



Governor Mike Dunleavy
STATE OF ALASKA

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Cathy Tilton
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Tilton:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill to provide an annual lump sum payment for classroom teachers in Alaska for a period of three years. This bill authorizes the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to make lump sum payments to teachers in the amount of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000, depending on the school district.

Education in Alaska is a matter of significant government concern.¹ Competition for quality teachers is a nationwide issue and multiple jurisdictions have adopted legislation to incentivize teacher recruitment.² Attracting and retaining top quality educators to the state is absolutely vital to fulfilling Alaska's obligation to provide a useful education to our children. However, due to the uniqueness of Alaska's geography and the remoteness of some of our schools, we are experiencing a crisis in recruiting and retaining the best teachers for our children. This bill establishes a pilot program designed to improve teacher recruitment and retention by incentivizing teachers to accept positions in Alaska, including the most remote parts of Alaska, with a particular emphasis on rural schools that have struggled to keep pace with their peers.

¹ Article VII, Section 1, Alaska Constitution

² See, e.g., Minn. Stat. § 122A.59 (2021) (An act establishing a program to support districts and schools recruiting and offering hiring bonuses for licensed teachers who are American Indian or a person of color from another state or country in order to meet staffing needs in shortage areas in economic development regions in Minnesota); WASH. REV. CODE § 28A.405.415(2) (2020) (An act providing salary bonuses for teachers in low-income schools); MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. 15A, § 19B (1998) (An act authorizing up to a \$20,000 hiring bonus for teachers based on measures such as test scores, grade point average, or class rank).

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Under the terms of the bill, certificated full-time teachers assigned to a classroom teaching assignment receive a lump sum payment on, or around, July 1, 2024, July 1, 2025, and July, 1 2026. The bill limits the payment to full-time teachers and specifically excludes temporary, substitute, or assistant teachers. In order to be eligible for the lump sum payment, a teacher must occupy a teaching position for the entirety of the school term for the school year immediately preceding the date of payment. The purpose of the bill is to provide a post-school year payment to encourage teachers to remain in Alaska for the entirety of the school year, thereby promoting continuity for Alaska's students and maximizing education outcomes. The payment of the lump sum is contingent on appropriation.

The bill identifies pay tiers for each school district individually in the amount of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000. The highest tier payments are directed to our remote and rural schools, which have most significantly struggled with producing quality education outcomes. This category recognizes the realities faced by remote and rural school districts in hiring and keeping educators.

The \$10,000 tier is targeted towards our rural schools that, despite their remoteness, are sufficiently linked to Alaska's urban network to allow for more regular access to goods and services.

The smallest tier is focused on incentivizing teachers in Alaska's most urbanized areas. While no portion of Alaska can be considered "urbanized" in comparison to the mega-cities of the contiguous United States, the \$5,000 tier recognizes that our urban public school system should not cannibalize resources for our rural areas, while still providing a significant incentive to teach in Alaska's cities and major population boroughs.

Under this bill, teachers are required to submit an application to be eligible for payment and school districts are responsible for certifying the applications. The bill also makes all lump sum payments compensation for the purposes of the Teachers' Retirement System. This bill supports Alaska's educators who sacrifice so much to provide our children with the best possible education.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,



Mike Dunleavy
Governor

Enclosure