above roads, safety, development, and all the other needs of our state. And that is while also knowing that my kids may not directly benefit from these funding increases.

Thank you for doing all you can to push HB69 to passage and to work together to make it veto-proof.

Tracy Fischbach  
House District 16  
Anchorage, AK



# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 · Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**Edgar Hoelscher**

Chairman

**John Hargis**

Superintendent

## *Resolution: Support for Key Educational Priorities*

### **Resolution No. 01-2025**

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** the LYSD Regional School Board is committed to ensuring that all students receive a quality education that prepares them for success in their future endeavors;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** adequate funding and resources are essential to maintaining and improving the quality of education within the LYSD region;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** the Base Student Allocation (BSA) is a critical component of education funding, and increasing the BSA is necessary to keep up with inflation and the rising costs of education;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** deferred maintenance of school facilities poses a significant risk to the safety and effectiveness of the learning environment, and continued funding for these maintenance needs is crucial;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** early reading proficiency is a key predictor of future academic success, and providing adequate resources for early reading programs, including support for Alaska Native languages, is essential to improve literacy rates among young learners;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** teacher recruitment and retention are major challenges in rural Alaska, and adequate, affordable housing and public school employment benefits are major factors in attracting and retaining qualified educators in our region;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** residential education programs provide vital opportunities for students in remote areas, and increased funding is necessary to support and expand these programs;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** maintaining local school board governance as the authorizer and overseer of charter schools within public school districts is essential to ensure alignment with district and community priorities;

**\*\*Whereas\*\*** public school choice exists and thrives throughout Alaska in the form of charter schools, correspondence schools, specialized or theme-based programs, and CTE programs, and adequate support for these diverse education options is critical to student success;



# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 · Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**Edgar Hoelscher**

Chairman

**John Hargis**

Superintendent

**\*\*Therefore, be it resolved\*\*** that the LYSD Regional School Board calls upon the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB) to advocate for the following priorities:

1. **\*\*Increased Base Student Allocation (BSA) into Statute\*\***: The Alaska Legislature should increase the BSA to reflect the current cost of education and incorporate it into the statute to ensure consistent and predictable funding. (AASB 2.23 Funding for Schools by Establishing the Base Student Allocation in Advance)
2. **\*\*Continued Deferred Maintenance Funding\*\***: The State of Alaska should continue and expand funding for deferred maintenance of school facilities to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for all students. (AASB 2.67 is a New Topic that is being proposed by the board of directors in order to consolidate 2.8, 2.28, 2.29, 2.12, and 2.51).
3. **\*\*Resources for Early Reading and Support for Alaska Native Languages\*\***: The State should allocate additional resources to support early reading initiatives, including the Alaska Reads Act, and ensure support for programs focused on improving literacy in Alaska Native languages. (AASB 2.6 Funding for Early Learning)
4. **\*\*Teacher Housing and Public School Employment Benefits\*\***: The State should provide funding and support for developing and maintaining adequate housing for teachers in rural areas and improving public school employment benefits, recognizing their importance in attracting and retaining quality educators. (AASB 4.5 Addressing the Teacher, Administrator, School Staff Shortage)
5. **\*\*Increased Funding for Residential Education Programs\*\***: The State should increase funding for residential education programs, including regional boarding home programs, to ensure that students in remote areas can access quality educational opportunities. (Do not currently see in the AASB Where We Stand Document)
6. **\*\*Local School Board Governance of Charter Schools\*\***: The State should continue to support local school board governance as the authorizer and overseer of charter schools to ensure these schools align with district priorities and community needs. (AASB 2.47 Local Control of School Funding)

**\*\*Be it further resolved\*\*** that the LYSD Regional School Board urges the AASB to prioritize these issues in its advocacy efforts during the upcoming legislative session and work with lawmakers to secure the necessary funding and support for these critical areas.

**\*\*Adopted by the LYSD Regional School Board on September 24, 2024.**





# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 · Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**Edgar Hoelscher**  
Chairman

**John Hargis**  
Superintendent

ATTEST:

Regional School Board Chair, Edgar Hoelscher

John Hargis, Superintendent

**Testimony to Support HB69**

January 29, 2025

Tracy Fischbach  
Anchorage, Alaska

Thank you, Madam Chairs. My name is Tracy Fischbach. I live in Anchorage with my husband and two high school aged kids. I am testifying today to ask you to support HB69.

The diversity of education opportunities in Anchorage is amazing. We have lived in Anchorage for nearly 30 years. We had opportunities to move out of state several times and each time we chose to stay here because the schools were so good, opportunities so diverse, and our teachers had been in the school for years, if not decades.

Now, if my kids were younger, I'm not sure that I would make that same decision. Over the years we have watched the class sizes get larger and larger. When I ask my kids how many students are in their class, the answer isn't a number it's whether or not there are desks for everyone. With increased class size come more and more chaos. It's inevitable. A single teacher cannot track ever growing group of students and ensure they all are making the progress they need to be successful. It's impossible. I can't even imagine trying to be a teacher in our schools now.

We can do better. I want to be able to tell people who are considering moving to Alaska that our schools are the best.

To do that we need more funding so we can have smaller class sizes and pay our teachers competitive wages so we can get and keep the best of the best. For me, this is my number one priority for state spending. This is the thing I value the most.

In closing, I respectfully ask you to support HB69 and fully fund the BSA. Thank you.

29 January 2025

house.education@akleg.gov  
House Education Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Attn: Representatives: Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair,  
Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Maxine Dibert,  
Ted Eischeid  
Jubilee Underwood  
Rebecca Schwanke  
Bill Elam

Re: Public Testimony by Suzanne Wood related to House Bill 69 —  
*An Act relating to education funding; and providing for an effective date.*

1. My name is Suzanne Wood and I am a resident of Petersburg, Alaska. The following public testimony is mine. I am grateful for this opportunity to share my testimony and support for House Bill 69 relating to Alaska's public schools basic student allocation funding (BSAF).

2. The Association of Alaska School Boards notes

*Alaska's public schools play a vital role in ensuring every child receives an education, regardless of race, ability, religion, economic circumstance, or special needs. Locally elected school boards oversee public school budgets, ensuring that taxpayer funds are used appropriately. In contrast, circumventing local governance and accountability and providing public funds to pay for private, parochial, or home school tuition and fees diverts limited resources away from public schools, reducing the funds available for classrooms and programs that must serve all the students of Alaska.*

3. Alaska's governor has repeatedly vetoed permanent increases for its public schools' BSAF which affects all public schools across Alaska whether in urban or rural districts. The lack of increased and permanent BSAF has resulted in continued layoffs for the teaching force, elimination of classroom curriculum, continued school closures requiring school consolidations which incurs increased busing and transportation costs; and the need for a funding mechanism to repair, renovate or build new public school

infrastructure. Alaska's inadequate public school funding is quite likely a primary driver in our diminishing State population.

4. Some of Alaska's public school closures and subsequent consolidations may require transportation or other special arrangements affecting

*kids who are blind, hearing impaired, have Down syndrome or are on the [autism] spectrum, staff said. One staff member at Fire Lake who works in the program said the majority of her students are autistic, making them the least resilient people" to move.*

5. The loss of talented instructors teaching the arts, in-person music, vocational technical curriculum, foreign language programs, advanced courses for those pursuing higher education or technical fields, eliminates pathways for achieving uniquely original high school portfolios. The lack of more diversity in subject matter may affect and/or limit post graduation entry level job requirements and/or meeting college entry requirements.

6. In January 2020, Alaska's governor introduced *Open for Business* legislation where he stated

*As Governor, I want to assure companies that Alaska is open for business by taking meaningful steps to lessen burdens on employers and encourage opportunities for our skilled workforce across the state.*

Alaska's governor has failed to permanently or adequately fund and inflation-proof Alaska's BSAF for all public school students and that may be short-changing their earnings potential and securing employment from the onset due to diminished learning potential. Their lack of advanced and varied educational curriculum often available outside Alaska may limit their job prospects with a new Alaska business from the Lower 48 or abroad.

7. Alaska's House Bill 69 is a three-year public school funding bill.

*If passed, the new legislation would boost the BSA by \$1,000 next school year, as well as two increases of \$404 each in the following two years.*

*In addition, the bill would adjust for inflation each year, based on the average consumer price index over the previous three years.*

*For next school year, the BSA would total \$7,249, a 22% increase. By the 2027-2028 school year, it would reach an estimated \$8,510, for a total increase of roughly 43% over three years.*

*Lawmakers say the boost will help address a major historical shortfall in funding. School costs rose by nearly 40% since 2011, while the BSA increased by only 10% with the bill.*

8. The State could expand its public school population by opening enrollment to three and four-years olds statewide — a practice that is already realized elsewhere around the world. These two age groups would matriculate into the traditional K-12 public school structure having achieved following directions and carrying out assignments in a classroom environment along with developing and communicating one's ideas and sharing them plus expanding their ideas further through peer critiques and suggestions— skills that would increase individual readiness for their public school education and beyond. Alaska would be expanding the population of public school students available to joining the work force or continuing on to advanced education at the University of Alaska's satellite locations or elsewhere.

9. Respectfully,  
Suzanne Wood

ic: House Education Committee Members:

Representative.Rebecca.Himschoot@akleg.gov

Representative.Andi.Story@akleg.gov

Representative.Maxine.Dibert@akleg.gov

Representative.Ted.Eischeid@akleg.gov

Representative.Jubilee.Underwood@akleg.gov

Representative.Rebecca.Schwanke@akleg.gov

Representative.Bill.Elam@akleg.gov

House.Finance@akleg.gov

Mike Dunleavy, Alaska Governor — <https://gov.alaska.gov/contact/feedback/>