



February 11, 2025

The Alaska State Legislature  
Attn.: Senate Education Committee

Dear Alaska State Senate Education Committee Members,

On behalf of the more than 12,000 members of ACTFL, a professional membership association dedicated to providing vision, leadership, and support for quality teaching and learning of languages, and the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS), which represents over 300,000 language educators and professionals throughout the United States, we write to you today to urge you to maintain support for language education by increasing state funding for education in Senate Bill 46.

Increasing state funding for education through Senate Bill 46 ensures that robust programs in districts like the Anchorage School District (ASD) will continue to support elementary school Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs in French, Japanese, Spanish, Chinese, and Yupik, and world language programs in ASD's secondary schools, impacting more than 2,800 DLI students. Without increased state education funding, we are deeply concerned that ASD elementary schools will be forced to reduce or eliminate some of their DLI programs and that its secondary schools will opt to reduce the number of language electives.

We submit that a strong case for language education exists. The undeniable economic truth is that young adults who have developed language skills over the course of their school years—both those entering the workforce directly following graduation and those seeking postsecondary studies—are at a distinct competitive advantage over their monolingual peers. Language skills place multilingual job candidates at a distinct competitive advantage over their monolingual peers—whether these individuals plan to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation or to seek an advanced degree. In fact, when surveyed, most U.S. employers across multiple sectors anticipate their demand for



multilingual employees to increase in the next five years. Furthermore, language learners develop improved skills in categories identified in the *Career and Technical Education (CTE) Employability Skills Framework*, as established by the U.S. Department of Education, becoming advanced collaborators, analyzers, planners, thinkers, and communicators.

Furthermore, language learning includes critical skills inherent in developing global competence, from cognitive benefits—such as improved memory, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills—to social rewards including enhanced communication skills, confidence, empathy, perspective, and cultural awareness.

Programs that begin early and are sustained over several years, like ASD's DLI programs, are the most efficient way to gain proficiency. More specifically, research shows that when English learners are taught in their home language in the context of a DLI program, both the students where English is and is not the first language benefit tremendously in this setting.

In an ever-globalizing world, the study of language should be viewed not as a luxury, but rather as a crucial element of our education system with far-ranging, pervasive benefits. We urgently and respectfully ask you to increase state funding for education through Senate Bill 46. This vital funding will enable language learning to thrive and grow in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence M. Paska".

Lawrence M. Paska, Ph.D., CAE  
Executive Director  
ACTFL  
1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amanda Seewald".

Amanda Seewald  
Executive Director  
JNCL-NCLIS  
P.O. Box 12  
Fanwood, NJ 07023

c. Anchorage School Board

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Amanda Peters <navydocwife@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 10, 2025 3:18 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA

Hi,

My name is Amanda Peters and I currently have two kids in the Anchorage School District, with another joining them in the fall. ASD is currently considering massive cuts to deal with a \$111 million deficit. Among other things, they are considering/planning on cutting all middle school sports, several high school sports, and the gifted IGNITE program.

I cannot even begin to express my dismay at the massive sports cuts. As an athlete myself (all through middle school, high school, college, and at a semi-professional level), I know the power that school programs have in these kids' lives. They encourage discipline, leadership, teamwork, and school pride - besides the obvious skill development. With the high cost of living here in Alaska, many (ourselves included) are not able to afford the incredibly high costs for club sports.

Please vote in favor of increasing the BSA in SB 46.

Thank you.  
Amanda Peters  
(208)989-1047

## Michael Mason

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**From:** A Harmeling <asiaharmeling@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2025 10:14 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Help keep French Immersion at O'Malley elementary

Hello!

My name is Asia Harmeling and I am the mother of two kids who attend the French Immersion program at O'Malley elementary school. I am writing to the State House Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee in support of voting for SB 46 and HB 69 we can to keep the French immersion program.

This program has been an amazing opportunity for my two children and hopefully my youngest, who is slated to start kindergarten this upcoming school year. My oldest daughter, who is in the 4th grade, has built such a loving and supportive group of friends and teachers while in this program. She has learned the French language at an impressive level for a nine-year-old. I am truly blown away with the amount of French she is able to speak and understand. Her favorite part of going to school is learning French.

There are many studies showing the benefit of learning a second language at a young age. The benefits of producing bilingual students are countless. By continuing the French program, we are not only investing in our children but also our future here in Alaska because in reality, these children are the future of Alaska.

The ability to speak French will open so many doors for these students and will give them a chance to connect with other cultures. My family and I were recently on a trip to Costa Rica and came across a group of tourists from France who spoke very little English. My daughter was able to translate for them and maintain conversation which they were very surprised and impressed with. It's experiences like these that motivate her to keep learning the French language and just another amazing reason to keep this program going.

My son in Kindergarten, who is just learning the language, would be so sad if this program was taken away from him as he just started. He is already building wonderful friendships and his own little community within this program. He comes home after school and tells me all the new words he learns in French which as a parent, is so fun to hear.

There were hours of hard work put in place to get this program even started. To recruit and obtain native French speakers as teachers is no easy task. If we lose this program due to budget cuts, very likely this program will not come back. I have also spoken to several of our French teachers who love Alaska and they would equally feel as devastated if they could no longer teach at O'Malley.

There are many families who are with O'Malley Elementary specifically because of the French immersion program. I've already spoken to several families who plan on leaving Alaska should we lose the French program. O'Malley is slated to lose 5 teachers with the potential budget cuts which would eliminate the French teachers and program. Enrollment in O'Malley may be drastically reduced if the French program is gone and in turn, we could lose the entire school. Language immersion programs help keep students in the ASD school system. Again, we could see a huge decrease in enrollment if the French program gets canceled.

Although the French program has been amazing, there is an unfair burden placed both parents and students. There are 26 students in each Kindergarten class which has already been overwhelming for the teachers and teachers aides. In reality this amount of students does have a negative impact on the students themselves. With the proposed budget cuts, we could be seeing over 30 kindergarten students per teacher which is unacceptable.

I am asking you to please reallocate the budget cuts we are facing within ASD in order to keep the French immersion program. I am not asking for me, I am asking for my children and every other child and parent who are

invested in this program. I feel lucky to be a part of school where there are so many supportive parents and teachers. To have all that taken away from these children and families would be a huge detriment to us all.

Please do what you can to keep the French program going! I have been envisioning the day I can watch my kids walk on the graduation stage years from now with their high school diplomas, having officially mastered the French language.

Thank you very much for your time in reading my testimony!

Merci beaucoup!

Regards,

Asia Harmeling

**Michael Mason**

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**From:** Brooke Dudley <brookemaury@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2025 10:46 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** support for Senate Bill 46, and House Bill 69

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you as a concerned parent of children enrolled in the Russian Immersion program within the Anchorage School District, which is facing the largest deficit in education funding in its history. With a projected \$111 million deficit next year, our schools are at risk of devastating cuts that will undermine the quality of education, particularly within our highly successful immersion programs.

The Education Clause of the Alaska Constitution requires that the Legislature "establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children in the state." This is constitutionally the responsibility of the state legislature. Flat funding for a decade without any provisions for inflation or forward funding I believe is constitutionally inadequate by clearly underfunding education. It is unfair to families and hurting our economy. Employers need a workforce a workforce needs good public schools (or they will not come/leave). This is already happening, it must be reversed.

If you have ever purchased property you know that real estate valuation ranks neighborhood schools as a major consideration. Even if I didn't have kids on school. I would much rather schools be funded, get a smaller PFD than have my real estate value and community economy hammered by inadequate school funding.

The Alaska Legislature has not increased the Base Student Allocation (BSA) in over a decade, and it has failed to keep pace with inflation. As a result, the Anchorage School District is being forced to make impossible decisions about which programs to cut. Under the current budget proposal, our district's elementary immersion programs will lose 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions next year. While these positions are not actual teachers, they

represent essential funding to maintain smaller class sizes in immersion programs and prevent larger class sizes that would negatively impact the students' learning experience.

The cuts I have seen from being a student at ASD until now are devastating.

For immersion programs like Russian, these cuts would be devastating. Increasing the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for immersion programs would force teachers to take on more students, diminishing the educational experience for all. If these 12 FTE positions are eliminated, we would likely see the permanent decimation of our district's immersion programs at the elementary level.

As you may know, immersion programs are a hallmark of our district's educational offerings, and we are proud to have one of the most robust and diverse immersion programs in the country. Currently, we have 2,848 students enrolled in Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, Spanish, and Yup'ik immersion programs. This diversity is a key asset for Anchorage, and it attracts families from military, oil, medical, and other sectors who value the educational opportunities our schools provide. Several languages are considered critical to our National Security. The NSA is actively recruiting, providing internships, scholarships and hiring graduates annually. I cannot emphasize enough how grateful we are to have had the chance to participate and how absolutely fantastic it is for children.

If the BSA is not increased, I fear we will see the dismantling of these programs, and with it, the loss of a vital educational tool for our children. These would be a huge loss and nearly impossible to replace as materials have been painstakingly brought by hand from all over the world over decades to create an immersive language learning environment. IF LOST, WE CANNOT REPLACE. Please, I

cannot emphasize this enough. It is essential that we secure adequate funding to preserve these programs and ensure that our schools continue to offer the high-quality education our students deserve.

I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 46, sponsored by Senator Matt Claman, and House Bill 69, sponsored by Representative Rebecca Himschoot, to increase the BSA and provide the necessary funding to sustain our immersion programs. Without this critical support, our students and our community will suffer long-term consequences.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your leadership in securing the future of our children's education.

Sincerely,

Brooke Dudley

Mother of Liam Dudley (12th grade) and Finn Dudley (9th grade)  
West Anchorage High school



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Caitie Milligan <cemilligan@live.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 10, 2025 6:29 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please support SB 46

Dear Senators,

I am writing to urge you to vote in support of SB 46. Stable, multi-year education funding is imperative for our kids & the Alaskan economy. Education funding has been flat for 8 years which is not sustainable. If nothing changes, huge cuts will be necessary to balance the budget. Meanwhile, spending on Alaska's prisons has grown 3x as fast as spending on education - this is backwards! I am well aware the programs that will likely be cut are those that provide our students with a well rounded education-art, physical education, music, and specialty programs will likely be the first to go.

My child attends the French Immersion program at O'Malley Elementary School in Anchorage. She has benefited in so many ways from this program as it challenges her academically, and also gives her a sense of community and stability. This stability is extremely valuable in these early formative years and if programs like French Immersion is not funded, my child will lose a key part of her support system outside of her home environment. She will lose the opportunity to challenge herself to learn in two languages, a skill that has already given her so much confidence. She will lose the ability to learn and interact with other French language speakers on a daily basis-something that cannot be replicated elsewhere at this time. This program has been amazing for my child's growth and development as it has been for so many others!

I urge you to consider the future of Alaska-our children, and the importance of well-rounded, properly funded education plays in their growth and development.

Thank you,

Dr. Caitlin Milligan

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Christine COUTURIER <christinecouturier@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 13, 2025 3:28 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education; representative.julie.colombe@akleg.gov; senator.james.kaufman@akleg.org; senator.loki.tobin@akleg.org; Rep. Jamie Allard; representative.justin.ruffridge@akleg.org; Rep. Mia Costello; Sen. Cathy Giessel; Rep. Ky Holland  
**Subject:** Support HB69 and SB46

Dear State Senators and House of Representatives members,

I would like to ask you to **support Senate Bill 46 on education funding and House Bill 69 about raising the BSA.**

Please increase the state funding for public school education and make it inflation-proof, increase the BSA to provide decent educational conditions for our children in decent-sized classes, offer more stable teacher employment, retain talented/experienced teachers, decrease disparities between students, and finally retain strong immersion programs.

I have a son in 5th grade and my daughter is in 1st grade, both in the French immersion program at O'Malley Elementary. Immersion programs in Anchorage have a very good reputation among parents and are sought after.

Without a raise in funding in years, O'Malley Elementary now risks losing 5 teachers (out of 17) next year, and the school will not be able to provide for its student population that is constantly increasing. It will also kill the French immersion program that took years, tens of thousands of dollars and great parents' involvement to build from the ground up since 2018. It will decimate a community.

Finally, please find solutions to increase the revenue of the state to provide a more stable economy that can financially support the education of its children. The funding issue coming back every year is not sustainable; it creates a lot of stress among parents, teachers, the community. With an unstable educational system in Alaska, families are leaving, and Alaska is made less attractive leading to a significant negative economic impact by limiting the workforce population and skills, leading to lower economic growth.

Please support education, Alaska's future depends on it.

Thank you for your time,

Christine Couturier

O'Malley Elementary School Parent, Anchorage

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Collin <collin\_hemphill@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 15, 2025 1:28 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Alaska Education Funding SB46

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today in regards to SB 46. It is imperative that this bill and its partner in the house be passed to ensure the future prosperity of our state. A strong public education system is the root of a thriving economy as it provides and promotes knowledge, community, rigid work ethic, physical health and so much more. I currently have a child in the Anchorage School District that participates in the elementary IGNITE program and am deeply concerned with the direction our public education system is heading.

We cannot afford to lose funding for this program or a number of the other activities/programs currently scheduled to be dismantled. The ability to prevent underachievement is paramount in a state that's already suffering from low overall test scores, poor graduation rates and continually declining retention of graduates to live and work in Alaska. The IGNITE program allows for intellectually stimulating opportunities and interventions. This program helps over two thousand children with the ability to stay engaged and invested within the public school system. Fostering their potential talent and challenging students to stay motivated to excel is of the utmost importance.

This program reflects positively on the district as a whole. Alumni are thriving and making progress in our society. It encourages parents that they're making the right choice enrolling their children in the public education system. It meets the needs of diverse learners, promotes equity and inclusion, and fosters innovation and excellence. As a state that is always looking towards development and progress, we need our future generations to be able to set that in motion. We need these gifted students and programs to fuel our economy, enrich Alaskan lives and promote a well rounded educational experience for future generations.

My child leaves our house with exhilarated energy on days they have IGNITE. Their spark is essentially "ignited" into a full flame with this program as the catalyst. Please consider prioritizing the needs of investing in education when making decisions about budget allocations and pursuing legislative action. Through continued support of gifted education, special education and many other arts and athletics programs, students are afforded the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our future as an economically growing state relies on our ability to not only keep residents but to give others a reason to move here. Proposed projects such as a liquid natural gas pipeline or chip making plants will require thousands of people to move to Alaska to fulfill jobs in every sector. The best way to keep them here after these projects is to give them reasons to stay. A strong economy and an excellent education system can only encourage prosperity.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Collin Hemphill



**Michael Mason**

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**From:** Deborah DeLong <debbiedelong@myyahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2025 1:21 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB46

Dear Senators of the Senate Education Committee,  
I'm writing to implore you to support SB46. The current cuts to education are having devastating effects on my grandchildren's schools with program cuts, and even greater increases in classroom sizes.  
Our schools are already suffering and I fear the lasting impact of continued budgetary restrictions will be detrimental to our children.  
Please help.  
Thank you,  
Debbie DeLong

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Gloria Burnett <glow313@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 12, 2025 10:27 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support Increase in Education Funding

Greetings,

I am writing as a very concerned parent, educator and community member. The impending budget cuts resulting from stagnant state education funding despite inflation will be detrimental to the wellbeing of my children and the state of Alaska.

I have directly witnessed the impacts of the lack of sustainable investment in our state education system in the lives of my children. My son receives special education services at Anchorage School District. He has received a lack of services over the past 2 years due to budget difficulties which result in staffing difficulties. I have put in the extra hours necessary at home to ensure he receives the extra support he needs. I have also volunteered to serve on our middle school PTA in an attempt to revive the morale and sense of community within Hanshew Middle School. It is clear that our educator morale is at an all time low with financial uncertainty taking a toll on their ability to focus on the most precious task at hand, educating our children.

There have been a multitude of bipartisan efforts over the past couple of years to increase education funding. I am pleading with you to please support SB 46: Education Funding. Failure to do so will result in the following impacts to my children's schools:

O'Malley Elementary

1. Loss of 5 teachers
2. Increased class sizes
3. Cutting 3 after school programs
4. Elimination of IGNITE program

Hanshew Middle School

1. Loss of 10 teachers
2. Loss of 1 Assistant Principal
3. Elimination of all middle school sports and afterschool activities
4. Increased class sizes
5. Increased enrollment
6. Reduction in electives offered

Alaska is already struggling as one of the lowest performing education systems in the nation. We should be investing MORE resources in our schools for the future of our state.

Thank you,

Gloria Burnett

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Keri Iles <keriiles@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2025 11:58 AM  
**To:** House Education; julie.coulombe@akleg.gov; Senate Education;  
james.kaufman@akleg.gov  
**Subject:** In support of SB 46 and HB 69

Dear Representatives and Senators:

I'm writing to you as a member of the Anchorage community and as a parent to a child who is thriving in O'Malley Elementary's French Immersion program. O'Malley is one of the schools that will have to cut a substantial amount of teaching positions due to proposed budget cuts. Anchorage School District's innovative educational programs are a huge part of what keeps our family rooted and invested in Alaska as our home. However, every year it seems we have to fight harder and harder to maintain the quality of education that ASD provides, primarily due to lack of State funding.

I urge you all to support SB 46 and HB 69 and to prevent devastating cuts to public education. Please promote a more sustainable means of prioritizing the well-being and growth of your youngest constituents.

Sincerely,  
Keri Iles

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Linda Bennett <l\_bennett@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 5:30 PM  
**To:** matt@mattclaman.com  
**Cc:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 46 Educational Funding- HB 69 ....support the ASD Language Immersion program

Dear Matt Claman, and Rebecca Himschoot,

I am the Grandmother of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in the French Immersion program at O'Malley Elementary School. She started in Kindergarten, and has had a half day French and half day in English in her school year for the past four years. I have witnessed the transformation from her beginning year of French to conversational and comprehension this year. She is now 8 1/2 and has a grasp of the language and its structure. It is inspiring! When a foreign language is immersed into these children for hours at a time, it becomes a normal part of their lives.

This is not a frivolous expenditure in the ASD budget-it is an investment that will play out around the globe as travelers and employees utilize their talents.

Please allocate the funds for the school district so it can continue to support this important part of the children's lives.

Sincerely,  
Linda Bennett

A 49.5 year Alaskan Resident

Sent from my iPad





# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Phone: (907) 591-2411

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

**George Smith**  
Chairman

**John Hargis**  
Superintendent

## **Subject: Opposition to SB 46**

Dear Members of the House and Senate Education Committees,

I am writing to express strong opposition to SB 46, which would eliminate the Public Education Fund and make school funding entirely dependent on annual legislative appropriations. This change introduces more significant financial uncertainty for districts across the state, making it nearly impossible to plan and sustain the programs, staffing, and resources our students rely on.

### **SB 46 Creates Instability and Financial Risk for Schools**

- **Unpredictable Funding Jeopardizes Student Success**
  - SB 46 eliminates AS 14.17.300, a structured, formula-driven funding mechanism that provides predictable resources for school districts.
  - Instead, the Legislature will determine funding year after year, meaning districts will not be guaranteed stable support. An inconsistent funding formula will make long-term planning and financial sustainability nearly impossible.
- **Alaska's Schools Are Already Facing Budget Crises**
  - The first reading of our district's budget reflects a \$9 million deficit, assuming no additional one-time funding.
  - Without one-time funding, a \$680 increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) would reduce the deficit to \$3.5 million, allowing for strategic adjustments instead of deep cuts.
  - An \$850 BSA increase would shrink the deficit to just \$2 million, potentially preventing cuts altogether and allowing us to reassess needs as the year unfolds.
- **SB 46 Fails to Address Inflation & Rising Costs**
  - Like many districts across Alaska, we struggle with rising utility, staffing, air transportation, and health insurance costs, yet the BSA has not kept pace with inflation.
  - SB 46 does nothing to increase BSA or provide sustainable relief, making it harder to maintain quality education, small class sizes, and essential programs.



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**George Smith**  
Chairman

**John Hargis**  
Superintendent

- Annual Appropriations Make Schools Vulnerable to Budget Cuts & Political Shifts
  - Tying school funding directly to legislative appropriations rather than a formula-driven structure leaves districts vulnerable to economic downturns, political shifts, and budget cuts.
  - Schools should not have to fight for funding every year. Predictable funding ensures we can focus on educating students rather than lobbying for resources.

## **A Smarter Solution: Increase the BSA, Not Create More Instability**

Instead of passing SB 46, I urge you to **support increasing the BSA** to provide **sustainable funding** for Alaska's students. This is the most direct and effective way to reduce budget shortfalls, prevent unnecessary cuts, and ensure students receive the quality education they deserve.

Our schools cannot afford funding uncertainty and instability. I urge you to reject SB 46 and instead focus on sustainable funding solutions that support Alaska's students, educators, and communities.

Thank you for your time and your dedication to Alaska's education system. Please protect sustainable education funding & increase the BSA. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

John Hargis  
Superintendent  
[jhargis@lysd.org](mailto:jhargis@lysd.org)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Megon Coon <megonmcoon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 8:34 AM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Please support education funding!

Dear Legislators,

First, thank you for all that you do to make Alaska a wonderful place for Alaskans to live.

One of my favorite things about living in Anchorage is the excellent multicultural and bilingual education my two children have received at Government Hill Elementary. The fantastic immersion education program they attend, as well as the many other immersion programs in Anchorage, will be decimated if the BSA is not increased. The current proposal has my child's school losing 4 teachers next school year, and other immersion schools are slated to lose even more positions.

The language-learning opportunities that our school district currently offers Alaskan students are unmatched in this country. Teaching a wide range of languages (7!), Anchorage immersion programs reflect the rich diversity of our city and nation. They promote cross-cultural understanding, celebrate diversity, and empower young people to use their linguistic competence to break down barriers between people and cultures.

There are currently 2,848 students enrolled in the Anchorage School District's immersion programs, and many of these parents drive their children across town every day to get to their school of choice. We made a long-term commitment to our children's education when they entered immersion kindergarten, and now I ask you to honor that commitment.

Anchorage families have clearly shown that they are invested in their children's immersion education. Please show that you too value education by supporting significant increases to the BSA. **Please support SB 46 and HB 69.**

Thank you,  
Megon Coon

## Michael Mason

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**From:** MIR Parents <[russianimmersionak@gmail.com](mailto:russianimmersionak@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 11, 2025 9:23 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** MIR Support Letter for SB46, Education Funding

MIR, Russian Language Immersion Program  
Turnagain Elementary  
[russianimmersionak@gmail.com](mailto:russianimmersionak@gmail.com)

February 11, 2025

We are writing as Mission is Russian (MIR), a parent led non-profit that supports the Russian Immersion Programs at Turnagain Elementary School, Romig Middle School, And West Anchorage High School. We are deeply invested in quality education and are writing to express our strong support for SB46, the Education Funding Bill. We respectfully urge legislators to vote in favor of SB46, as the chronic underfunding of the Anchorage School District has now led to a \$100M budget deficit. Long-term investment is needed in our schools and is vital not only for the success of our children, but also for the future of Anchorage.

For another year, language immersion programs at the Anchorage School District have faced severe budget cuts or closure. Our family of language immersion programs are far more than just classes in a foreign language—they are immersive experiences that build bridges between cultures, foster empathy, and prepare students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. By enabling students to learn a new language through everyday use and cultural integration, immersion programs significantly enhance critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, in today's global economy, bilingualism and cultural fluency are more than just assets; they are necessities. The sustained funding provided by SB46 will ensure that these programs remain open, giving students the opportunity to develop these crucial skills and creating opportunities such as the ones we have seen at the State Department with Richard Marshall, Director of Operations for NSA Alaska.

Supporting SB46 is an investment in our future. By endorsing this bill, legislators are not only ensuring that vital educational programs continue, but they are also sending a strong message about the value our community places on diversity, inclusion, and global readiness. We are confident that with your support, SB69 will help build a stronger, more innovative, and united future for all of us.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. We hope you will stand this letter of support to the packet and it helps build support for 40 legislators.

Sincerely,

Anna McConnaughy (President)

Vlada Sotskaya (Vice President)

Galina Ryabova-Houston (Treasurer)

Marina Moore (Secretary)

### **MIR Parents, Inc.**

Supporting Russian Immersion students, teachers, and families at  
Turnagain Elementary, Romig Middle School, and West High School in  
Anchorage, Alaska

*Remember when shopping on Amazon, please go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/01-0829469> and have Amazon donate to MIR!*

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Natalie Brinley <brinleynatalie@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 7, 2025 9:08 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for Senate Bill 46

Dear Senator,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you as a concerned constituent and advocate for quality education in our community. As we continue to navigate the challenges of the modern world, I believe it is imperative that we invest in educational programs that equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly globalized society. One such program is language immersion education in the Anchorage School District, which fosters not only linguistic abilities but also cross-cultural understanding and cognitive development.

Currently, our schools are facing significant financial constraints that threaten the quality and accessibility of these invaluable programs. Language immersion, like the Russian Immersion program my child attends at Turnagain Elementary, has been shown to improve cognitive flexibility, academic achievement, and cultural awareness, yet many of our schools will be unable to sustain or expand these programs due to insufficient funding. As such, I am urging you to support efforts to increase funding for schools, specifically I would like to advocate for earmarked funds for language immersion programs.

These programs are essential in providing students with the opportunity to become bilingual, a skill that is increasingly sought after in both the workforce and in our interconnected world. By supporting the funding of language immersion programs, you would not only be investing in the future of our children but also in the long-term success of our state and nation.

I respectfully request that you consider supporting legislation, like Senate Bill 46, and budget allocations that prioritize the growth and sustainability of our schools and our language immersion programs. Your leadership in this matter would have a profound impact on the educational opportunities available to our students and will help ensure that they are better prepared for the demands of a diverse, globalized world.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your support on this important issue. Should you require any further information or wish to discuss this matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Natalie Brinley  
Pediatric Physical Therapy, parent of Noa Brinley (kindergarten Russian Immersion at Turnagain Elementary) and Jude Brinley (Airport Height Elementary PreSchool)

**From:** Nate Beck <[beck.nj@gmail.com](mailto:beck.nj@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 7, 2025 10:03 AM  
**To:** Sen. Löki Tobin <[Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Urgent Action on Education Funding

Dear Ms. Tobin,

I am writing to urge your strong support for increased education funding in Alaska by advancing House Bill 69 and/or Senate Bill 46. These critical and urgently needed pieces of legislation are necessary to ensure our schools receive the resources they need to provide a quality education to Alaska's children. Education is not just an investment in our students—it is an investment in the future of our state.

As you know, inflation has severely impacted the purchasing power of our schools, eroding their ability to provide essential services, retain quality educators, and maintain safe and effective learning environments. The Base Student Allocation has remained largely stagnant for years, failing to keep pace with rising costs. Without meaningful increases, schools are forced to cut programs, increase class sizes, and struggle to recruit and retain qualified teachers. These challenges directly harm students and jeopardize the long-term success of our communities.

Furthermore, a well-funded education system is crucial for attracting and retaining young professionals in Alaska. Families considering putting down roots in our state weigh the quality of public education heavily in their decisions. Without strong schools, we risk losing talented individuals and skilled workers to states that prioritize education. This is a concern that deeply affects my own family—we want to continue living and working in Alaska, but the quality of education available to our children is a major factor in whether we can realistically stay. A failure to act on education funding threatens not only our children's future but also our workforce and economy.

Additionally, proposed budget cuts threaten the viability of Alaska's language immersion programs. With the Anchorage School District set to lose 12 educator positions next year, these specialized programs—which require small class sizes

and highly qualified teachers—face potential collapse. Once lost, these programs would be nearly impossible to rebuild, depriving students of unique language learning opportunities and diminishing Alaska's cultural and linguistic diversity. Without a BSA increase, secondary immersion programs will also be at risk, further limiting educational opportunities for our students.

I urge you to support legislation such as HB 69 and SB 46 and to advocate for sustainable, inflation-proof education funding. The time to act is now. The future of Alaska depends on the strength of our schools, and that strength begins with proper investment.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the people of Alaska. I look forward to your leadership on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Nate Beck  
Vice President, Koniag Energy and Water  
5301 Wood Hall Dr  
Anchorage, AK 99516  
[beck.nj@gmail.com](mailto:beck.nj@gmail.com)  
(907) 615-0018



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Paula Rogers <progers227@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 11, 2025 9:25 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** French Immersion

The Anchorage School District is facing the largest deficit in education funding ever, \$111 million for the next school year. This is due to a lack of state funding to support the district. The Alaska legislature has not increased the base student allocation in over a decade! This is definitely not keeping up with inflation. Stable, multi-year education funding is a vital state investment for our kids and the Alaskan economy. Meanwhile, it is my understanding that spending on Alaska's prisons has grown 3 times as fast as spending on education?? This seems backward to me. Investing in our children and their education is an investment in our future for the state of Alaska.

The suggested model of increasing the pupil to student ratio (PTR) to stretch the budget simply does not work for language immersion programs. The 12 FTE "positions" that are in question are not actual people but overall funding to offset the smaller class sizes in immersion when overall PTA increases. However, if these 12 FTE are eliminated, ASD immersion programs would be decimated and likely permanently. Foreign language teaching positions are hard to fill and these individuals often need time to apply for work visas. We cannot afford to wait until June to see what the legislature decides to fund as we will not have the time to find teachers to fill the vacant positions. 12 FTE would take five teachers from O'Malley and completely eliminate the entire K-5 French immersion program. Five teachers is nearly one third of our entire teaching staff at O'Malley.

Additionally, if there is no immersion program at O'Malley we will also lose our direct feed to Goldenview Middle School. This also negatively impacts our children because they will be separated from friends they've been attending school with since kindergarten. Without the direct feed some of our students will be directed to Hanshew and some to Goldenview.

ASD is known for having exemplar immersion programs dating back to 1989 with the Japanese program starting at Sand Lake Elementary. Our variety of languages reflects the diversity represented in our city and is unheard of in most districts. In 2020 ASD's Immersion programs were recognized by being honored with ACTFL's Melba D. Woodruff Award for Exemplary Foreign Language Programs. A testament to the dedication of our educators and the success of our immersion programs.

My child attends the French Immersion program at O'Malley Elementary. He has benefited in so many ways from this program as it challenges him academically, and also gives him a sense of community and stability. This stability is extremely valuable in these early formative years and if programs like French

Immersion is not funded, my child will lose a key part of his support system outside of his home environment. He will lose the opportunity to challenge himself to learn in two languages, a skill that has already given him so much confidence. He will lose the ability to learn and interact with other French language speakers on a daily basis something that cannot be replicated anywhere else in Anchorage. This program has been amazing for my child's growth and development as it has been for so many others!

Our children and our hard working educators deserve predictable, multi-year funding to avoid annual crisis and cuts. Please, I urge you to support HB69, Senate Bill 46 and all vital education funding.

Respectfully,

Paula Rogers

**Michael Mason**

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**From:** Sharon Clawson <randevu39@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 7:51 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB46

Senators,  
I completely support increases in funding for education. Please pass Senate Bill 46 ASAP.

Sharon Clawson  
Anchorage 99507

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Tam Agosti-Gisler <tamag5@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 5, 2025 12:34 PM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Worst in history

Dear Senators and Representatives:

A large and successful fundraiser was recently held by French Language Advocates Anchorage (FLAA) on behalf of the French immersion school, O'Malley ES and Goldenview MS (expanding to 6th grade there in the 25-26 school year). Businesses, parents, teachers and supporters of language immersion education donated their products, time and talent. Even with the community raising the money to pay for the translation of next year's 6th grade curriculum into French, we are still facing the loss of 6 FTE at O'Malley which will DEVASTATE THE PROGRAM!

The proposed education cuts all over the state are some of the worst in history. PLEASE pass HB 48 and SB 46 and follow our constitutionally-mandated duty to fund PUBLIC education.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tam Agosti-Gisler  
3438 Stanford Drive  
Anchorage, AK 90508  
907 240-2345  
tamag5@me.com

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Trina Resari-Salao <tresari.salao@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2025 10:10 AM  
**To:** House Education; Senate Education  
**Subject:** Urgent Action Needed to Support Public Education

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you as a concerned mother of children enrolled in the Chinese Immersion program within the Anchorage School District, which is facing the largest deficit in education funding in its history. With a projected \$111 million deficit next year, our schools are at risk of devastating cuts that will undermine the quality of education, particularly within our highly successful immersion programs.

The Alaska Legislature has not increased the Base Student Allocation (BSA) in over a decade, and it has failed to keep pace with inflation. As a result, the Anchorage School District is being forced to make impossible decisions about which programs to cut. Under the current budget proposal, our district's elementary immersion programs will lose 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions next year. While these positions are not actual teachers, they represent essential funding to maintain smaller class sizes in immersion programs and prevent larger class sizes that would negatively impact the students' learning experience.

For immersion programs like Chinese, these cuts would be devastating. Increasing the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for immersion programs would force teachers to take on more students, diminishing the educational experience for all. If these 12 FTE positions are eliminated, we would likely see the permanent decimation of our district's immersion programs at the elementary level.

As you may know, immersion programs are a hallmark of our district's educational offerings, and we are proud to have one of the most robust and diverse immersion programs in the country. Currently, we have 2,848 students enrolled in Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Russian, Spanish, and Yup'ik immersion programs. This diversity is a key asset for Anchorage, and it attracts families from military, oil, medical, and other sectors who value the educational opportunities our schools provide.

If the BSA is not increased, I fear we will see the dismantling of these programs, and with it, the loss of a vital educational tool for our children. It is essential that we secure adequate funding to preserve these programs and ensure that our schools continue to offer the high-quality education our students deserve.

I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 46, sponsored by Senator Matt Claman, and House Bill 69, sponsored by Representative Rebecca Himschoot, to increase the BSA and provide the necessary funding to sustain our immersion programs. Without this critical support, our students and our community will suffer long-term consequences.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your leadership in securing the future of our children's education.

Best,

Trina Resari-Salao

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Victoria Weakland <victoriaweakland@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 16, 2025 8:06 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Alaska Education Funding SB46

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today in regards to SB 46. It is imperative that this bill and its partner in the house be passed to ensure the future prosperity of our state. A strong public education system is the root of a thriving economy as it provides and promotes knowledge, community, rigid work ethic, physical health and so much more. I currently have a child in the Anchorage School District that participates in the elementary IGNITE program and am deeply concerned with the direction our public education system is heading.

We cannot afford to lose funding for this program or a number of the other activities/programs currently scheduled to be dismantled. The ability to prevent underachievement is paramount in a state that's already suffering from low overall test scores, poor graduation rates and continually declining retention of graduates to live and work in Alaska. The IGNITE program allows for intellectually stimulating opportunities and interventions. This program helps over two thousand children with the ability to stay engaged and invested within the public school system. Fostering their potential talent and challenging students to stay motivated to excel is of the utmost importance.

This program reflects positively on the district as a whole. Alumni are thriving and making progress in our society. It encourages parents that they're making the right choice enrolling their children in the public education system. It meets the needs of diverse learners, promotes equity and inclusion, and fosters innovation and excellence. As a state that is always looking towards development and progress, we need our future generations to be able to set that in motion. We need these gifted students and programs to fuel our economy, enrich Alaskan lives and promote a well rounded educational experience for future generations.

My child leaves our house with exhilarated energy on days they have IGNITE. Their spark is essentially "ignited" into a full flame with this program as the catalyst. Please consider prioritizing the needs of investing in education when making decisions about budget allocations and pursuing legislative action. Through continued support of gifted education, special education and many other arts and athletics programs, students are afforded the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our future as an economically growing state relies on our ability to not only keep residents but to give others a reason to move here. Proposed projects such as a liquid natural gas pipeline or chip making plants will require thousands of people to move to Alaska to fulfill jobs in every sector. The best way to keep them here after these projects is to give them reasons to stay. A strong economy and an excellent education system can only encourage prosperity.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Victoria Hemphill