



2024

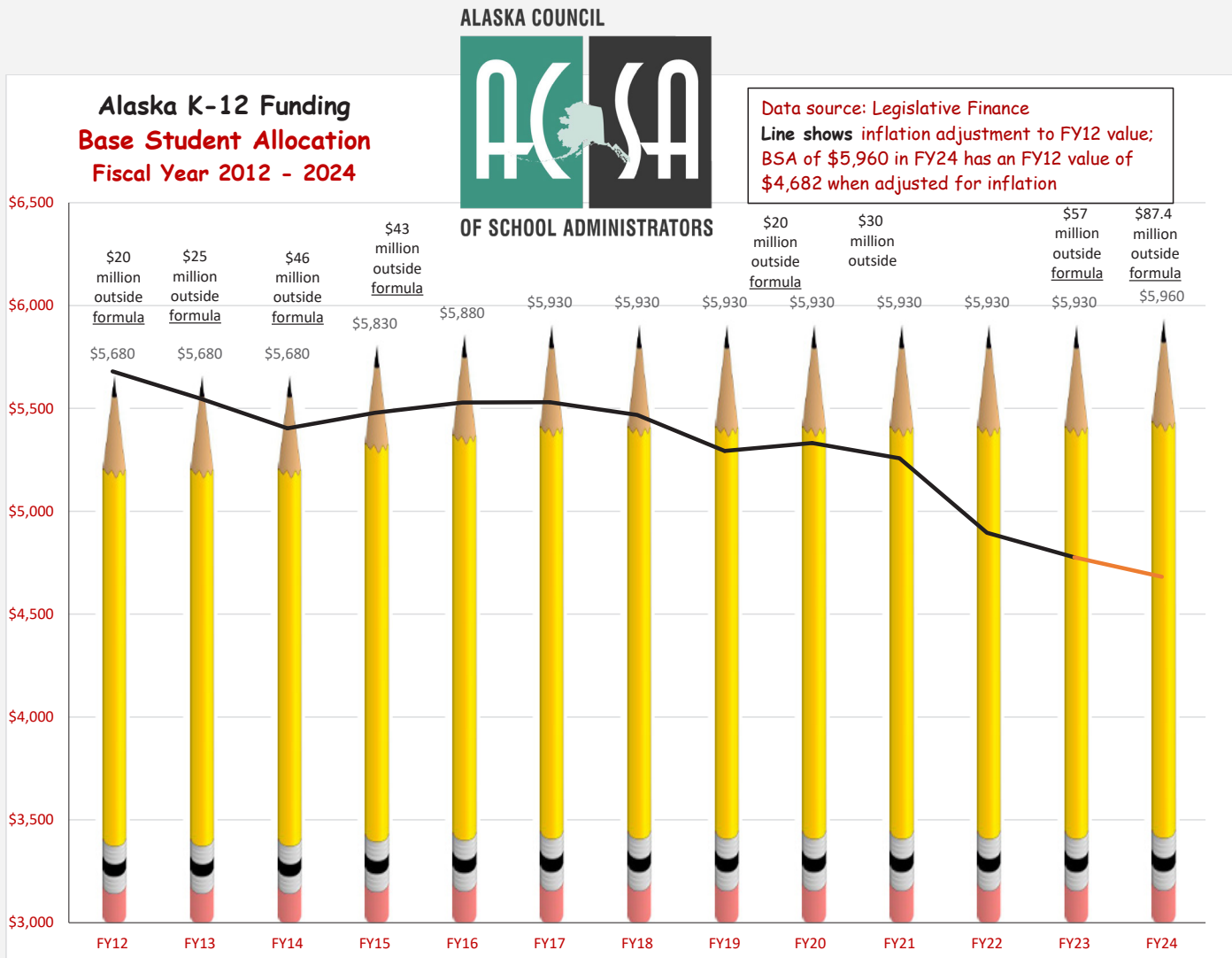
ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS JOINT POSITION STATEMENTS

**Student Achievement is
our number one priority.**

**Sustainable funding remains
our most critical need.**

PRIORITY FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

The State of Alaska has a constitutional responsibility to public education, which means to provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and to provide full and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. **Early notification of funding and predictable funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.**



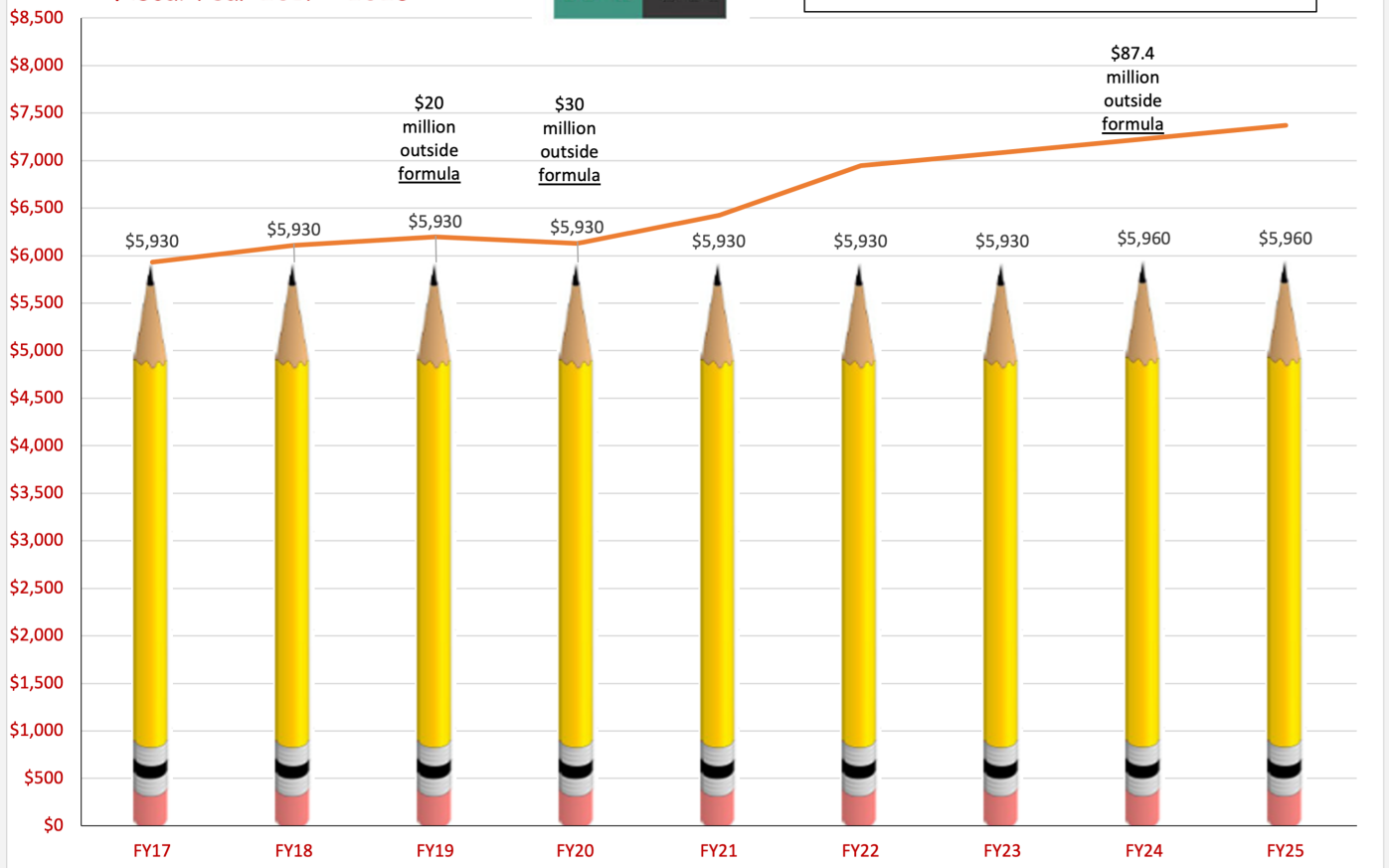
The line in the chart above shows inflation adjustment to FY12 value; BSA of \$5,960 in FY24 has an FY12 value of \$4,682 when adjusted for inflation.

We appreciate the Legislature prioritizing education funding in 2023. The administration's veto, combined with prolonged flat funding, historic inflation and increasing costs in health care, transportation, operations, and maintenance, results in a loss of purchasing power that schools cannot sustain while keeping achievement high and meeting accountability requirements such as the Alaska Reads Act. Adjusted for inflation, schools need an increase of \$1,413 in the BSA to match inflation since FY17.

Alaska K-12 Funding Base Student Allocation Fiscal Year 2017 - 2025



Data source: Urban Alaska Annual CPI-U
Line shows what the BSA would have been if
inflation adjusted since 2017 - FY25 = \$7,373



The line in the chart above shows what the BSA would have been if inflation adjusted since 2017 - FY25 = \$7,373.

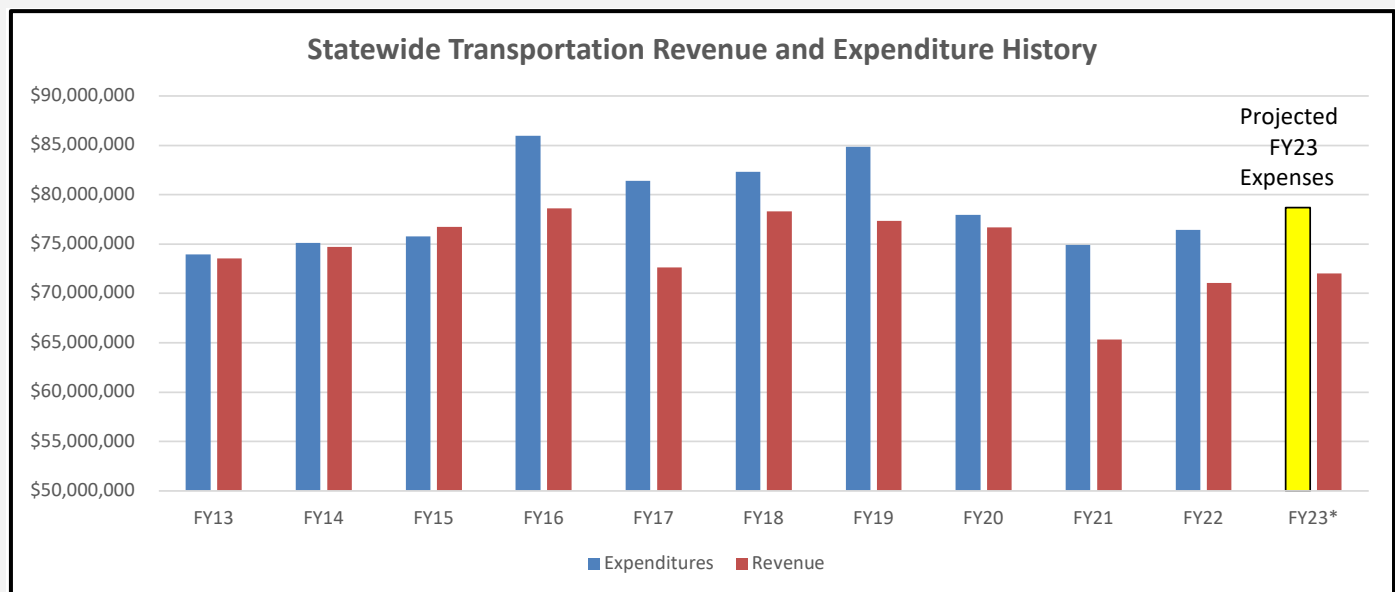
In order to reverse the ongoing out-migration and economic decline in the state of Alaska, it is imperative that the state invest in education. Implementation of a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains essential to maximize the ability of districts to meet student needs. Diversified revenue streams are critical in the current fiscal climate to address any deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements, while preserving the Permanent Fund Dividend for future generations.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments. ACSA strongly opposes any efforts by the State to unnecessarily limit or reduce the resources districts rely upon to support non-instructional or community-based programs, such as Community Services, afterschool programs, and/or pupil transportation. We urge the state to abide by the definition of local contribution found in 4 AAC 09.990(b), which is limited to “money appropriated to a district’s school operating fund by the city or borough,” and to halt their pursuit of a new definition of local contributions under the cap as any funds provided by the municipalities to the districts, including those appropriated to special revenue funds for non-instructional purposes.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Student attendance is directly tied to availability of transportation/routes, and Alaska has the highest rate of chronic absenteeism in the country. State transportation funding has not increased since 2016, although costs have increased almost 40%. It is imperative that the State of Alaska increase and inflation-proof funding for pupil transportation. Without this increase, our responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education for students is compromised, ensuring that districts will not be able to provide Alaska's students with safe, reliable, accessible transportation from home to school in accordance with Alaska statute.

Additionally, severe staffing shortages have resulted in increased costs to recruit and retain drivers and attendants, even while required expenditures for maintenance, repair, supplies, and shipping have risen to unprecedented levels. Since that time, statewide transportation costs have exceeded the amount of state pupil transportation funding by over \$36.5 million, requiring districts to further redirect operating funds to non-instructional services.



Since the pupil transportation grant is tied to enrollment, declining enrollment has further fueled a decrease in funding since there is no hold harmless provision, even though routes often cannot be cut or shortened without significantly limiting accessibility for remaining students. Cutting routes also has the potential to increase the amount of time some students spend being transported to school.

With unique geographic challenges, severe weather, wildlife, and vast distances, Alaska's students depend on safe and reliable transportation via air, ferry, and road to access their constitutional right to a free public education. Therefore, we must ensure all communities' pupil transportation needs are equitably met and maintained, and that transportation does not become another barrier to academic engagement.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Student outcomes in the classroom are directly connected to equitable access to mental health professionals in public schools. Studies by the American School Counselor Association show that school districts with lower student-to-school-counselor ratios produce higher graduation rates, higher college entrance, lower absenteeism rates and fewer suspensions.

ACSA supports targeted funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase students' access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development for all staff to meet the increasing and diverse needs of all students.

The CDC listed Alaska as having the third highest suicide mortality rate of any state, with 30.8 deaths per 100,000 total population. Alaska also has the third highest adolescent (ages 15-19) suicide rate in the country, with 41.3 deaths per 100,000 adolescents, according to the United Health Foundation.

All Alaskan students, regardless of their geographic location, deserve equitable access to staff and support that nurtures their social, emotional and mental health. State funding is critical in providing school districts with the resources so that schools can implement comprehensive, culturally responsive, and school-based mental health programs to foster the overall wellbeing of our most precious resource, kids.

INCREASING BANDWIDTH IN UNDER-SERVED AREAS

ACSA supports continuing the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) to ensure all schools are able to access a minimum speed of 100 megabits per second, which leverages federal E-Rate funds up to a 9:1 match. We also support efforts to continue to increase download speed to meet national recommendations of 1 gigabit per second, per student.

It is critical to recognize the ongoing and increasing need for Alaska's students, educators, and leaders to have equitable access to the digital world both inside and outside of the school environment. ACSA wants to ensure every student has reliable internet access. Access to vital bandwidth is necessary to innovate learning, create efficiencies, provide online health services, and keep pace with peers globally and is essential where infrastructure is extremely limited or non-existent. ACSA supports school to home connectivity.

ACSA also supports efforts by the legislature to continue to increase innovative infrastructure capacity through public/private partnerships, partnerships with tribal entities, and statewide consortiums in an effort to provide all communities with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet.

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

ACSA calls on the Legislature to provide and fund a public pension system that fairly compensates all district staff who devote many years to Alaska's children. According to a study by the Economic Policy Institute, the average teacher earns 21% less than other professionals with college degrees. This gap must be offset by providing an excellent benefits package, including a robust, defined benefit retirement system. Alaska stands alone in the nation, with its certificated staff as the only PK-12 group denied the opportunity to earn either a pension or Social Security.

The absence of fundamental retirement security necessitates a more robust retirement system that far surpasses these bare minimums. The lack of a defined benefit retirement plan, coupled with the loss of competitive salaries, offers teachers scant incentive to pursue a career in Alaska. The support of the state in providing these crucial benefits is essential to a healthy education system for Alaska's children.

SCHOOL SAFETY

ACSA advocates the prevention of school crime and violence as a catalyst for safe and secure schools. We emphasize the importance of preventative as well as responsive measures to ensure school safety. ACSA supports improving the safety, physical and mental well-being of our children, knowing this is critical to increasing student achievement. School safety is developed through training, prevention, planning and maintaining effective, positive relationships among students, tribes responding to local needs. ACSA supports providing school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services.

ACSA advocates full funding and access to school counselors, law enforcement and first responders, Village Public Safety Officers, and other agencies such as the Office of Children's Services. ACSA calls for a statewide clearinghouse of safety trainings, internal safety processes, and policies to assess threats to the school and to have a secure school facility.

HEALTH CARE COSTS AND BENEFITS

Controlling the cost of health care for our professionals is critical and promises long-term benefits in recruiting and retaining effective educators and other school staff. Such staff are at the core of maximizing student achievement. Implementing solutions to the long-term, escalating costs of healthcare and health insurance in the state is imperative. **Health care costs have become a large portion of districts' operating fund expenditures, with some districts seeing 20% of their operating dollars going to healthcare. This significant and growing cost takes away from a district's ability to provide funding to other programs and needs.**

MAJOR MAINTENANCE

ACSA supports reliable, adequate and equitable investments and funding through the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) school construction process for capital projects and major maintenance to existing school district facilities in order to provide students and staff a safe and healthy environment. ACSA strongly advocates for comprehensive safety improvements that adhere to both federal and state mandates, while also incorporating modern best practices in safety protocols. Reliable investment in school major maintenance as needs arise will save the state from future costs. Preventative school maintenance will defer the need for new school construction.

SCHOOL BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

ACSA advocates for the legislature to end the moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement. In 2015, the state placed a moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement until 2025, thereby placing the burden on school districts to fully fund bonds with their own tax revenue.

Due to the moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement, many districts have deferred school construction projects, will likely result in deterioration and long-term damage, leading to unsafe conditions and higher costs to school districts.

Additionally, funds for REAA school major maintenance and construction are tied to the amount of bond debt reimbursement. The 10-year moratorium on bond debt reimbursement will have lasting effects on the capitalization of that fund and lead to the deterioration of facilities in communities served by REAAs.

PREPARING, ATTRACTING, AND RETAINING QUALIFIED EDUCATORS

Recruiting and retaining highly effective educators and leaders is imperative to increase student achievement and eliminate academic disparity for all of Alaska's students, especially for those with special needs.

However, Alaska districts had over 500 certified teacher vacancies on the first day of school in 2023-2024, and some Alaska schools did not have a single certified teacher on the first day of school. Alaska districts also had to use hundreds of emergency certificates. An urgent response is needed to address the dire vacancy rates. **Districts must be equipped with the resources to provide nationally competitive compensation, a benefits package, combined with a robust state retirement system, to correct this issue.**

A comprehensive statewide program should be developed to prepare, attract, and retain high quality, diverse educators, and professionals. ACSA recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts along with a renewed commitment to growing our own educators, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, principals, and superintendents. ACSA encourages the state to provide funding and policies improving access to safe housing for all due to the difficulty in finding adequate housing for educators in Alaska's rural communities.

The national educator shortage compounds Alaska's need to fund a robust educator certification program within the University of Alaska and to create incentives for graduates to stay in Alaska. Exploring innovative, alternative pathways is paramount to attracting high

quality educators to address Alaska's unique needs. We support prioritizing the removal of barriers for certified teachers coming from out of state, and internationally on J-1, H1-B, and other visa types.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ACSA supports the definition of elementary education to include universal Pre-K, thus ensuring equitable access to fully funded, sustainable, birth to age five learning programs and nutrition services. The developmental differences of 3 and 4 year old pre-K children require developmentally appropriate instructional materials and playground equipment, all of which depends on sufficient funding. According to the 2022-2023 Alaska Developmental Profile, over 80% of Alaska's students enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning and with this figure reaching up to almost 90% in some communities, additionally over 40% of entering kindergarteners lack critical foundations in literacy. These services would have the most impact on kindergarten readiness by running a minimum of 5 days a week, 6 hours a day. A full day pre-K program provides a foundation of critical social, emotional, and cognitive instruction to students.

As the Alaska READS Act acknowledges, early intervention, instruction and parent education are the most effective ways to create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade and minimize the dropout rate. ACSA supports adequate, sustainable early childhood education, Pre-K, and parent education support funding as part of the base student allocation – including full (1.0) ADM funding for pre-K students.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional learning with DEED, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska with educators and industry-based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The pipeline of CTE services begins with early learning programs. This foundation for CTE gives students the opportunity to build future-ready skills and contribute to their local economy after high school. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, tribal, regional, and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving graduation rates, higher career earnings, and decreasing dropout percentages.

These programs must either be available to students before they graduate or include funding for postgraduate programs for students above age 18 in industries where only adults may receive training, for instance marine welders. ACSA supports the inclusion of CTE courses in the eligibility requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

ACSA fully supports continued and increased targeted funding for voluntary internships and pre-apprenticeship programs that prepare students for high-demand, high-skill, high wage jobs, as well as dual credit offerings that provide opportunities to obtain an occupational certification or credentials.

OTHER STATE ISSUES

ACSA adamantly opposes any additional unfunded mandates.

Capital Improvement (CIP) funding must be fully restored to prevent the loss of public school facilities. Costs of preventative maintenance have significantly increased due to inflation and prolonged neglect to public school facilities due to unfunded major maintenance.

ACSA expects the State of Alaska to fully fund early learning programs, including Head Start aligned to DEED standards, to improve educational outcomes for Alaska's students, and to make attending kindergarten a requirement.

ACSA supports the local control and autonomy of Alaska's communities who are served through all 54 unique school districts.

When the school funding formula is reviewed, ACSA strongly supports that it be done by a task force including nationally-recognized and Alaska school finance experts, and that school and district cost factors be closely reviewed.

ACSA supports a non-partisan and independent State Board of Education with the sole purpose of ensuring a quality education for all of Alaska's children.

ACSA is proud and supportive of educational alternative programs, so long as the directive in Alaska's Constitution is upheld: *"No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."* This restriction includes vouchers and/or any other mechanisms that channel public funds to private or religious schools.



FEDERAL ISSUES

FOREST RECEIPTS (SAFE AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT)

ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the federal government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership. ACSA supports the reauthorization of the Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act, included in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, that would provide funding beyond FY25 and any bill that provides a permanent funding mechanism.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

ACSA encourages the United States Department of Education to continue to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control. Further, ACSA encourages Congress to eliminate discretionary funding caps to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

ACSA supports the full funding of IDEA. By honoring its commitment to support the education of students with disabilities, Congress should enable districts to shift dollars toward new initiatives that address their local disability needs.

HELPING SCHOOLS FEED KIDS ACT

ACSA supports increased funding for child nutrition through the Helping Schools Feed Kids Act (H.R. 1424). Providing breakfast, lunches, and snacks at school reduces barriers, increases student engagement and preparedness, and supports healthy communities.

Advocacy Toolbox

- Live legislative hearings
- Current Education legislation
- Legislators by School District
- Legislative Tracking Resources
- 2024 Joint Position Statements
- JPS Talking Points



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SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
**JOINT POSITION
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**Sustainable funding remains
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For Advocacy resources and to easily track education related legislation please visit the ACSA Advocacy Tool Box at AlaskaACSA.org

OTHER FEDERAL ISSUES

ACSA strongly opposes the use of public money to fund private/religious education through vouchers or other mechanisms.

ACSA supports full and equitable funding with cost-of-living increases for E-Rate, Indian Education, Impact Aid, and all Title programs with no significant program changes.

ACSA supports waiving the FERPA requirement to obtain parental consent to bill Medicaid for necessary services provided in the school setting.

ACSA supports increased funding for teacher housing in rural communities.

ACSA supports funding for social emotional learning, social workers, mental health support, school nursing, and birth to age five learning for all. For more specifics, refer to our Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Position Statement.

ACSA does not support including Pupil Transportation funds in the federal disparity test for Impact Aid.

ACSA advocates continued support for Alaska school districts under the E-rate funding that supports expanded connectivity.

ACSA supports the use of federal funds to retrofit and make infrastructure repairs in Alaska schools to align with modern school safety best practices. For more specifics, refer to our School Safety Statement.

Contact Information:

Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)

Email: acsa@alaskaacsa.org

Phone: 907-586-9702

Follow ACSA on X: @ACSAASDN

Website: alaskaacsa.org

Mailing address: 234 Gold Street, Juneau, AK 99801

2024

**ALASKA COUNCIL OF
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

JOINT POSITION STATEMENTS



Student achievement
*is our **number one priority.***

Sustainable funding
*remains our most **critical need.***



Priority Funding for Education



Transportation Funding



School Bond Debt Reimbursement



Major Maintenance



School Safety



**Preparing, Attracting, and
Retaining Qualified Educators**



Career and Technical Education



Retirement Systems



Health Care Costs and Benefits



Social, Emotional, and Mental Health



Early Childhood Education



**Increasing Bandwidth in Underserved
Areas**

**ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS**

*Leadership, Unity and Advocacy for Public
Education*

907-586-9702 - ALASKAACSA.ORG



From: [Lon Garrison](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: AASB Testimony on HCS CSSB 140 January 20, 2024
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 7:30:21 AM
Attachments: [240120 HSE Rules CS SB140 AASB Testimony.pdf](#)

Please find attached my written testimony for HCS CSSB 140 and AASB's 2024 Legislative Priorities.

Respectfully,
Lon Garrison

--



Lon Garrison | Executive Director

Association of Alaska School Boards

1111 W. 9th Street, Juneau, AK 99801

Office: (907) 463-1668

lgarrison@aasb.org

AASB honors and respects the Ancestral Lands on which all Alaskans live, work, play, and learn, and encourages activities and practices that acknowledge and recognize the past and present stewardship of these lands.

From: [Lisa Asselin](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:16:25 AM

My name is Lisa Asselin Martin and I am a parent of a 6th grader at West Homer Elementary in Homer. I oppose moving SB 140 forward in its current form. The BSA included falls far short of what is needed to provide students in our public schools a high quality education and the teaching staff the supports they need to make this happen. Families are leaving this state. They are leaving to find better futures for their families. And why not? Parents are well aware of the hard decisions facing school districts about what enrichment programs get cut, how many students can fill a classroom, what bus activities and routes can be cut, what jobs we can minimize and more. A BSA increase of only \$300 reflects a decision based on the question- what is the bare minimum we can do to maintain standards? This leaves schools, staff and parents scrambling to ensure quality programming while the state can wipe their hands clean from the hard work yet still demand high standards. Families are leaving the public education system and this state because they don't feel valued and I don't blame them. It's time we actually put our money where our mouth is and make this state a great place to live. Raise the BSA to \$1300 so students and their teachers can get back to learning and away from wondering what's going to get cut next. Thank you for your time today,
Lisa Asselin Martin
Homer

From: [Jennifer Beckett](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Testimony for SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:38:10 AM

Dear House,

I am writing to let another voice be heard from Delta Junction. Please help stop the mindset that the old mindset that this is the way it is so deal with it. Our students are suffering because our staff is continually asked to work with little, for little and expected to do BIG things with our students. Don't let our state be counted among the many who have highly qualified and experienced teachers fleeing positions for more money, more flexibility and more time.

The continuous neglect and under-investment in our public schools must end for the benefit of our students, families, and communities.

A BSA increase of **\$1,413** is necessary to keep pace with inflation and ensure that all students have access to quality education, resources, and opportunities that they rightfully deserve under our state constitution.

Thank you for reading this and considering closely what you are deciding on.
Students first,

--

Jennifer Beckett

SPED Teacher

Delta High School

615-510-1687 (Call or Text)

“The only guarantee for failure is to stop trying.” – John C. Maxwell

From: [Rebecca Bernard](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:35:57 PM

Dear Chair Johnson and members of the House Rules Committee,

I am a longtime Anchorage resident and a parent of two public school students, a high school senior, and an eighth grader. I am writing to express my views on SB 140.

I've been following the issue of education funding for over ten years now, and it is painful to witness the chronic undervaluing and slow strangulation of Alaska's public schools. In hearing after hearing, large majorities of Alaskans have weighed in, begging legislators to give the schools a cost of living raise. And year after year, with few exceptions, the Legislature has failed to listen. Alaskans want our public schools to be adequately and reliably funded, so that we can hire and keep good teachers, attract and keep families with school age children, and prepare Alaskan children to be our next generation of leaders. A \$300 BSA increase is far below what the schools need to catch up with inflation and rising costs since the BSA was last raised in 2017; instead, we need a BSA increase that is north of \$1,000.

In this time of political polarization in our communities and country, it is more important than ever to have vibrant schools where students from all walks of life can encounter each other, talk to each other, learn from each other. To give up on our public schools by slowly starving them of funding is to give up on the idea of our shared polity as a cohesive community where we all belong.

In this post-pandemic time, it is more important than ever to have vibrant schools that can support our students in all the ways that they need. Students are still struggling to catch up academically and emotionally in the wake of the pandemic, and their needs are greater than ever. This is not the time to starve our schools.

Our communities need well-rounded high school graduates who are prepared and ready to enter the workforce and engage as citizens, and for that, we need our schools to be securely and sufficiently funded. We need a substantial increase to the BSA.

I also urge the committee to drop the provision recently added to SB 140 that would remove charter school decisions from local school districts and give this authority to the state. There is no reason for this change: charter schools are thriving in Alaska, and it is the local districts and the people in them who can best discern what special school programs are needed and valued in their communities. The top-down decisionmaking envisioned in this provision -- the state decides which charter schools are approved and the district is then charged with running them -- is not how Alaskans like to do things.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,
Rebecca Bernard
1210 N St
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-244-3988

From: [Laura Bonner](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:05:49 AM

Chairman Craig Johnson
Members of the House Rules Committee

I oppose many of the additions and changes the Rules Committee added to SB140.

BSA reduced to \$300 is unacceptable! There is wide support for the \$680 amount but it still doesn't keep up with inflation.

Giving the State Board of Education the authority to authorize new charter schools takes away local control for school districts amounting to an unfunded mandate for local school districts. This provision should be removed from SB140.

HB111 could be a good bill but it needs to be heard by more than one committee and there were no fiscal notes attached to it. It should be removed from SB140.

If one-time bonuses is an action taken, it needs to include teacher aides, paraprofessionals, food service workers, counselors and custodians who are also critical to support classrooms and support teachers and the students.

SB140 has become a huge bill but the \$680 BSA increase that was in prior version is a must have.

Laura Bonner
Anchorage AK

From: [Carole Bookless](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: public input on BSA legislation
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 4:25:22 PM

Dear Legislators,

I made a presentation at public input on Saturday, Jan 20, but due to me being under the weather, nervous, etc, my point may not have been clear. I would like to clarify it now.

My point was that Governor Dunleavy will continue to veto BSA increases unless you address his very real concerns that funds are not reaching the classrooms. I share his concerns AND think the BSA is the way to address them.

I mentioned the Dollars to Classroom legislation that tried to address this issue nationally in 2005. This is obviously a long standing (20 years) issue, not only in Alaska.

Dollars to Classroom set a cap of 5% on the use of D2C funds for administration. (I believe Dollars to Classroom was supplemental which is maybe why only 5% was chosen.) While Dollars to Classroom did not pass, the idea of capping admin costs might work for Alaska. Setting a cap on administration's use of funds from the BSA will address the top heavy administration we have now.

I would like a reasonable cap to be set on money from the BSA that can be used for administration. There must be data somewhere that can help set that percentage. This would address the Governor's and DEED's concern that money is not making it to where it is needed - to the classroom.

You may remember my example of the several distant trainings/conventions that were taken by administrators just before the district "discovered" how in debt we were. This is just not okay.

Classrooms could benefit twofold - more dollars from the BSA and more dollars available to classrooms from less money going to admin.

The bottom line is we need to increase the BSA. And we need to get that increase past the Governor. To do that, we need to address his concern that not enough of the BSA money is making it to the classroom - because he is right.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Carole Bookless

Douglas, Alaska

PS. A "bonus" for just doing my job is NOT wanted nor needed. Adequate funding to do my job safely and efficiently, with adequate staffing, curriculum and support, IS wanted and needed. Raise the BSA.

From: [Steve Bouta](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Sen. Robert Myers](#); [Rep. Frank Tomaszewski](#)
Subject: SB 140, Omnibus Education Bill
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:02:23 PM

Honorable Committee Members, and my senator and representative,

Thank you for taking testimony today. Here are my thoughts.

The BSA: The increase of \$680 is the bare minimum you should consider. Inflation has radically eroded the allocation. With his veto, our Governor is saying that our children are worth less today than in the past. Our children deserve better, our society deserves better. Pay for schools now, or pay for corrective measures later.

The State Board of Education getting involved in charter schools: No, no, and NO. The whole idea behind charter schools was allowing more local control. Now some want to push that idea backwards. No. If you want to follow the KISS rule, eliminate charter schools altogether, so we can all work on improving the schools where all our children attend, not subvert attention and funding to separate schools for the special few. Charter schools are a tool to increase the stratification of society. They should not receive taxpayer funds.

Teacher retention: This is really a no brainer. Improve their compensation and benefits. Bring back the defined benefit plan.

How to pay for this? Sell our oil for a fair price. Stop being bamboozled by big oil!

Thanks for listening.

Steven Bouta
1024 Cranberry Ridge Dr
Fairbanks, AK 99712

From: [Harvey Brandt](#)
To: [Rep. Craig Johnson](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:05:00 PM

Tried to testify

Waited 2 hours

Here it is

I am opposed to the mosh mash of too many things in bill #140

1 I am opposed to bonuses for teachers

Let's have a respectable pension

2 Raise SBA to reflect inflation

3 school governance is local

KEEP IT LOCAL. No more state NO state governance of charter schools

Harvey Brandt

Long time Alaskan

Sent from my iPhone

From: sarahlbrewer@yahoo.com
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 3:33:01 PM

Good afternoon Chair Johnson and members of the committee, my name is Sarah Brewer, lifelong Alaskan, mother of two in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School district, and a certified substitute teacher who one day would love to make my way back to a permanent classroom in Homer, Alaska. I have also worked in the Fairbanks, Unalaska, and Sitka School Districts before setting roots on the Kenai Peninsula. I am speaking as an individual today.

Like many at the hearing on Saturday, I am here in opposition to moving Senate Bill 140 in its current version out of Committee. While there are some beneficial issues that it does address, It does not address the desperate need for a more significant increase to the BSA. This bill is woefully short of fulfilling that need. The lump sum payment to teachers allocated in it comes without the foundation needed to recruit and retain them long term. It also leaves out paras and many other support staff who work tirelessly within our schools, and doesn't do anything to address the lacking retirement system that Tier Three educators receive after years of service. You've heard all of this today, over and over...

I urge you to look for long term solutions to support our students and teachers. As is, this simply kicks the can down the road for a bit longer, but does nothing to address the systemic issues our educators and families are facing. It's not just ethical, it's economical. We are losing 20% of teachers, and 10% of administrators every year (and that's just for the schools on the road system). This lack of stability is not only damaging to students, it's costly to the state of Alaska. A study by U of Alaska Anchorage's institute for social and economic research estimates that each teacher turnover costs the state \$20,000, and 75,000 per administrator. The amount of 2022 teacher/admin turnover puts the total cost that year at \$20 million.

On a personal note I also just want to say that the fact that all of us have to come back, year after year, to fight over scraps at the budget table when public education for our kids is ONE THING that we should never have to fight over is, in and of itself, exhausting and demoralizing. It's also your constitutional responsibility. I look forward to a year when we can all say, you guys made the right call right out of the gate, got creative, crossed the aisles, and made the right decision together to begin with. This year, however, here we are again. Please don't move this bill forward without addressing the important issues that so many of us have outlined at the hearing.

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." -Will Shakespeare

From: [Laura Buchheit](#)
To: [House Education](#); [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 - public testimony - raise BSA
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:32:28 PM

Chair Johnson and members of House Rules Committee,

I write as a resident of Alaska, a parent, and employer. I write in support of increased support of our education system, which SB 140 does not provide. I am very concerned that SB 140 as written damages our children, our teachers, and, therefore, our future. The original intent of SB 140, as an Internet for Schools bill, is valid, yet the amendments are not OK.

Primarily:

- The BSA must be increased. The Alaska Association of School Boards recommends a minimum increase of \$1413. This is a minimum to invest in our children and our communities - the BSA should be even higher for Alaska to be a viable place for families to raise their children for future resilience and success.
- Charter Schools need to stay locally controlled, not under the authority to the state board of education. Local charter schools need to be responsive to and run by their local communities.

As a parent and an employer, I see the lack of state support for education hurting my children, my family and my job.

As a parent, I am concerned for my childrens' future. My family has lived in Alaska since 2012, first in Gustavus and now Juneau. We came for employment, quality of life and community. We were glad to raise our children here. We want to keep our children in the Alaska public schools, yet due to the lack of state support of education, we have had to make difficult choices that have separated our family. Our eldest child wanted greater academic opportunity than the public school provided, so left the state for boarding school (with a scholarship that made it possible). We moved to Juneau for greater educational opportunity for our youngest child. While our son has thrived in the Montessori charter school, SB140 as currently written threatens the stability of his education.

As someone who recruits and hires employees, I have to be honest with potential employees that the school system is lacking support from the state. The lack of state support for education is hurting the opportunity to recruit excellent employees who are hesitant to bring their children to a depleted education system.

Please support our children, our teachers, our communities and our future by increasing BSA and keeping local control of charter schools. In addition, the state legislature should be investing in our teachers, so that they can use their expertise and energy to educate our children rather than advocate for their jobs.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Laura Buchheit
421 W 10th Street

Juneau, AK 99801
907-957-7808
formerly Gustavus, AK

From: [Carolyn Loeffler](#)
To: [House Rules](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#)
Cc: [Sen. Click Bishop](#); [Rep. Ashley Carrick](#)
Subject: Testimony for SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:33:18 AM

Dear esteemed members of the House Rules committee,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for quickly addressing the issue of education funding for our public schools this session. It is no secret that our teachers are drowning, grossly underpaid, and our schools are insufficiently supported. We cannot expect our students to thrive in such an environment and our poor test scores are harbingers of what's to come if we don't begin planning and investing for our future now.

I also believe the state of our schools is *a major reason* why many working-age Alaskans are leaving the state. They do not see adequate opportunities for their children (or themselves) and are looking elsewhere. As a mother of a 2.5 year old and a 4.5 year old (who will be starting kindergarten this fall), I am *deeply concerned* about what I am hearing and seeing from our teachers. Basic needs are not being met. The public schools in Alaska are not what I want for my children nor anyone else's. **They all deserve far better.**

The proposed increase to the BSA in Section 10 of SB 140 is absolutely inadequate and I urge you to consider increasing **to at least \$680**, an amount widely supported by the legislature. I also have grave concerns about Section 3, the lack of public input and process in its creation, and the way it overrides local school boards and leadership in critical decision-making. Keeping decision-making close to the populous is a core American value and urge you to reconsider this section after greater input from the legislature and the public.

Again, thank you for addressing this critical issue for our state. There is no doubt in my mind that whatever the outcome for education is in the 2024 session, it will have lasting implications for the well-being of our state for years to come. It is my sincere hope that we can take **the long view** and leave a positive lasting legacy for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Loeffler
2187 Loveland Dr
Fairbanks, AK 99709

--

Carolyn K. Loeffler

From: [THOMAS CALDWELL](#)
To: [Rep. Craig Johnson](#)
Subject: YES, on SB 140 Sec. 3 & 9 (Charter & Correspondence School Approval)
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 4:16:22 PM

YES, on SB 140 Sec. 3 & 9 (Charter & Correspondence School Approval)

The school districts are too large and too arrogant, and they wield THEIR power over the public by refusing to accept any new charter or correspondence school applications.

Who do you think services the; bullied and children who feel unsafe at their neighborhood school, students with mental illnesses, students with health issues, students living in a unique household situation where attending school is problematic, students that travel, students that play sports out of state, etc. Charter and correspondence schools service these students. Your neighborhood schools do not.

To think that any new charter or correspondence school that is approved by the state wouldn't follow the Alaska state laws and regulations, is simply silly.

Thank you,
Rebecca Caldwell

From: [Rep. Rebecca Himschoot](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: FW: testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 3:16:45 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

A constituent wanted to offer the testimony below on SB 140. Thank you for your efforts on this marathon hearing!
Rebecca

Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Alaska House of Representatives
House District 2
907-465-3732



[Sign up for my newsletter - Southeast Swell](#)

From: Norman & Toby Campbell <ak.campbells@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2024 3:14 PM
To: Rep. Rebecca Himschoot <Rep.Rebecca.Himschoot@akleg.gov>
Subject: testimony

Hello Rebecca,

I was ready to testify on the phone call, but even tho' I called initially at 9:30, then, again at 9:45 to be put in a cue for testifying (I was put on the list at 9:45), I was listening to a lot of very good testimony, until I had to go to another commitment, at 12:10...SO, I didn't get to testify. I'm so sorry. BUT, I'm going to type it up, so if you could pass it along to the right folks, that would be great! Thank you very much.

Best to you,

Toby

"Hello, my name is Toby Campbell. I'm a retired teacher from the Sitka School District. I taught for 38 years and would like to share a few of my thoughts on SB140 School Funding.

Our children **are** our future. We cannot underestimate the impact of diminishing opportunities and resources for our children. We will soon be relying upon their creative, intelligent, responsible, resilient problem-solving and thinking. We should not be undermining ourselves in the vital process of their education. Why is education such a political football when it is such a critically important foundation and springboard for all of us?

It only makes good sense that the BSA keeps up with inflation. It has not been raised since 2016!!!! Our schools have been operating at a deficit for at least seven years. In what part of our lives and economy would that ever be allowed? The BSA needs to keep up with inflation.

Charter schools will break the backbone of our public school system. I am in support of making our public schools as strong, diverse, rich, and creative as possible, in order to meet the needs of more students.

The bonus pay amount should apply to ALL school staff, including custodians, para-educators, and food service staff. It is critically important that the entire network is valued.

Thank you for all of your hard work and for listening to our testimony."

From: [Sarah Campen](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 testimony for public record
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:52:36 AM

Investing in public education is absolutely critical for the present and future of our great State. Please increase the BSA!! We are so behind other states in our investment in public education. Our students, teachers, parents, and communities deserve better.

Thank you!

Sarah Campen
Gusvatus, AK

Sarah Campen
907.209.6736
scampen.com
[*Salmon Dance*](#)
[*A Piece of Kake*](#)

From: [LIO Anchorage](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: FW: Senate Bill 140 public testimony
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 8:27:13 AM
Importance: High

From: B Carlson <carlson.bc@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:00 AM
To: LIO Anchorage <Lio.Anchorage@akleg.gov>
Cc: Matt Claman <matt@mattclaman.com>
Subject: Senate Bill 140 public testimony
Importance: High

Honorable Alaska Legislators:

We are unable to call in today, but submit this public testimony at 9:58 pm, 2024.1.20. As Anchorage citizens with family, colleagues, and friends throughout Alaska, we urge the Legislature to find a way increase, not decrease the BSA. As a resource rich state it is beyond the pale that we cannot provide a stable and well-funded education system which reimburses employees in pay and benefits that should be due to them. It makes no sense to offer money to entice and retain new educators to Alaska if once they get here they cannot afford to house support their families. This is one of the best places to live in the US, but if we let funding slip it will not be a place that people want to live, work, and retire. To provide for the integrity of infrastructure in Alaska we must ensure that not only is necessary new construction included, but also this desperate move of deferring maintenance must be less frequently used. Taking care of what we have is basic and to be forced to repeatedly defer maintenance absolutely degrades the longevity and functionality of buildings.

Again, please find a way to build the security and appropriate funding that will keep families here, support commerce, and retain the education work force. It is key to Alaska's success and without it the slide to failure is certain.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael and Barbara Carlson
6050 W Dimond Blvd
Anchorage, Ak 99502

From: [Jennifer Carr](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 D
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 7:44:43 AM

Dear members of the House Rules Committee,

I am writing today in support of SB 140 D. As a retired teacher with all service in this state, I am so alarmed at what has happened in our public schools. I believe the biggest hit has come from home schooling of course, but funding and forward thinking is a big priority to not go farther backwards. Public schools have been the foundation of our strong country and it's very sad that we have not valued them.

Maybe cuts are not as noticed in the main areas of that state where resources can be shared like Soldotna/Kenai, Fairbanks and Anchorage. But in the small areas like Seward it is having big effects. WE DO NOT EVEN HAVE A MUSIC PROGRAM ANYMORE!! At one point we struggled to keep the swimming pool open.

The least we can do is provide funding. I am always shocked that the governor, a former educator, takes the stand he does. Passing SB 140 D is a start.

Thank you for serving our state.
Jennifer Carr, Seward

From: [Terry Chapin](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Please increase the bae student allocation for education
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:34:06 AM

Dear Legislators,

It is shameful that most schools in Alaska do not receive enough money from the state to provide even the most basic education that they need. Most are running deficits, even after reducing their teaching staff and closing schools. Alaska used to have one of the best school systems in the country. One reason I chose to stay in Alaska to raise my family was because of the excellent schools. Now it is no longer something we can be proud of.

It is shameful that the Alaska state government is deliberately ruining the state's school system. Please increase the Base Student Allocation for education.

Terry Chapin
2158 Penrose Lane
Fairbanks, AK 99709

From: [Jim Cheydleur](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 Omnibus Education Bill
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:15:35 PM

Honorable Members of the Alaska House Rules Committee,

I would have liked to offer public testimony in today's omnibus education bill, but I am traveling and the time was a conflict with family events.

Some comments on aspects of the bill:

- I support there being investments in improving high speed internet access to the schools throughout the state - particularly rural areas. Internet access is one of the aspects of broad based quality education for our youth.

-While I think the proposed \$300 increase to the BSA is a step in the right direction, \$300 is really woefully inadequate. The increase in costs for our school districts is known and the BSA has not been keeping up. The schools in Fairbanks (and I imagine other districts) have cut many programs and increased class sizes. And yet Fairbanks schools face a huge deficit in the coming year. This needs to be addressed. Short changing our schools and our youth is not something that we can catch up on later.

-I strongly oppose the bills move to put the approval of charter schools with the State Board of Education. The authority for charter school approval resting with local school boards has worked well for Alaska. Local school board members are elected officials and are closer to the needs and desires of their local communities. The State Board of Education has a different role. **Do not leave this in the bill.**

-Bonus pay for teachers is an interesting idea. But, it does not solve the long term problem of having sufficient qualified and experienced teachers. It's a band aid approach. The Legislature needs to acknowledge the consequences of having created a poor retirement program for our newer teachers. It's time for a change. Teachers aren't the only one leaving payrolls due to poor retirement; there are many other positions in state government that infilled for substandard wages and retirement.

Thank you for your service. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these matters.

Jim Cheydleur
POB 81177
Fairbanks, AK 99708

From: [Carin Christensen](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:51:01 AM

To: House Rules Committee,

My name is Carin Christensen. I am a resident of Petersburg, Alaska, and have two daughters in public school.

- I support a permanent \$1,413 increase to the base student allocation.
- I oppose the State Board of Education charter school authorization. Decisions should be made up to local school boards.
- I oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, reinstate either pensions or a more equitable retirement system.
- I oppose increasing the funding multiplier for homeschool correspondence programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Carin Christensen

Sent from my iPhone

From: barb2845@alaska.net
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: My testimony this morning
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 5:48:22 PM

My name is Barb Clark; I've been an ASD high school teacher for 24 years. I'm here to urge passage of an unencumbered increase in the BSA substantive and enduring enough to reverse the damage that many years of flat-funding have done.

Over the last decade, Anchorage schools have steadily lost exemplary programs and excellent educators. And not just teachers; the proposal to give a one-time "bonus" just to teachers is not a fix. To be clear, though some of you, I'd guess, might recognize me as a union person, I'm speaking here only for myself. I'm sure we do have teacher members who would be happy to take the money and run in a year or two. It's what they were planning to do anyway -- because of salary, because of retirement, because of support, because of professional respect, because of a voice in curricular design. Is that what you want?

A teacher bonus is an insult to security staff, office support, teaching assistants, counselors, nurses, mental health professionals, and custodians – and it's an insult to our teachers, who want a robust support staff, well-maintained buildings, reasonable class sizes, adequate curricular resources, and a secure and sufficient retirement as much as we want competitive salaries.

We teachers have a mechanism for raising our income. We bargain as equals and in good faith with our districts. We would very much like for those districts to be able to come to the table as worthy negotiating partners without multi-million-dollar deficits. They're the people we elect to make decisions about staffing, programs, curriculum, chartering, and facilities.

The Alaska Constitution charges the legislature and the governor with "establishing and maintaining" the public education system. Letting our schools slide further into deficit and disrepair is not maintaining public education. Losing more programs, buildings, equipment, and staff every year is not maintaining public education. Micromanaging decisions that belong to elected school boards is not helpful. Please, step up and do your constitutional duty and just --generously -- raise the BSA.

Thank you.

From: [John Doe](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Support of SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:01:24 AM

I am writing to voice my support for SB 140. BSA is clearly in need of an increase.

Sincerely,
Zach Clevenger
Big Lake, AK

From: [MICHAEL COONS](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Updated SB 140 Please remove previous
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:53:08 AM

My name is Mike Coons from Palmer.

In Basis, I cannot find Sections 11 and 12 re the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, getting what all along they should have had, equal rights and resources. From what Representative Allard has told, me, I fully support this. My wife and I taught Hunter Safety for several years. We had two classes for the deaf, first, a one on one and that evolved into the next regular class having almost a dozen deaf taking the class, then the interpreters becoming Hunter Safety Instructors for more classes for the deaf community. Sadly we did see discrimination by some of the students, who left on their own or my wife and I encouraged them to leave. One would think in this day and age that this would not be needed, yet, it is. As a conservative, less government is a good thing, yet in this case apparently government is needed to step in to right a wrong within the educations system that sadly is more concerned about WOKE, CRT and LGBCDQ than individual rights, overall! Thus I strongly support this section of SB 140.

I do have concerns however on the internet side since no indication that Star Link is in this or being even considered! Has anyone looked at the cost savings since most rural villages have satellite capabilities vs the cost of cable by GCI? I believe that this is a sweetheart deal with GCI.

As to the BSA increase, I am absolutely opposed to that increase and agree with Commissioner Bishop on strategic funding.

I am very supportive of the Charter School accountability and aspects in this bill as indicated in the testimony by Commissioner Bishop. I will not oppose because there are good portions that good people will be harmed if this is not passed out of committee. I do strongly encourage passing amendments on the floor to remove the BSA increase and to hold off on the Internet aspects, since this does appear to be not well thought out, and a sweetheart deal for GCI, without serious consideration of Star Link.

From: [Mary Corcoran](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: PUBLIC TESTIMONY SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:16:55 AM

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB140. I am a retired teacher with years of experience in both neighborhood and charter schools.

This bill contains some changes that I think need a closer look, particularly in light of the DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY "Education bill (HCS CSSB 140(); Work Order No. 33-LS0687\R)".

1. The BSA needs to be increased more than this bill proposes given the loss of real funding since 2017. Justification for this can be found in most Alaska State school district budgets.
2. Charter schools must remain primarily under local control. Districts and their communities know best what their population needs. What is broken under the current system?
3. Teacher bonuses do not guarantee continuity or quality. Exit and applicant interviews would probably support changes made to teacher pay including benefits.
4. Changes made to increase support for hearing impaired students is a positive provided there is adequate additional funding.

I do not support this bill in its present draft. School communities are shortchanged. Alaska needs an adequately educated population to thrive.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Corcoran
Delta Junction AK

To: Honorable Chair Johnson and Rules committee

From: Dennis Robinson and I'm speaking as a citizen of Unalaska.

I am speaking in support of portions of SB140 and in opposition of other portions.

I support the original language of SB140. However, I believe it should be amended to provide 25,50 or 100 megabytes per second of dedicated service.

Unalaska finally has broadband delivered by fiber optics. The Unalaska city school opted to have 50 megabytes per second rather than 100 megabytes. If they chose to go with the 100 megabytes it would have cost them all the bag grant money. As it is it cost the school a \$150,000 reduction in grant money.

I support an increase to the BSA as you all know there hasn't been an increase of any significance since 2016.

The increase I support is one passed by the Senate for \$1400.

In the past five years Unalaska has lost over 60 students. However, the costs of maintaining and keeping the school open have increased over the years. That is roughly 18% of our student population.

To say that adding to the BSA wouldn't affect the outcome of money getting to the classroom is not accurate in any sense. Unalaska for more than 34 years has provided the maximum amount allowable by law which directly caused both our Elementary and Highschool to become Blue Ribbon schools.

In fact, the city will be providing nearly a quarter million additional dollars this year to replace the 34-year-old boilers in the high school.

I do not support the sections creating charter schools. It takes away local control and will quite likely lead to extra financial burdens on school districts.

I do not support a lump sum paid to teachers without an increase to the BSA. What happens after the lump sum if BSA isn't increased in a way to fill that gap in teacher pay? Without a BSA increase, how will we support salaries of classified teachers to show equal value to their role? This also sends a message that teachers can't trust the school district to use their general funds and fairly compensate teachers.

That concludes my testimony, thank you.

Respectfully,

Dennis Robinson

drobinson59@msn.com

907-359-2542

From: [Debbie Sis](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 Testimony--FUND EDUCATION
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:38:43 PM

To: All legislators

From: Debbie Sis

I am appalled, dismayed, frustrated, depressed and upset at the lack of priority, funding our schools appears to be to many of our state lawmakers.

We are an abundant state and we can afford to fund our schools. In fact, we cannot afford to NOT fund our schools. One son, not only graduated from JDHS but was awarded a full scholarship to University of Alaska for his education. The intent was to retain our talented youth to stay and thrive in our state as that is what keeps our state vibrant. He graduated from UAA with 2 degrees and now resides here as a professional with his own family. Will our families remain in the state when we do not value education? What will happen economically when families leave the state? The result will be a lot more of a loss than funding the BSA as was up for vote this week.

This is a disgrace. We can afford PFD's, we do not have income tax and in some areas we do not even have a sales tax. This is not spending but rather investing not only in our deserving kids but in the states future. I am beside myself that this is even an issue.

I urge you to fully fund our schools and invest in our state as it deserves, the alternative is to see our state lose citizens who value education and contributing to our community and move elsewhere. What will be left will be apathy, economic loss and without future leaders who grow up and love to contribute to our state.

Thank you to all those who believe in our Alaskans and are voting to fully funding education.

Respectfully,

Debbie Sis
5639 Kenai Fjords Loop
Anchorage, AK 99502

From: [Diann Darnall](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Rep. Maxine Dibert](#); [Sen. Scott Kawasaki](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:42:10 AM

House Rules Committee,

Thank you very much for dealing with the issue of education early in the session.

After listening to the testimony given to your committee for the last hour and a half, it is clear that this Bill needs some adjustments.

Particularly:

Charter Schools need to stay under local School Boards, not the State.

Teachers and support staff need solid funding, not just bonuses to teachers.

State Funding needs to be increased. The state has not kept up with the needs of Alaskans. Time to step up!

Yes, internet access to rural Alaska schools needs to be better.

Thank you,

Diann Darnall
Fairbanks, Alaska

From: [Kirk & Jenn DesErmia](#)
To: [House Rules](#); [Rep. Ben Carpenter](#)
Subject: Support SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 5:39:19 PM

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 140 and encourage this committee to keep it moving forward. Our schools need a significant and permanent increase to the BSA and this bill helps with that. Please support SB 140!

Thank you,
Jennifer DesErmia
Seward, AK Resident
907-491-0607

From: [Adam Diaz](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: #RaisetheBSA
Date: Sunday, January 21, 2024 3:05:42 PM

Hi my name is Adam Diaz. I live in Homer, I support for an increase in the BSA and urge the committee to make it a main focus. My hope is that we can restore the 680\$ increase originally included in SB 140. In addition I urge you respect local school boards to determine which charter schools best serve the communities. Please remove the State Board of Education charter school takeover from the legitimation. Education is going to be something that will be around for years to come, how can we keep people that have devoted their time to their communities and the children they teach?

We all love are jobs, but where we are right now with prices of sustainability, we need your assistance. Education affects all of us, not just one person. Provide for those that give back and see the impact they give when the youth goes into the world.

Thank you, Chair Johnson and Members of the committee.

Sincerely
Adam Diaz

From: [Karen Dillman](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:03:54 AM

Greetings,

I am a resident of Petersburg. I am writing in opposition to SB 104 for the following reasons: a \$300 increase to the BSA is completely inadequate to meet the needs of our school system. It does not take into account the rate of inflation or rising fuel costs, not to mention all the curriculum requirements that have been imposed, such as the Alsak Reads Act.

I fully support the proposed \$1430 increase. However, I am opposed to the state board of education charter school authorization. Authorization should be decided by local needs and school boards. I also oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, call for the reinstatement of either a defined benefit pension or a more equitable retirement system. This "bonus" idea is both inequitable for all school employees and likely ineffective at retaining young teachers after they have served their bonus requirements. I have seen new young teachers move on from our community once they realize that there is no retirement for them, so tossing new teachers a bonus won't get far for their future. Finally, I oppose increasing the funding multiplier for homeschool correspondence programs. I once taught Spanish to a home school student and I was amazed at how much money the program had, with seemingly several ways to abuse the system.

Thank you for receiving my testimony.

Karen Dillman
907-518-4300

From: [GCI Email](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Urgent Need to Increase BSA for Alaska Schools
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:44:35 AM

Dear House Rules,

I am writing as a concerned constituent to emphasize the critical importance of increasing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for Alaska schools.

Raising the BSA is not merely a financial adjustment; it is an investment in the future of Alaska. Adequate funding plays a pivotal role in better educating our children, ensuring they receive the quality education they deserve. A well-funded educational system is fundamental to our children's success and contributes significantly to their ability to thrive in the ever-evolving world.

Moreover, increasing the BSA enhances our chances of retaining these graduates within the State of Alaska. By providing a robust education, we empower our youth with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully to our local communities and economy.

Equally crucial is the impact on our educators. A stable working environment, facilitated by sufficient funding, alleviates stress for teachers, allowing them to focus on delivering high-quality education. This, in turn, strengthens our ability to retain talented educators within the state, further enriching the educational experience for our children.

As you consider budgetary decisions, I urge you to prioritize and advocate for an increase in the BSA. This investment in education is an investment in the future prosperity of Alaska.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I trust you will continue to work towards ensuring a bright future for our children and our state.

Sincerely,

Sandy Edwardson
382 Killewich, Drive
Juneau, Alaska
Sledwardson@gmail.com
(907)209-8771
Sent from my iPad

From: [Janelle Eklund](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:14:47 AM

Greetings,

It is imperative that the Base Student Allocation for education be raised to meet school district needs. I volunteer working with students. Education should be the top priority for Alaska and our nation. Education reduces crime, instills stewardship for our communities, brings much needed knowledge for future leaders to be able to think intelligently, work collaboratively, and make the world a better place. With education shootings and killings will drop, hate crimes would drop and our communities would work together for a just a safe world. Please, I beg you, to increase the BSA so our communities are safe and so every child has the knowledge for good job opportunities.

With Sincerity and Respect,
Janelle Eklund, volunteer

From: [Donnalee Engelke](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: *****SPAM***** \$30,000 for 15 yrs of work stipend; HRA rules change so employees can have access
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 1:49:05 AM

Members of the House of Education:

I have worked for 17 years as a custodian for the Kenai Peninsula School district. At the 15 yr date I figured out my employers contribution to my 401.

I sat with my mouth hung open. What an insult for all that hard work. This is not retirement. FIRST: who decided it was ok to contribute only 5%.

The standard business contribution is 8% with a match if the employee wants to contribute more. I want to call out those people now. My feeling is the District has stolen from me 3% of my 401 account every paid day. Shamefull!! All support staff for school districts do not have retirement.

And it is your fault and everyone who created this disaster of an account. How will I ever retire!!!

The HRA account held with AKDRB Tier 4s. That HRA account has too many restrictions on it—on top of the IRS restrictions. First no assigning a beneficiary for the "spend-down" provision if the employee dies. The IRS allows this but AKDRB does not. CHANGE THAT!!!!

Second: in this volatile time of employment, it should not take 10 yrs (14yrs) of work to have rights to that fund. All the Districts have been doing is rolling money in and out without any loss to them (not having to give any to the employee). I put forth an immediate request to change this from 10 yrs (14 yrs) to 8 yrs (10 yrs). This is one of the few benefits the 401's have and you have made it unattainable for 99% of employees.

In 2008? when this program was designed, there were no 401 employees and we did not have any representation. This needs to be redesigned retroactively including the 401s. The Pension people designed this to not give us anything and they were/are successful at that goal.

This needs to be changed, the 401s need representation, and it needs to be redesigned. They directors get big raises and if they have been around awhile this means a 10% raise for life!!! The support staff (401) cannot make a living appropriate for inflation just for the time they work.

And the stipend should bring disgrace to all who were involved with its creation.

Please respond to this email at donnalee60@hotmail.com

Cordially
Donnalee Engelke

From: [anita.evans](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: Rep.Jaime.Allard@akleg.gov; [Rep. Andi Story](#)
Subject: HB 140 - Concerns about Sec. 12
Date: Sunday, January 21, 2024 7:31:49 PM

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in response to what I believe is ambiguous wording in Section 12 of HB 140. As the mother of a son who is Deaf; I am also a graduate of an educational interpreting program, a former (retired) employee of the Juneau School District, and have also served as an adjunct instructor, teaching ASL at the University of Alaska Southeast. In my experience, the issues of unbiased educational and informed language choices are very important.

I agree with what I am reading in Sec. 11 - although personally I would like to see more emphasis on Sign Language written into the choices listed (page 13 lines 1 - 5 and 22 - 24). However, I am most concerned about Sec. 12 (page 114 lines 17 - 20) . . . As I interpret the text, it seems that the decision to place a Deaf child in a state residential school could rest with any particular school district, and/or the educators involved. The key phrase that worries me is: " . . . the school district THAT makes the placement (page 14 line 19). . . ". and it seems that line could be open to local interpretation. In my opinion, most educators and administrators are not qualified to make those very life-changing decisions . . . Families should be given as much information as possible, and to be allowed to decide what is best for their child. Every child, and every situation will be different.

But the impression I had while reading through Sec. 11 really seemed to support educating parents and families about deafness; the language, educational, and community choices available to them. I agree whole-heartedly with this approach! A Deaf child is a child first; and a member of his/her family, community, and the local culture. An open, unpressured (and unbiased) communication between families, educators, and specialists would be ideal!

Thank you for considering my thoughts and opinions!

Respectfully,
Anita C. Evans
(907) 780-8674 Home
(907) 209-4743 Cell/Text

From: [Nancy Fassett](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 Testimony for Public Record
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 5:06:17 AM

Dear House Rules Committee Members,

Education needs to be treated as a priority in our state. Children are our future--- our future leaders, community members, and workforce of Alaska. We have an obligation to provide a quality education for them. Having said this, I am writing in non-support for SB140 as it is **currently** written.

Thank you for recognizing that there **must** be a raise in the BSA. Education funding has not kept pace with inflation and an increase of \$300 is **severely** inadequate. The amount needs to be raised substantially. School districts around the state are asking for an increase of \$1403 to account for inflation and rising costs. Here in Anchorage, our district is once again facing a massive deficit. Should current funding remain level or have only the minimal increase proposed in this bill, this will no doubt lead to teacher and support staff layoffs, increased class sizes (again), and program cuts. This limits options and possibilities for each of our 43,000 + students. Districts all over the state face similar challenges.

SB140 now contains a provision that charter schools can be authorized by the Governor appointed State Board which removes the decision making process from locally elected school boards. I strongly believe that this process needs to remain in the hands of local school boards. They know the needs and priorities of their own communities. It is they who make decisions on how and where to spend the funds received from the state. They are the ones who are directly accountable to their constituents and communities.

Once again, I do not support SB140 as it currently stands. Please work across the aisle during this legislative session to make education for all of Alaska's students a priority with adequate funding which will make a positive, substantive change. Investing in education means investing in Alaska's economy—now and in the future.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Nancy Fassett

From: [Heidi F](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 7:38:45 AM

Hello,

Thank you for allowing the public to weigh in on this important topic. I am concerned, though, that no matter what the public says, the majority will still make the decision that furthers its agenda instead of the public good. Still, it is my job to let you j is how I feel despite my reservations and it's your job, as legislators, to weigh all aspects of the proposal, especially public input and how it will impact Alaska's future. Please consider:

1. Reducing the BSA increase will negatively impact Alaskans of all ages. Saying that schools don't need or can do without the funding is ignoring all of the basic facts of how our economy works and what this decision will do to our education system in the future.
2. Charter schools should be allowed to exist but in limited scope, that allows families to "go deep" into their studies or as a magnetic school to help failing students. The process should require both state and local school board approval.
3. The Governor's proposal of bonuses is asinine. It Will cost the teachers, local schools and school boards more in the end, allow dissent in the workforce, drive away qualified employees, and make retention harder.

Please recognize that our students, teachers, and workforce will suffer because of this ill advised decision for years to come. Thank you.

Heidi and Steve Frost

* please forgive any typos. This message was using iPhone. Thank you.

From: [Gillian Wittstock](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 Comments
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:27:59 PM

My name is Gillian Louise Wittstock
I am a resident of Petersburg.

Please support a permanent \$1,413 increase to BSA.

Please please be against state board of education charter school authorization - should be up to local school boards

Please oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, reinstate either pension or more equitable retirement system.

Please add to the needs of students rather than taking away programs, resources and staff.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
Gillian

To the House Rules Committee, concerning CS for SB 140:

My name is Mary Geddes. My husband and I have lived here for 40 years. We chose to stay in Alaska as our children grew because the public schools here could and did provide a truly excellent education. But legislative failures over many recent years to adequately fund public education now puts at risk our grandchildren's and our state's futures.

I offer five specific recommendations today.

1. The original proposal of SB 140 to fund increased internet speeds for rural school districts should be legislated and approved on a stand-alone basis in order to speed and assure its approval.
2. The BSA should be increased to \$1400 – not the proposed \$300 – in order to maintain our public schools statewide. This increase should be unencumbered by any of the radical measures proposed in this bill.
3. The committee should reject the truly radical proposal to end elected, local control over charter schools. Speaking from our own family's experiences with public charter schools, we can assure you that the current, LOCAL administration of charter schools has been a successful arrangement. And, if it works, don't fix it.
4. The lump-sum bonus idea included in SB 140 does not seriously address the exodus of teachers and young adults from our state. Instead, the state should provide enough funding for competitive salaries and retirement benefits to attract and keep teachers and staff.
5. Finally, while I appreciate the chance to speak today, please schedule additional and lengthier hearings on the many important subjects which have been rolled into this bill. Please allow other interested persons opportunity to participate in meaningful vetting of these ideas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by Mary C. Geddes, 1113 N Street, Anchorage, AK 99501, 907-244-1379

From: [Laura Silliphant](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [House Education](#); [House Education](#)
Subject: Public comments on SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:54:12 AM

Dear Chairman Johnson

My name is Laura Gregersen. I am a voter, taxpayer, and parent living and working in Anchorage, AK. I am writing to comment on SB 140.

My sons, ages 9 and 12, attended Aquarian charter school since Kindergarten. My oldest son is now in middle school and attends Romig Middle School. My oldest son is in the Highly Gifted program at Romig. I see excellent educators at work at both Aquarian and Romig Middle School. My sons excel academically in their respective learning environments. They also develop and excel because of the after school activities available to them at each school.

Since 2016, inflation in Anchorage has risen nearly 27%, while the BSA has risen just 0.5%. This is not sustainable. I fear the quality of my sons' education is at stake if the BSA is not increased permanently at an increase of \$1,413, for a total of \$7,373, and to inflation-proof the BSA going forward.

I sat at the LIO in Anchorage from 10am to 11:30 am this morning waiting for my turn for public testimony. I had to leave because I need to take my son to his soccer game this afternoon. I am sending this email in lieu of my public speaking opportunity.

Please fund the BSA permanently at the higher rate of \$7,373 and inflation proof the BSA. Please leave the charter schools to operate as they have been operating – successfully.

Sincerely,

Laura Gregersen
4021 Woronzof Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517

From: [Karin Halpin](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Education funding
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 10:44:45 AM

I find myself both downright angry and profoundly disappointed in actions our government has taken in our state regarding adequately funding education for the past 10 years.

Public education is one of the great equalizers in our country. It allows individuals to come together from varied backgrounds and cultures to learn and grow together for the betterment of all.

As a retired educator who spent 25 years serving Title I schools in both urban and rural-remote Alaska I find it disheartening to watch what feels like the slow and steady dismantling of our public education system. Good educators are leaving our state because they can earn a higher living standard working in schools in the lower 48 that have better salaries along with a defined benefit system.

Our children in this state deserve better than we are currently giving them. I implore you increase the SBA to \$1,400 to allow districts to stop cutting services to children and start building them back up. I also ask you to spend time in our schools to see how hard educators across our state are working to meet the diverse needs of the children and youth with such limited resources and support.

Lastly, I believe it really is an insult to the children and youth in our state your offer of increasing the SBA by \$300. Please raise the SBA to \$1,400 to help account for inflation for the past 10 years.

Regards --

Karin Halpin
4628 Grumman St
Anchorage, AK. 99507
907.230.0012

Sent from [Outlook](#)

From: [Jenell Hartman](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Sen. Matt Claman](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#)
Subject: SB 140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 6:29:56 PM

Dear House Rules Committee Chairperson and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of SB 140.

My name is Jenell Hartman, a resident of District 15, a product of the Alaska public school system; both in Fairbanks North Star Borough, and a graduate from Anchorage School District.

I can honestly say that I received a quality education and am proud to be an alma mater of the Bartlett Golden Bears. I now have the privilege of teaching in the District that taught me, and yet it is through these dual lenses that I see how the lack of funding impedes the learning objectives of a students' academic success.

Public school funding is a part of Alaska's constitutional duty, and it is your job as the elected citizens of governance to ensure that funds are properly distributed. Funneling funding into charter schools is inequitable to the majority of our students throughout the state, and not an equitable use of constituent dollars to serve a specific subset of the population. Our public schools, that are currently built, running and in desperate need of a permanent increase to the base student allocation needs to be a priority of this legislative session.

Noting the low financial note of a measly three hundred dollars per student does not show our students that their elected officials, nor those that support them, are supportive of them and their academic needs to succeed. Our students need an inflation proof increase to the BSA in order to succeed academically, and then hopefully merge either into the workforce of Alaska or the public university system.

I want my students to stay in Alaska. I want them to succeed. I want them to get jobs in our state to stabilize the economy and provide additional economic opportunities for them to pursue passions and interests. I believe in our state. I believe in my students. I believe in the students across Alaska. What I don't believe in are bloated PFD's or throwing unconstitutional (not to mention inequitable) amounts of money to placate folks motivated by money, and not by forward funding or progressive planning.

This proposed bill has a lot of flaws that need to be weeded out, and it needs to go back to the basics of its original proposal to expand broadband width to our rural areas of Alaska (I support this part of the bill). Thank you for your consideration.

Warm Regards,
Jenell

Labor puts you at the forefront of progress.

From: [Kelsey Hayden](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Rep. Louise Stutes](#)
Subject: SB 140 BSA comments
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:41:58 AM

Good morning from sunny Cordova,

I am a lifelong Cordova resident, who came up in the Cordova School District, and has 2 children entering it in the next 5 years.

I am writing today in regards to SB 140, the base student allocation increase.

There is nothing you do that is more important than funding education. It provides for the youth of Alaska who will take over for all of us as they grow. If we do not put the time and money into feeding, educating, and caring for them at a young age, they will impact the health of their community and our state. You have the ability to make that a negative or positive impact.

For Cordova, the different of \$1000 per student is huge. Its the difference in having a preschool program or not, which studies show creates smarter, more well rounded students and people. Cordova is severely lacking in preschool options and space.

We struggle to retain and recruit teachers, aides, etc, and overall funding for our school system.

The City of Cordova has limited revenue, which is largely based on property and sales tax. While the City tries to fund to the cap, it sometimes cant or that simply isn't sufficient for covering additional costs for programing, preschool, etc.

Further, costs have only gone up in the last several years, as we are all aware. To not pass that increase along through the BSA is expecting the schools to do the same with less, an impossible feat.

Please vote to increase the BSA for the health of our communities, our children, and the future of Alaska .

Thank you

Kelsey Hayden

Cordova

From: [Molly Hickox](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 2:35:43 PM

Thank you Chairman Johnson and the House Rules Committee for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

I am an elementary school principal in the Anchorage School District and I am speaking as an individual. While I am supportive of the original intent of this bill to provide an increase in broadband internet service statewide, I am very concerned about the inadequate increase to the BSA and the proposal to allow the State to authorize new charter schools.

We must have predictable, stable and adequate funding and a \$300 increase to the BSA is completely inadequate. I want to share the experience of a teacher at my school. She was a first year teacher last year, and did an amazing job teaching her first graders to read. This spring, I anticipate having to tell her that I don't have a position for her at my building due to a projected increase in our PTR due lack of funding. She will have to interview at other schools and prepare to pack all of her supplies and move to another school. How will this affect the retention of this high quality educator? It certainly doesn't send the message that she is valued. I can tell you what would positively affect her retention: predictable and adequate funding so that she can remain at her school and not get shuffled around, a competitive retirement system, and enough funding to attract and retain the quality paraprofessionals that support her every day so that she can focus on teaching.

Regarding the portion of the bill related to authorization of charter schools, I want to remind the committee that public charters through local school districts are currently offering a wide variety of choices for our local families. While they are successful, I believe there is plenty of room for growth so that we can make sure that all of our students, regardless of income, family involvement, or transportation needs, have access to these charter school options. Only local school boards can effectively address these local issues, particularly in a state as large as Alaska and with such a diversity of needs. Our current system of authorizing public charter schools at the local level is working effectively and doesn't need to be changed.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my comments.

Respectfully,

Molly Hickox

From: [Sarah Hanson-Hofstetter](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 Comments
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:07:15 AM

Hello, Please do not cut support for public schools funding. My parents moved here in 1967 to be public school teachers. My husband and I have 2 kids here in public schools.

I support a permanent \$1413 increase to SBA

I am against state board of education charter school authorization. It should be up to local school boards.

I oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead want reinstatement of pension or more equitable retirement system for teachers.

Please support the students rather than take away programs and resources and staff.

I oppose increasing funding multipliers for homeschool correspondence programs.

Sarah C (Hanson) Hofstetter
PO Box 1580
Petersburg AK 99833
907-978-6365

From: [Susan Holmes](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Funding for our schools
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:37:00 AM

Dear Alaskan Legislators,

As an Alaskan teacher I urge your support financial for the children of Alaska.

The cost of living including the basic cost of transportation of supplies, and children demand an increase in the BSA.

I urge you to fund the governor's mandates, instead of demanding changes without additional funding as was added this past year.

The future of our state depends on adequate funding that only you can provide.

Sincerely,
Susan Holmes
Petersburg, AK
Sent from my iPad

From: [Kimberly Hunt](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Testimony: adding to the Base Student Funding amount
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:30:21 AM

Good Morning, Legislators-

My testimony regarding base student funding is that it's not how much money there is, it's where the money goes. I am for a modest increase, one that does NOT go to administrator salaries or to textbooks, but toward administrative accountability, hiring qualified administrators, getting rid of the old boy network, and investing in the education "infrastructure" to improve schools structurally and retain teachers.

What makes sense to me is to make sure village schools are structurally sound and that they have heat and water, even if fuel and water need to be helicoptered in every month or so.

It also makes sense to me to invest in village housing so that students have a place to stay and they can show up in school ready to learn instead of just waking up.

A third allotment in any BSF increase should include a teacher pension and not only dangling the idea of health care in front of teachers, but ensuring health care (including wellness and an EAP in case a teacher needs someone to talk to) is both affordable and accessible.

I think if we use the money we have, plus a little more, to concentrate on the foundations- teacher retention through accessible health care and making it feasible to stay in Alaska for more than the short term, administrator accountability, (I made the remark at one inservice that I left Indiana so I wouldn't have to turn my clock back to 1953; I cannot tell you the number of staff meetings/conferences/conversations with administrators I've sat through where I, myself or women in general were spoken over, interrupted, invalidated, or just plain not considered), village stability, and school viability, we can form a base or a platform from which we can argue for still more funds.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will raise the base student allotment by a moderate amount and put efforts such as the ones I've outlined into place.



Kimberly Hunt (Kim)
907-855-9374 (EST -4)

From: [angie Jensen](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Worth It!
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:56:26 AM

Investing in our future is worth it. Please increase the BSA to the \$1300 amount it deserves.

Public education is the great equalizer and binds us together. By bringing youth from different backgrounds together through the guidance of healthy adults, we facilitate cooperation success for a lifetime.

Not adequately funding our public education system is fracturing our community and making it more divisive than it already is. The damage done over the last seven years has created an environment that hurts all of us.

We are losing quality educators, dumbing down teaching to meet test criteria, and creating a generation of people who will not make good decisions that make our community better.

Our education system is declining because legislators do not understand. Please, listen to those who have done the hard work and change the direction we are going and increase the BSA.

Angie Jensen
Alaskan Elementary School Counselor

January 20, 2024

House Rules Committee Chair Johnson and Committee Members,

I am writing in regard to SB140 as it is currently written and amended. While I applaud the initial intent to improve internet access to all Alaska schools, I am opposed to the hodgepodge of issues this bill now addresses. Many of these issues either have not been thoroughly investigated as to potential impacts, or they have been and could not stand on their own. I appreciate the strong and early focus on education this session but this rushed process does not create good educational policy.

I oppose any degradation of local control and therefore oppose state board oversight of Charter Schools. Alaska has a robust system of school choice, far more extensive than most other states. This robust system has been a result of the close partnerships between local districts and charter schools.

The imposition of a civics requirement with a pass of 70% on a standardized test again undercuts local control of education as well as setting an arbitrary cut score on a test that has not been shown to be valid in a high school setting. I oppose this proposal while coming from a district which does require a civics course for graduation. This is an area for local districts to determine. I believe there are other ways to support districts in strengthening civics education-as we have done in our district in collaboration with students, staff, parents and the community.

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified employees requires competitive salaries and benefits (including retirement), professional respect and positive and stable working environments. Bonuses are a short term fix for a long term problem. And this strategy ignores the fact that we have shortages in every area of education; principals, paraprofessionals, school counselors, custodians...

The problems in education in Alaska do not stem from not having enough choices, nor from not having rigorous curriculum or programming. Parents are not leaving because of these reasons. Teachers are not leaving for these reasons. They are leaving because of lack of investment in our students and our infrastructure. Data has demonstrated over and over that funding levels are below what is required to maintain, much less grow the quality of education in Alaska. You have been presented with enormous amounts of information that demonstrate the need for additional funding to the BSA. **Just to catch us up to inflation** we need \$1413 added to the BSA. This does not account for growth.

Provide adequate funding for education (increase the BSA by \$1413 this year and inflation proof going forward), invest in state infrastructure (transportation, housing) and many, if not all of the challenges will be met.

Thank you for dedicating time to this important issue and taking public testimony today.

Barb Jewell
Chair, Cordova Board of Education
3101 Whitshed Rd
Cordova, Alaska 99574
bjewell@cordovasd.org

From: [Ilana Kerschbaum](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Ilana Email-phone](#)
Subject: Please do the right thing!
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:55:37 AM

Dear House Rules Committee,
Alaska Legislature, Governor and Commissioner Bishop,
I am a life-long Alaskan, 27 year public educator, current proud parent of 2 public school children, and I still believe in the value of a quality public education and equity for every child in our great state.

You have denied that basic right to all our kids by holding the BSA capture as if that was your right. How dare you? Increase it now to \$1400. So, we can decrease class size to at least address the sorry way you have rolled out the Alaska Reads Act on the Backs of teachers who are left without pensions in over crowded classrooms. By the way as a mom of a dyslexic and dysgraphic son, I would like reimbursement for the \$1000's of dollars myself and others are spending privately to give our children the Right to Read, write, spell, But we watch as so many are still not given this right in our state the way it should be! Other states do it right! Why can't we!

Do the right thing now! Increase the BSA.

We are tired of you all playing around with our kids and public education in our state. We are the ones facing them as we are in crisis every day!
Sent from my iPhone

From: rebeccaking4@yahoo.com
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Rebecca King](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:52:27 AM

Dear Honorable Legislators,

Please pass SB 140 with the addition of the BSA increase. I've worked in public schools for twenty years and have a child in our schools as well. What I see is students who come to school with so many individual needs and a staff stretched too thin to meet those needs. Kids and families are doing the best they can, teachers and staff are doing the best they can. We need help! For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, we need stable teacher assistants in the classroom who know the kids and can help us keep them on track and attend to the small adjustments that kids need. For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, we need counselors and behavior support staff who can meet the mental health and crisis needs of students who are overwhelmed and unable to focus on learning and might be keeping others from learning as well. For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, we need stable bus drivers and food service staff and custodial staff who are making a good living so they are not overworked and have the energy to be part of the support for the kids. For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, veteran teachers need to be able to pass their knowledge onto the wonderful new teachers who are planning to stay because it's a career that they can devote their lives to and make a good living. For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, class sizes need to be small enough that teachers can have meaningful time with every student every day, provide meaningful feedback on student work, and have time to engage with all the families. For teachers to be able to focus on academics successfully, we do need administration and coordinators who are doing the system jobs of choosing good curriculum, promoting best practices through good trainings, and keeping the big picture things running well so we can do our jobs. It's all important. We have cut and cut and cut and cut and cut. There is nothing left to cut and there is so much we need back. It's hard to know if that if just had more resources we could be meeting more kids needs, but we aren't getting it. The adults are overworked and doing the best we can. Please help us by increasing the BSA so we can do the job we want to do for the students!!!

Sincerely,
Rebecca King
Anchorage, Alaska

From: [Summer Koester](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Testimony on SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:08:08 PM

Hello Committee Members,

I'm a teacher and parent of a sixth and fourth grader here in Juneau. I'm here to speak to SB 140, which would effectively **Slash K-12 education from \$175 million to \$77 million.**

I'm not going to go on about all the district jobs that would be lost. I'm not going to go on about how I already lost one Spanish teaching job as a result of budget cuts, a position that has now been eliminated. I'm not going to talk about how the morale among teachers is already eroded from a lack of COLA increase, managing larger class sizes every year, and being the only state that doesn't have a teachers pension.

No, today I'm testifying as a parent whose child has autism and recently went from a school with a class of 17 students to a school with a class of 32. 32 students in a fourth grade class, it should be criminal. There are days my daughter refuses to go to school, crying, she won't go to class, she hides in the bathroom. She doesn't want to go in her classrooms because there are too many students, it's too overwhelming. Her teacher is a saint and works so hard trying to accommodate her, find ways to make her feel comfortable but with 32 students there's only so much he can do. Thirty two fourth graders, can you imagine? How is this okay? Her teacher put her in the lowest math level because she wasn't comfortable sitting on the floor in her appropriate math group - the group was too big.

Now they're talking about closing a middle school and merging sixth grade into elementary, which would make her class even bigger. 7th and 8th graders from 2 students will be funneled into one school, which would increase class sizes for my son, an incoming 7th grader. They're talking about doing away with nonessential classes, the classes that he enjoys the most that make him look forward to going to school: all the specials and teachers he loves, those could all be cut.

I'm asking the legislature to return the BSA increase to that original 680 increase (or \$1413, which is latest inflation-adjusted number for flat funding).
thank you for your consideration,

Summer Koester
17408 Christine Ave.
Juneau, AK

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Summer Koester | Writer

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Newsletter](#)

From: [Lin Davis](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Sen. Jesse Kiehl](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:05:31 AM

Dear House Rules Committee:

Alaska is uniquely positioned for new economic opportunities but we can't move the state forward with a poorly funded education system.

The correct amount of BSA increase is \$1403, as the bipartisan legislature determined.

Please focus on making Alaska a national leader in growing our own smart engineers, technicians, medical providers, sustainability project managers, logistics specialists, social service providers, community leaders, year round greenhouse farmers.

After retiring from DOLWD and Juneau Job Center, I know we need to grow our own dedicated workers. People recruited from down south often leave after our expensive efforts to recruit and train, house and pay for moving expenses.

Our current lack of reasonable funding for education is like the COVID pandemic- it infects and disables every aspect of Alaskan life.

Thank you Rules Committee for proudly increasing our BSA to \$1403.

We are good at providing hands-on training programs in transportation, logistics, IT, skilled trades but we need pipeline of confident inquisitive students excited to learn new skills.

Clearly we don't need public funds supporting church charter schools- that would be unconstitutional.

I applaud SB 140 funding for new deaf and hard of hearing school programs. As someone who suddenly lost my hearing in 6th grade, let's support these students.

Our future smart ferry oilers, captains, nurses, truck drivers, mechanics applaud your clear wisdom re: SB 140 and increasing BSA to \$1403.

Thanks for your larger wisdom in creating world class education system.

Lin Davis
30 year resident
Douglas Island

From: [Mel Langdon](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: HB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 7:26:47 AM

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 140.

I graduated from West Anchorage high in the 1970s. My children graduated from East Anchorage High school in the 2000s. Both generations benefited from well funded public schools that set them up to excel in college and beyond. Now my children have started families in the lower 48 states. They don't see any opportunity here for raising their children in schools with adequate standards, such as reasonable teacher student ratios, heat, and transportation. It is important to restore these aspects of public education in Alaska, if not for my grandchildren, at least for children who are school age now and for the next generation of children. Let's not force them to move elsewhere; let's improve things here!

- HB 140: As currently drafted, HB 140 will only worsen Alaska's education crisis. It piecemeals out funds for specific purposes without providing the minimum funding that public schools require. For instance, bonuses for some but not all marginalized public education staff.

- Charter schools: We do not need to change what is working well, nor do we want the control taken from people we elect to an appointed board. School boards, who are accountable to voters in their districts, should continue to oversee these alternatives to public schools and assure that home schools and charter schools are accountable for the achievement of their students.

- BSA: We need to invest in a meaningful increase to the Base Student Allocation to stave off a mass exodus of teachers - and families - just when our state most needs to invest in building up our workforce. **A BSA increase of \$300 is mere pittance.** Education organizations have recommended an increase of \$1,413. This bill is less than half of the \$680 that was previously proposed and agreed to in both houses of the legislature last year.

- Retaining public school staff: We need to restore defined benefits in order to attract and retain teachers and staff.

- Internet. I endorse funding for wider broadband access. This is critical for rural districts.

Please provide for the long term excellence of our schools and challenge the short sighted goals of the current governor.

Sincerely,

Mel Langdon

2621 Redwood St

Anchorage

From: [Andrew Lenz](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:24:58 AM

Dear Legislators,

Please accept this as my public testimony on Senate Bill 140, for January 20, 2024.

I am concerned about the funding levels of our public schools, and the poor academic performance of Alaska's schools. Despite being the richest country in the world, the U.S. is consistently outperformed academically by other, less wealthy nations. Alaska consistently ranks as one of the worst states in the country in academic performance. I love our country and our state and I want us to do better.

My wife and I moved to Alaska in the early 2000's, and have made Alaska our home. We are small business owners, where we consult on projects that help bring more natural gas to southcentral Alaska, and on infrastructure projects at the Don Young Port of Alaska to help secure our future. We are raising our daughters here. We are committed to Alaska. We are concerned that the Alaska State Legislature and the current administration are not committed to working-age Alaskans like us, who are helping to secure Alaska's future and make it a desirable place to live.

Even if we did not have children, we would support investing in the education of children and young adults in our communities. It is a no-brainer. It has the highest ROI of any public investment a government can make for the future benefit of its citizens.

Alaska is losing its appeal. Low taxes and the PFD are not enough to draw people here and get them to stay. The wage premium we once enjoyed is eroding. Working-age Alaskans are leaving for better opportunities and a better quality of life. The quality of public schools and the programs offered are a major factor when choosing where to raise a family. We've watched more than a dozen of our friends, all professionals in their fields, leave the state because of the poor quality of schools in Alaska.

One bright spot in the Anchorage School District is the Language Immersion Program, which we wholeheartedly support. We personally know doctors, federal prosecutors, and business owners who moved to or stayed in Alaska *because of* the language immersion programs offered by the Anchorage School District.

We do not want to leave our home. We are committed to Alaska and want to stay. But with the constant threat of cutting programs, higher pupil/teacher ratios, delayed technology purchases, and delayed repairs at the schools, we are considering looking elsewhere for better opportunities for our daughters.

Please make funding public schools a priority with the below items at the top of your list:

- 1) Support increasing education funding to track inflation.
- 2) Pass Senate Bill 140 which includes a substantial BSA increase. This increase, while substantial, does not match inflation, and more will need to be inflation-proofed in the future.
- 3) Support and advocate to keep language immersion programs running indefinitely.

Thank you for your commitment to Alaska. Please look beyond partisan politics, and consider

—

Owner of 61 North Environmental

$$\langle \dots \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{\alpha=1}^N \langle \dots \rangle_{\alpha}$$

From: Lessens_Kelly
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Lon Garrison](#); [Bellamy Margo](#); [Office Of The Superintendent](#)
Subject: Testimony re: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:00:18 AM
Attachments: [KLessens letter letterhead.pdf](#)

Please include the attached letter as testimony for today's hearing on SB 140.

Thank you for your service,
Kelly Lessens

From: [Sarah Lindsey](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Increase the BSA
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:00:00 AM

I am writing to express my support for increasing the BSA by at least \$600. This is the right thing to do to support our students, teachers and community.

As a parent of three kids in ASD and the spouse of an ASD teacher, I see the impact of underfunding schools from multiple perspectives. When districts have to cut aides, counselors, and diverse programming like art and language courses and sports, kids lose and so does our community. People want the best for their kids.

If we want to attract and keep a strong workforce in Alaska, and keep our economy growing, we need to invest in making our communities great places to live. If our schools are underfunded, failing, and can't retain experienced teachers and staff, people will choose other places to live. It is short-sighted to think a big PFD will motivate people to move here or stay here. Fund schools. They are the foundation of our community and our future.

Thank you,
Sarah Lindsey
Anchorage

From: [Carolyn Loeffler](#)
To: [House Rules](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#)
Cc: [Sen. Click Bishop](#); [Rep. Ashley Carrick](#)
Subject: Testimony for SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:33:18 AM

Dear esteemed members of the House Rules committee,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for quickly addressing the issue of education funding for our public schools this session. It is no secret that our teachers are drowning, grossly underpaid, and our schools are insufficiently supported. We cannot expect our students to thrive in such an environment and our poor test scores are harbingers of what's to come if we don't begin planning and investing for our future now.

I also believe the state of our schools is *a major reason* why many working-age Alaskans are leaving the state. They do not see adequate opportunities for their children (or themselves) and are looking elsewhere. As a mother of a 2.5 year old and a 4.5 year old (who will be starting kindergarten this fall), I am *deeply concerned* about what I am hearing and seeing from our teachers. Basic needs are not being met. The public schools in Alaska are not what I want for my children nor anyone else's. **They all deserve far better.**

The proposed increase to the BSA in Section 10 of SB 140 is absolutely inadequate and I urge you to consider increasing **to at least \$680**, an amount widely supported by the legislature. I also have grave concerns about Section 3, the lack of public input and process in its creation, and the way it overrides local school boards and leadership in critical decision-making. Keeping decision-making close to the populous is a core American value and urge you to reconsider this section after greater input from the legislature and the public.

Again, thank you for addressing this critical issue for our state. There is no doubt in my mind that whatever the outcome for education is in the 2024 session, it will have lasting implications for the well-being of our state for years to come. It is my sincere hope that we can take **the long view** and leave a positive lasting legacy for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Loeffler
2187 Loveland Dr
Fairbanks, AK 99709

--

Carolyn K. Loeffler

From: [Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 10:44:37 AM

Dear House members,

I appreciate your interest in SB 140. While I support an increase in the BSA, I am concerned that the \$300 is a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed to turn around our education crisis. Districts need a \$1400 increase in the BSA to make them whole. Also, I am against using public funds to create or give money to religious charter schools or take the right to found charter schools away from local districts. I hope the rules committee takes the opportunity to make SB 140 better before it passes it onto the next step in the process.

Thanks for your service,

Cheryl Lovegreen

From: [Kerry Mahoney](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:54:36 AM

Members of the House Rules Committee:

I am urging you to consider competitive retirement packages for school district employees in lieu of the teacher bonus program illustrated in this bill. We are seeing a high turnover rate in administration positions in our district.

We simply cannot fill the open positions in our district with the contracts we are reduced to offering. The current administration and staff are covering duties not outlined in their job descriptions. Our elementary school principal regularly is covering lunchroom, nursing and playground duties just so she doesn't have to burn out her teachers. If we could offer competitive contracts to certified and classified staff alike, with retirement packages comparable to districts in the lower 48, we could reasonably see an increase in recruitment and long term retention. I believe offering three year bonuses to teachers is equivalent to plugging a hole in a dam with your finger- it isn't a sustainable solution to the problem.

I would also like to urge you to consider a BSA increase of \$1413. The continued under investment in Alaska's schools does not make Alaska a great place for families.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support of Alaska Schools.

Sincerely,,

Kerry Mahoney
Unalaska City School District School Board Seat A

From: [Lynnetta Marcellus](#)
To: [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Rep. Jennie Armstrong](#); [Rep. Thomas Baker](#); [Rep. Ben Carpenter](#); [Rep. Ashley Carrick](#); [Rep. Julie Coulombe](#); [Rep. Mike Cronk](#); [Rep. Maxine Dibert](#); [Rep. David Eastman](#); [Rep. Bryce Edgmon](#); [Rep. Zack Fields](#); [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Alyse Galvin](#); [Rep. Andrew Gray](#); [Rep. Cliff Groh](#); [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Rebecca Himschoot](#); [Rep. DeLena Johnson](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Kevin McCabe](#); [Rep. CJ McCormick](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Donna Mears](#); [Rep. Genevieve Mina](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. George Rauscher](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Dan Saddler](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Laddie Shaw](#); [Rep. Will Stapp](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Rep. Jesse Sumner](#); [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#); [Rep. Frank Tomaszewski](#); [Rep. Sarah Vance](#); [Rep. Stanley Wright](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 2:10:12 PM

Representatives,

As a teacher, I'm asking you to support the passage of SB 140 as is, with the changes to Charter school approval falling under the State Board of Education rather than the local school district. Local school districts have limited the amount of charter schools in the state by refusing to approve or by closing them without due process, as evidenced in the closure of Family Partnership. Most lower 48 charter schools get approved by their State School Boards, not their local districts. The local districts may manage them, but they do not approve or disapprove of a charter creation. It is time for Alaska to do the same. More choice for all students!

I also support the changes to the correspondence funding to add the multipliers. I currently oversee many special needs students in a correspondence program that do not get the same funding as their peers. SPED student numbers are growing yearly in the correspondence programs due to the ineffective ability of the local district to meet their needs. When SPED students move to a correspondence program, I have seen massive growths in their academic, emotional, and physical abilities due to the specialized one-on-one instruction and individualized curriculum created for that student. When I started overseeing families in the home school community, I had 1 or 2 special needs students but now I sometimes have 20-30 special needs students at a time. Special needs students are moving in large numbers to charter and correspondence schools. Unless these students attend a district brick-and-mortar school, they do not receive the money desperately needed to support their education.

Lastly, I support the deaf and hard of hearing provisions and the teacher bonuses in this bill. We are having a hard time keeping teachers in Alaska and especially in the rural areas. The districts are only speaking against this because they obviously do not want the money to go to teachers. They want the money to go to the district so they can spend it elsewhere. Even my husband after reading the bill said "we should stay in Alaska now that they are offering you a bonus". We were considering leaving to teach in the lower 48 after this school year.

Thank you for all you do and please keep the charter and correspondence provisions in this bill and pass it!

[Lynnetta Marcellus](#)
Eagle River AK

From: [Elizabeth McKee](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Testimony SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 2:09:17 PM

I waited to provide testimony by phone, but had another obligation. Thank you for accepting my testimony in writing:

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth McKee. I am from Anchorage, and I am representing myself. I am a Tier 2 Alaska elementary educator of 25 years and the parent of a senior at an Anchorage high school.

I support an increase of the BSA by \$1,413 to a total of \$7,373, as well as inflation proofing. This approach makes sections 9 and 15 irrelevant. All students and all educational professionals benefit from adequate funding of the public education system. Local school districts can address the specific needs of their community based on knowledge of current initiatives, the labor market, student performance, and capital costs in their area.

Alaska has been recognized for the successful use of charter schools. I oppose the move, in Section 3, to move charter school authorization out of the hands of local control. Elected school board members, accountable to the community and familiar with the finances of their institution, are best suited to make decisions about the appropriateness and feasibility of a proposed charter school.

I encourage you to raise transportation funding in Section 7 by \$209 per student for a total of \$690 per student.

Further, I'd like to see this bill go through vetting by the education and finance committees before moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill and for your service to Alaskans.

From: [Christy McMurren](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:16:47 AM

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA so that all students in public schools in Alaska can receive an education that will permit them to be successful, productive members of our great land. It is interesting to me that just today I read that there is an outcry among some legislators that we are losing our workforce. That fact is entirely predictable because some in the legislature have systematically helped to make Alaska an undesirable place to live and raise a family. You have a constitutional mandate to provide public education available to ALL children in our state. Please educate yourselves about the current challenges our schools face that you did not experience in your own schooling. These are not your 1960's school districts.
Thank you.

Christy McMurren
Anchorage, AK

From: [Luann McVey](#)
To: [Rep. Craig Johnson](#)
Subject: Opposed to CSSB140 - for the public record
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:40:17 PM

Education Funding: January 20, 2024. Re: House Rules SB 140:

Chairman Johnson & Committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm testifying against CSSB 140 on behalf of my husband, Richard Steele, and myself. We are retired teachers who served students in Alaskan schools for more than 51 years between us.

We support the expanded internet this bill provides for Alaskan schools and we are glad its sponsors recognize the current Base Student Allocation is woefully inadequate. However, the bill's increase to the BSA is nowhere near the \$1,413 the Association of Alaska School Boards estimated is needed to provide for inflation.

Without an adequate increase to the BSA, Alaska will lose teachers and young families who will no longer be able to afford to live in our state. We worry that our two daughters and their families will have to leave the state where they grew up, due to concerns about huge classes forced by inadequate funding.

Individual teacher bonuses don't make a difference for all educators and we don't support them. Without a significant increase to the BSA, you are forcing the collapse of Alaskan schools and, consequently, our entire economy.

The Legislature can make a difference to our state. Do what is needed to float the boats of all members of the Alaskan public education communities: our students, teachers, and young Alaskan families. Give us a BSA of at least \$1400 that will sustain our lives in our beloved state.

Thank you

Sincerely,

Luann McVey and Richard Steele

From: [Jeff Meucci](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Testimony on SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:30:10 AM

Greetings from Petersburg, I am writing in opposition to SB 140. The bill does nothing to solve the long term problems of paying for quality education in Alaska and making sure the teachers we have can afford to stay here with decent wages and long term benefits.

I am in support of permanently increasing the BSA to \$1,413.

I do not support the State Board of Education authorization of charter schools.

I do not support cash bonuses for teachers and instead, reinstate either pensions or more equitable retirement system.

I do not support increasing funding multiplier for homeschool correspondence programs.

We need leadership in the Alaska legislature to take an honest look on how we treat dedicated professionals who help our students become successful and have the tools to be our next leaders. By kicking the educational funding dilemma down the road you are doing nothing to solve a long term fiscal problem that has gone on for far too long. You have been elected to make the difficult decisions that have a huge impact to small communities who are barely surviving. Thank you for your time.

Jeff Meucci
PO Box 1086
Petersburg AK
907 518 9007

From: [Cyndy Mika](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Sen. Gary Stevens](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Lisa Parady](#)
Subject: House Rules Committee Written Testimony for SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:56:04 PM

Chairman Johnson, Vice-Chair Tilton, and Committee Members,

My name is Cyndy Mika and I am the Superintendent in Kodiak Island Borough Schools District. I provided public testimony this morning from the Kodiak LIO, but was unable to finish in the two minutes allotted and wanted to send in my entire testimony for SB 140.

Last year when SB140 was introduced, I thought Finally! This is a way to help to address the inequity in internet service in our rural schools. The fact that we have a cap on services to any of our students in and of itself will always cause inequities between schools on the road system and mainland and those schools that are not. So, I am very much in favor of increased internet capacity within the BAG grant. Please consider taking off all the additions to the original bill and address this crucial need now so that we can make the erate application deadline at the end of next month. Students in our villages on Kodiak Island deserve equity in internet services to those in town and on the mainland road system.

In regards to the additions to SB 140:

While I was pleased that last year an amendment was put forward to raise the BSA \$680, it truly isn't enough for students to continue to receive the same educational opportunities they have now. To now see it lowered to \$300 in recent days is a travesty. Kodiak Island Borough last year faced a \$3M deficit and we cut many positions as a result. This year with increased costs and only a 1% raise to all employees going into next year we face a \$5 million dollar deficit. As a result, we are faced with cutting about \$3 million in teacher, counselor, classified, and administration positions as well as funds for some activities and student and staff travel. But even these cuts will not be enough unless the BSA is raised to compensate for the high inflation we have seen over the years. The state is no longer flat funding us when you look at inflation dollars. The \$300 increase to the BSA would net us about \$600,000 this is about 1/3 what we received in one time funding last year. To keep up with inflation we need a \$1400 raise to the BSA.

I do not support the addition of charter school implementation being given to the state level. This completely erodes local control. Kodiak island elects our school board members and as such they are duly elected to make the decisions for the district. For the state to do so does not leave education in local control, which Alaskans highly value. We have a charter school program that is being successful under local control which is where it needs to remain.

I also do not support the lump sum to teachers, or rather to teachers with a rostered

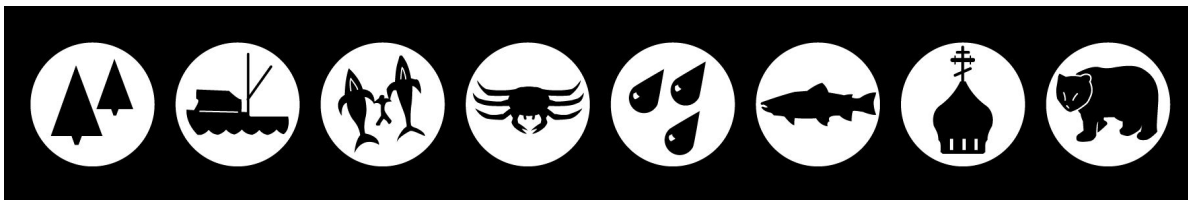
classroom. We have many certificated teachers that fill important ancillary jobs: counselors, special education teachers, instructional coaches, etc.... But more so, we have classified staff that work hard which allows our teachers to teach, we have administrators that guide and focus on the vision to ensure that each student is safe, seen, and supported. The best way to get money in the hands of the teachers and all our staff is through an increase to the BSA. In fact, KIBSD negotiated with the four associations in our district that all employees would receive a raise if there was an increase to the BSA. For every \$750,000 of new funds KIBSD receives as a result of the BSA, our staff would receive a 1% raise. We are committed to taking care of all our employees. This addition only takes care of the few and it is not fair nor equitable. Therefore I cannot support it.

Additionally, I fully support the increase to the student transportation by \$7.3M, the specials needs factor for the correspondence school programs, the parental rights of hearing impaired students, and a state school to support the education of the deaf and hearing impaired who communicate solely in American Sign Language.

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony on SB 140. I appreciate your hard work and support of all Alaskan students.

Cyndy A. Mika, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools Kodiak Island Borough School District



We gather on the traditional homeland of the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq people. The heritage and culture of the Alutiiq people continue to enrich our communities and our schools.

KIBSD

722 Mill Bay Rd

Kodiak, AK 99615

907-486-7550

From: [Ian Miner](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Written Testimony for SB 140
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 8:54:51 AM

Hello

My name is Ian Miner and i am providing testimony on SB140. Currently as the bill is now i fully support the Deaf and hard of Hearing bill being lumped in with SB140 to get it through the Legislator as quickly as possible. However with the BSA being at 300 dollars I have a hard time supporting this bill unless the BSA is raised to a higher amount as 300 dollars is not going to cover the cost of the school districts being able to meet the new requirements of the deaf and hard of Hearing bill. And we will continue to see school districts struggle to meet students' needs, especially kids with special needs. I am urging the legislator to increase the BSA so that school districts have the money to help students be successful.

Thank you,

Ian Miner

From: [Rod Morrison](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 2:54:18 PM

The Southeast Island School District is currently facing a dire situation:

Because of past budget shortfalls, SISD does not have essential positions such as counselors, school nurses, CTE teachers, librarians, music teachers, and art teachers.

We are struggling to meet basic student education needs. We have been forced to cut staff, including reducing the hours of many classified staff to part-time, because we cannot afford to pay their benefits.

Our school facilities are experiencing maintenance issues, including HVAC system failure, boiler issues, and safety concerns.

Furthermore, with implementing the AK Reads Act and required assessments, the district cannot allocate the necessary budgetary resources to support these initiatives, including extra reading teachers.

I want to draw your attention to the following critical points:

- Funding Alaska's public school system is a Constitutional duty, and most students in Alaska attend public schools.
- The continuous neglect and under-investment in public schools must end for the benefit of students, families, and communities.
- A BSA increase of \$1,413 is crucial to keeping pace with inflation and ensuring equitable access to quality education.
- Lump sum payments to teachers should not be a substitute for pensions and must extend to other critical staff members for holistic school operations.
- I trust that you will consider these pressing concerns and take decisive action to address the urgent needs of the Southeast Island School District. Your support of SB140 is paramount in ensuring the well-being and educational success of the students in our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to witnessing positive outcomes for the Southeast Island School District.

Sincerely,

Rod Morrison

Superintendent
Southeast Island School District

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Rod Morrison
Superintendent
Southeast Island School District
PO Box 19569
Thorne Bay, Alaska 99919
907-828-8256 or Cell: 907-617-4755
sisd.org

"The most valuable resource that we all have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives."

Robert John Meehan

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From: [Noah Sullivan](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 104 Testimony 1/20/24
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:52:28 AM

I am a college student writing in opposition to SB 104 for the following reasons: a \$300 increase to the BSA is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the school system that educated me and makes no account for inflation or rising fuel costs, in addition to the curriculum requirements that have been imposed, such as the Alaska Reads Act. I fully support the proposed \$1430 increase. I am opposed to the state board of education charter school authorization. Authorization should be decided by local need and school boards. I oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, call for the reinstatement of either a defined benefit pension or more equitable retirement system. The “bonus” idea is both inequitable for all school employees and likely ineffective at retaining young teachers after they have served their bonus requirements. Finally, I oppose increasing the funding multiplier for homeschool correspondence programs, which further exacerbates the neglect we have inflicted upon our public schools. Thank you.

Noah Sullivan
Occidental College '24
nsulli340@gmail.com
907-518-0130

From: [Shaun Nesheim](#)
Cc: [Rep. Cathy Tilton](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Rep. Laddie Shaw](#); [Rep. Zack Fields](#); [Rep. Jesse Sumner](#)
Subject: Public Comment on SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:21:18 AM

Hello State Representatives;

I am unable to stand before you for public comment on SB140 in the House Rules Committee today on 1/20 due to Covid; please find below my 1-minute of public comment.

Please reach out to me if any clarification is needed.

Thanks,

Shaun Nesheim

Educator in the Juneau School District

2024-01-20 SB140 Comment

Members of the committee,

My name is Shaun Nesheim, I teach Spanish, Government, and sometimes Finance at Juneau-Douglas High School: [Yadaa.at](#) Kalé.

Public schools around the state are in financial crisis after almost 8 years of effectively-stagnant funding, though costs increase; maybe you've heard of inflation. Schools need MORE funding from the state, not less.

Apropos Dunleavy's teacher-bonus provision, paying me more but failing to support the whole education ecosystem is not going to end well. I cannot do my job effectively if my school does not have paraeducators, nurses, office staff, admin, counselors, custodians, or food service employees. Can any of you do your jobs well without your aids or other support staff? Neither can we.

I don't want a bonus. I want the legislature to fund the whole system with a Base Student Allocation increase.

I like getting money as much as the next guy, but I don't need a bonus or even a permanent fund dividend. I need a state that values public education so we can better raise my son and his peers to become part of the future workforce of Alaska.

This is an election year, and anyone who votes for bigger pfd's and/or less funding for education will not be getting our votes.

I thank you for your time.

From: [Jason Norris](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 7:12:52 AM

Committee Members,

I write to you in support of an enhanced SB 140 that truly addresses our state's education needs. I note that five of you were nays on overriding the veto on HB 39. I hope this indicates you have plans this session for something better than what HB 39 would have brought. SB 140 as currently drafted is not that. I am fine with parents having choices, but I want it to be because it's what is best for their families and not out of desperation because public schools have been starved of funding. One line I've heard a lot during this debate is that "more money won't necessarily make things better", and while that contains some truth in how the money is used, a lack of funds will certainly make things worse.

If I may be frank with you for a minute, our kids deserve better than this, and parents deserve better than a single shot at testimony jammed into an inconvenient spot on the calendar.

Respectfully,
Jason Norris

From: [LIO Anchorage](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: FW: Testimony on SB 140
Date: Monday, January 22, 2024 8:18:40 AM

From: oneill_abby <oneill_abby@asdk12.org>
Sent: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:26 PM
To: LIO Anchorage <Lio.Anchorage@akleg.gov>
Subject: Testimony on SB 140

Good afternoon! My name is Abby O'Neill and I am a proud principal in the Anchorage School District speaking on my own behalf. I am grateful for the committee bringing forward the issue of funding and I urge you to see the whole school picture. I am a principal at a Title I school of 400 students grades PreK to 6th and one of the most diverse schools in the nation. My staff greets every student, every day, right where they are. In order to take them where they need to go in their learning, they must also meet basic needs of safety, hunger, and connection. Our families are sometimes homeless, in shelters, or transitioning between places, we support students who are in foster placements, have food insecurity, are new to country and almost our entire school qualifies for free breakfast and lunch.

We feed the need and teach the child. We use trauma-informed practices and work every year to build up our teachers to grow students academically as engaged learners. The BSA is not a one and done permanent raise of a few hundred dollars. It is a decade behind inflation already. The lack of funding in education has directly impacted: Our ability to staff buildings adequately.

It has over crowded classrooms.

There is a lack of support staff and many without a livable wage.

There is no hope at retention of good people with bonuses, they need a retirement and funding.

The lack of funding and supports has completely overrun our special education programs as well.

In order to provide for ALL students- you must inflation proof the BSA not just raise it \$300. We must value what schools provide for communities and families, and support the educators that are facilitating far more than learning these days.

Schools are only as good as the people in them, and if we want good people as well as safe and thriving schools, we need to look closer at retention of the amazing educators and families we already have and work towards improving our schools and their outcomes by raising the BSA!

In addition, the BSA should not be hiding in a bill that is supporting increased internet for rural areas, deaf education, and charter options. This is a separate issue entirely and deserves its own space as all of those things deserve support and their own conversations as well.

Thank you.

Abby O'Neill
Principal
North Star Elementary
907-742-3800

From: [Margaret Oswald](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Rep. Andrew Gray](#); [Sen. Matt Claman](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Sen. Lōki Tobin](#); [Sen. Gary Stevens](#)
Subject: Please Fund our Public Schools Competitively
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:46:54 AM

Please fund our public schools in a manner that Our Great State of Alaska can compete with other US States.

Our Great State of Alaska is competing with all other US states for working age employees. One of the concerns of many working age employees is the education of their children.

Our Great State of Alaska is competing with all other US states for teachers. We cannot compete if we cannot give competitive pay and benefits.

Public schools provide a community center where people of all faiths and all political views can come together for the good of the community. This allows us to learn to care for people who are different from ourselves and encourages us to have a more civil society.

Please fund our public schools in a manner that Alaska Public Schools can be considered desirable above other states for both teachers and students.

Thank you
Margaret Oswald
907-223-1883

Alaska Constitution, Article VII, Section 1 Public Education

The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

From: [Polly Carr-Anaya](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Comments and concerns about SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:08:49 PM

Dear Chair Johnson and Committee Members,

I was unable to testify today during the hearing.

My name is Polly Carr and I'm a parent of a student in the Anchorage School District. I'm here today to express serious concerns about SB140 and to ask you to Raise the Base Student Allocation (BSA) to a level that will actually sustain our education system and invest in our workforce, our economy, and Alaska's future.

First, thank you for acknowledging the need to increase the BSA. The proposed increase in this bill is less than 25% of what school districts have requested for years. We are in a crisis right now, with oversized classrooms, loss of student activities that provide critical support for families, teachers leaving the state, and families leaving the state.

Second, the addition in SB140 of the State Board of Education to create (or remove!) charter schools instead of locally elected school boards takes power away from local communities. This strategy does not help school choice- our current system of public charter schools is operating smoothly and effectively.

Finally, the teacher bonus pay is conceptually a good idea but much harder to implement than conceived, and does nothing for critical support staff. A larger BSA is the solution for helping attract and retain the brightest and best educators.

I'd ask you all to think harder and work together to do the right thing-which is to raise the BSA by the amount requested by school districts and invest in the future of our workforce, our economy, and our state.

Thank you.

Polly Carr
7631 Griffith Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

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Polly Carr
(907) 952-7827 (cell)

From: [Princess Lucaj](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Sen. Scott Kawasaki](#); maxine.dibert@akleg.gov
Subject: SB 140
Date: Sunday, January 21, 2024 8:03:59 PM

Dear House Rules Committee Members,

I am writing to say that as a resident of Fairbanks, beneficiary of a public school education in Alaska, and as a mother with three students in public K-12 schools, I find it appalling that Gov. Dunleavy cut our education funding by \$87M. I applaud those that attempted to override the veto.

We should all know that public education is a cornerstone for any democratic society. In a public education system that is well funded, where teachers are valued and their value rewarded with competitive pay and benefits, leads not only to better student outcomes but enriches our entire state and makes Alaska a place where families want to stay.

We need the BSA to increase, we need the \$87M to be restored. We need to send a strong message to Alaskans that our teachers and our children in public education matter.

The goals of education must evolve with our rapidly changing world and our children are our future leaders - they are the ones who will one day be taking care of and representing us in the legislature. We need them to be prepared for college, careers, and civic engagement.

Mahsi' choo!

Thank you for your service.

Princess Johnson

Fairbanks, Alaska

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We recognize that we work throughout the unceded territories of the Indigenous Peoples of Alaska; that our homes are located on the traditional territories of the lower Tanana Dene Athabascan Peoples. We acknowledge the ancestral & present land stewardship and place-based knowledge of the peoples of these territories.

From: [Lauren Padawer](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Support SB 140 to increase School Funding!
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:58:09 AM

I support SB 140 which would increase the BSA (base student allocation) from \$5,960 to \$6,940.

Lauren Padawer
PO Box 394
Cordova, AK 99574
Cell: 907-428-8004

From: [June H. Park](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Please raise the BSA permanently
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 3:15:58 AM

Hello House Rules Committee Members!

I hope this message finds you well. I'm writing to you in hopes that you would consider the future of Alaska and help increase the BSA permanently.

I was born and raised in Alaska and this is my 15th year teaching first graders. Over these 15 years, I have witnessed our students, schools and community suffer due to the lack of staffing and resources. I absolutely love our state and my job and watching six and seven year olds become great thinkers and problem solvers has been rewarding. However, many of our students do not have their basic needs met. I have provided endless amount of snacks, socks, snow gear, school supplies, and more. We care for our students and would not want to see them in negative degree weather without proper snow gear. I know we ask parents to provide these items for their children but they may not have the funds and are trying to make ends meet, especially with the increase in the cost of living. I know I don't need to provide these items or we can fundraise for these items or ask for donations. But what other occupation in this world spends a part of their own salary for their job?

Over the years, I've also seen more students suffer emotionally and mentally. When students' basic needs are not met, they CANNOT learn. Trying to help 25 to 28 students regulate their emotions while teaching them to read and write is challenging. Teachers are working tirelessly every day and are losing sleep for our students because we truly care for them. We are constantly thinking of how to meet their academic needs while inspiring students to grow their love for learning.

May I ask when was the last time you stepped into an elementary school? I implore you to visit a public school and see the challenges teachers face everyday. When we can't find substitutes and have to take another classroom of 20+ students along with your students, it's quite challenging. When we are asked to teach students and raise test scores with 30-40 students in a small classroom, it's quite challenging. Can you imagine teaching 30 first graders? It's like herding cats. Who would possibly want to become a teacher in these conditions? Especially with school shootings also rising in this country? More and more teachers and paraprofessionals are quitting and less people are interested in becoming teachers. Do you care for the students in Alaska?

Teachers are trying to help students become responsible citizens in this world and I can tell you that we are failing to do that, not because of incompetency but because of the lack of funding. Teachers cannot cultivate caring, ambitious lifelong learners when class sizes are huge. Our students WILL NOT learn without an increase in BSA. If you have any consideration of our future, please increase the BSA as our students deserve an education just as you received one.

You have the opportunity to be a hero for Alaska students and educators this year.

Our students, schools, and communities desperately need a permanent increase to the Base Student Allocation that will signify a meaningful and dependable investment in public education.

Without a BSA increase, we will see schools close, class sizes increase, and student opportunities disappear. Alaska students deserve better, and you have the power to make a real difference in their lives by passing a permanent increase to the BSA.

Communities across Alaska have made their support of public education clear. Local education leaders and administrators know that funding means more opportunities and more student learning. Business leaders know that investing in education will help our local businesses find work-ready young people. Families know opportunities like sports, CTE, and extracurriculars help children grow and thrive.

The Legislative Finance Division calculates that the BSA would need to increase by \$1,348 to match the buying power of the peak year 2015.

SB 140 is on the legislative 5-yard line and represents a major investment in public education for the State of Alaska. Please be a hero for Alaska students and pass SB 140 early in session to provide our public schools, educators, and students with the fiscal stability needed to be successful.

Thank you for your service and leadership on this important subject.

From: [Dave Peck](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 BSA
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:09:25 AM

I am not in a position to testify by phone today so I submit this email.

I oppose increasing the BSA. There are several reasons.

1. Where will that money come? If the Education Bureaucracy & the Teacher's unions want more money they should also propose a source or where they would recommend cuts. If the education people want our PFD for themselves they should say so.

Instead it seems a case of we don't care where it comes from. We demand it. Where it comes from is your (the citizens of Alaska) problem. Having worked for a unionized state work force before I know this to be true. I also resent public advertising where kids are shown begging to increase the BSA. I've even heard this is a specific tactic to have the kids asking for money because, well it's a kid. Having to say no to a kid is a lot harder. But these days maybe more necessary than ever.

2. We need better outcomes before we increase funding. I hear this time & time again. And less students (for any number of reasons) should not mean more BSA. It means if you have less student population funding should not be increased. Less students may also be a function of the lack of private opportunities for business in Alaska due often to federal restrictions on developing transportation corridors and other regulation. We are becoming a kind of colony of the Federal Government restricting what we do.

3. Until we solve some of these basic problems I'm in favor of continuing to fund education on a pay as you go basis vs increasing locked in funding formulas.

Thank you
Dave Peck/Kenai
Sent from my iPhone

Testimony to the House Rules committee – Craig Johnson Chair and legislators

My name is Marilyn Pillifant, a 58 year resident of Alaska, 28 year retired public elementary school teacher and mother of two boys who've gone through the public system.

I support the original version of SB 140. It was clean and concise. However the new iteration of the CS has turned into an all encompassing cornucopia of educational wants; a shopping list of sorts that have snuck into the original SB140. Now SB140 goes from 10 lines to 12 pages with a litany of items / a shopping list of wants; by whom? I can only deduce Gov. Dunlevy and other Legislators.

This perverted version of SB140 (HCSCS140) – adds a whole lot of stuff/ issues that in and of themselves ought to be dealt with separately with public testimony!

Having said that to clear up your muddled mess of a bill, please revert to the original bill SB140 for increased internet broadband access to include a BSA increase of at least \$1400. This would constitutionally maintain Alaska's system of public schools.

This annual merry-go-round has to stop. We've been talking about raising the BSA for decades. Get 'er done. The Alaska Constitution states Maintaining Alaska's public school system; but it must be brought up to date fiscally and inflation proofed.

I also do not agree with the bonus idea in this bill. This was tried in the ASD in the early 90's – only to prove to be divisive, insulting and a slap in the face to ALL educators.

I believe in local control of charter schools. Who is going to oversee what and how they are complying with State statutes? In my career, I've had many Charter school/home schooled students enter my classroom – only to be woefully behind and my duty was to bring them up to grade level!

The Legislature must fix the retirement system! Teachers do not receive social security and BTW, neither will tier 3 Legislators. So GPO/WEP ought to be a concern for them.

I'm looking for this legislature “to do better, now that you know better”
(Quote by Commissioner Dena Bishop)

From: [Rachael Posey](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Public testimony on SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:52:06 PM

Chairman and Members of the House Rules Committee

My name is Rachael Posey and I live in Anchorage. I am testifying today because I am very concerned about the future of Alaska public schools, and consequently, our state as a whole. I was born and raised in Juneau, and after leaving for college and graduate school, I chose to return to Alaska 12 years ago to raise my children. In the decade or so that I've been back in Alaska, the state has gone from a net in-migration to a net out-migration of residents. This has dire economic consequences for the state due to a shrinking workforce and an aging population. One way to address this is to bolster our public schools so that we can have a well-educated Alaskan workforce and we can draw families from outside the state as well. The tight budgets that Alaska school districts have faced in recent years have put an ever-increasing burden on teachers and other school personnel, and resulted in cuts to cherished programs and enriching school activities. Overcrowding classrooms results in teacher burn-out and makes it harder for teachers to teach, and students to learn. When teachers and other school personnel are so overworked it makes it harder to identify students who are struggling academically and/or emotionally. Nationwide our young people are facing a mental health crisis (increased anxiety, suicide rates, and social isolation) having well-funded schools, including supplemental activities like sports, music, drama, etc are increasingly important to help students' mental health. We need to support our teachers and our students by implementing a permanent increase to the BSA. The proposed \$300 BSA increase in SB140 is NOT adequate to protect the quality of our Alaskan education system. Schools need significantly more in order to maintain funding when accounting for inflation.

Additionally, I am adamantly opposed to a Governor appointed state board to oversee charter schools. This takes control away from local school boards - who are elected to represent the views of their constituents. And instead gives more power to appointees who are not accountable to voters. There is no reason to change this system from what is working currently.

If we want Alaska to be a vibrant, economically stable state, we MUST adequately fund public education. All the money spent on teachers, school buildings, school programs etc keeps money in our communities, helps attract and retain high caliber teachers, and builds our workforce for the future. We must make school funding a priority.

I was hoping to deliver this testimony via the phone but I was unable to continue on hold due to prior commitments. However, I was encouraged to hear so many other people testify with similar concerns to mine. Thank you for your consideration.

Rachael Posey
Anchorage, AK
House District 15

From: [Pat Race](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:06:21 PM

I write today in opposition to SB140 in its current form.

First, I applaud those of you who had the courage to stand up to the Governor's senseless veto of last year's education funding. I thought it undermined a lot of hard work in the House and sowed quite a bit of distrust.

SB 140 isn't enough. There are some good ideas and a bit of forward movement but it just doesn't get us there.

Inflation is real. It's plain to see at the grocery store and in rental prices that the already high cost of living in Alaska has increased. Clearly the cost of providing a quality education has increased as well. This means **flat-funding is a cut** and this bill doesn't go far enough to get us back on track after 8 years of allowing our schools to atrophy under the burden of 15% inflation.

Increase the BSA. I applaud the increase to the BSA in this bill but it needs to be higher. The \$300 increase isn't even enough unless it's being proposed as part of a multi-year plan. Increase the BSA \$300/year over three years? That might start making a real difference in outcomes.

You don't get more for less. I don't know how people get the absolutely cuckoo-clock idea that we can increase outcomes in our schools by putting in fewer resources. That's not how anything works. I can't give my employees a pay cut and expect they'll work harder, I can't make conditions worse and expect they'll appreciate the job more. It's nonsense but if the approach of trying to squeeze more from less is something you'd care to defend, I'd love to hear how that works.

Classroom Size. The driving factor in all of this is classroom sizes and the ability of teachers to spend time with each student. If you're a teacher juggling a chaotic class of 35-40 students, that just doesn't leave a lot of space for learning. If we want to increase outcomes, we need to increase funding so we can hire more teachers so we can bring down our class sizes and create an environment more conducive to learning.

Charter Schools. Sweeping charter schools under a board appointed by the governor is a terrible idea. It politicizes the process of setting up and running a charter school and leaves the burden on the local school boards. What happens when a new governor comes in and appoints a new board, are all the charter schools now under threat of review? Will each political tide bring a new wave of charter schools for local school boards to oversee? It seems bad.

Thank you for your time. Please invest in our next generation by further increasing the BSA.

Pat Race,
Juneau

From: [Carmela Ramirez](#)
To: [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#)
Subject: Support for BSA \$1413.00
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:45:36 PM

Hello Mr Chairman and members,

My name is Carmela and I am emailing in as a parent. I support the increase of the BSA by \$1413.00. I've had a daughter who graduated with ASD and another is currently in Kindergarten in ASD. My graduated daughter had the opportunity to go to public, charter and career schools. In order to maintain what is currently in place and then consider new initiatives and new reading requirements we must adequately fund education- all staff and teachers, to prepare our children for increased achievement. Educating students also includes safety, wellness, nutrition, and educational enrichment opportunities. As we embrace that we have one of the most diverse schools in the country, it is essential to invest in our children for the sustainability of our communities and state. Please support an increased BSA of \$1413.00 in SB 140 for public education and I do not support the idea of moving charters under the state. I encourage a thorough review of other items on this newly proposed bill separately.

I was on hold for public testimony around 10:30 but could no longer wait. Please consider this email as a public testimony.

Thank you,

Carmela Ramirez
9078304072

From: [Cassandra Gardner Raun](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 4:38:23 PM

Good afternoon,

Thank you for hearing public testimony regarding SB140. Regretfully, I was not able to stay on the call long enough to share my thoughts orally, so I am sending this written statement instead.

I am a graduate of the Anchorage School District and I have three daughters who are all students of ASD, two at neighborhood schools and one in a charter school. I have been involved with ASD as a student, as a parent, as a substitute teacher and as a PTSA board member. I am extremely concerned about the state of public education in Alaska.

We have a constitutional responsibility to maintain a system of public education in Alaska and we are failing at that responsibility. Our school districts are broke, we are unable to retain teachers and staff, class sizes are increasing, and services and programs are being cut. Year after year, I have watched our public education system deteriorate. The common denominator for all of these issues is funding. I appreciate the recognition in SB 140 that we MUST increase the base student allocation. Unfortunately, as currently drafted SB 140 will only worsen Alaska's education crisis.

1. We need a meaningful increase to the BSA and we need it now. \$300 is simply not enough. The previously proposed amount of \$680 is not enough. We need a \$1413 plus increase to the BSA to help stave off a mass exodus of teachers and families. I have personally seen several new teachers, many of them Alaskans who themselves were educated in Alaskan public schools, leave the district for out of state positions that offer more pay, smaller class sizes and better retirement. If we want to retain our teachers and staff, we need to provide the funding to meet that goal.

2. Alaska just recently received national recognition for our local charter schools. Our charter school system is working and it's working well. I have a student who is benefiting from that work. I see no reason to take control of charter school authorization out of the hands of locally elected school boards who are already doing a nationally recognized excellent job.

Our children are our greatest resource. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. Alaska is struggling, our workforce is declining, our families are leaving. Alaska needs to invest in our schools now to avoid future economic collapse.

Please, I beg you, fully fund our schools now. Our future depends on it.

Thank you,
Cassandra Raun
Anchorage, AK

From: [Ingrid Reese](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: BSA
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:03:13 AM

Alaska Legislators,

Please increase the BSA by more than \$300. Please increase by \$600 to even start to keep up with inflation and support public schools that are the foundation for why many working age people will or won't come to Alaska.

If you want people to stay here (or move here) and are concerned with not having enough people to keep Alaska's economy moving, please consider the well researched connection between public schools and people's desire to stay in a community. It is one of the most important things to keep families in this state.

We clearly do have the funding, you just need to spend it in ways that are not short sighted. A big PFD does not get working age, skilled people to live here. It's good schools, jobs, infrastructure, livable communities.

Kindly,
Ingrid Reese,
Mother of 3 Anchorage School District Students

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Susan Ritter](#)
To: [Rep. Thomas McKay](#)
Cc: [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Sen. Matt Claman](#)
Subject: SB140 testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:11:50 PM

1/20/2024

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

For the record, my name is Susan Ritter. I am a an experienced 17 year, Tier 3special education teacher and have taught all grades K-12 in Anchorage. Prior to being a teacher I was a special education paraprofessional. I am speaking as an individual. I live in House District 15 in the Sand Lake area.

Thank you for hearing my comments on the changes to the Committee Substitute for SB 140. "An Act relating to funding for Internet services for school districts; and providing for an effective date."

First, I urge you to raise the BSA back to at least the compromise of \$680 but would prefer \$1600. The \$300 increase proposed is an insult and represents a 56% reduction from the compromise achieved last session.

Next, you must keep the local control, oversight, and accountability of our local charter schools. We have a system that works and this provision is a solution in search of a problem that has not been reviewed or vetted seriously.

Finally, the teacher bonuses are great - if you expand them to include all the hard-working folks who work in our schools and if they are coupled with a significant increase to the BSA.

A recent article from Education Week dated July 27, 2022 -

“ finds that, given a choice of different ways to increase compensation, teachers say the prospect of salary increases that keep up with inflation are more likely to keep them in the classroom than other financial perks—including more generous family leave policies. Meanwhile, one-off bonuses don’t seem to be much of a draw at all, unless districts are *really* prepared to shell out for them.”

The iterations of this bill Waters down the original intent.

I am asking this committee and the entire legislative body to return SB 140 to increase the permanent BSA to a number that will allow our schools to thrive.

I ask that expensive programs such as the correspondence study funding be examined.

I urge our legislators to strip SB 140 of the attempt to seize local control of school districts and boards.

Please stand by the Alaskan Constitution and support all Alaskan students, educators, and administrators.

Provide the necessary funding for us to continue teaching our students in a safe and inclusive environment.

In reference to the quality of education in Anchorage, my daughter graduated from West High School in the top 10 of her class in 2013. She received an excellent public education.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

Susan Ritter

From: [Charlie & Jamie Rodriguez](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: *****SPAM***** Testimony In Support of SB 140 and Greater Education Funding
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:22:38 AM

To: Members of the AK House Rules Committee
From: Jamie Rodriguez, Anchorage
January 20, 2024
Re: In Support of SB 140 and Greater Education Funding

Good schools are an investment in our children. They're the key to our economy and, ultimately, our children's well-being. They're the key to everything: a strong and thriving economy, helping to grow well-trained professionals to meet community needs, such as excellent medical, technical, educational, and business professionals; even artists and entertainers, and so much more that make any community, state, and country livable, productive, welcoming, and successful.

When this governor was a Superintendent, he tried these same "cutting to the bone stunts" and he drove his district into near financial ruin, clearly demonstrating that this tactic doesn't work. These cost slashing tactics are now hurting school districts large and small across the state, some to the point of near bankruptcy. This is not their fault, they're the victims. It's the fault of miserly legislators who endlessly vote against education and spin idiotic reasons not grounded in reality for doing so.

As a brand new governor, with Donna Arduin at his side, the current governor commented in one of those meetings, that it was his goal to see Alaska's population decrease to pre-statehood numbers. It's case alarming because that's the exact opposite of what a governor, who should be helping their state and its citizenry of all ages, thrive, should be doing for their state. It rang alarm bells then and it continues to do so now.

It was commented this week, by someone in Governor's administration, that schools, which haven't had significant funding since 2017, are "doing just fine." If that's such an easy fix, then we should give serious thought to taking the governor, his administration, and his Vote-No Legislators" back to 2017 pay levels so they, too, can experience being "just fine."

Education is so widely recognized to be the key ingredient to success, that our own state of Alaska embedded it into our Constitution. This, we have a constitutional obligation to our children to provide well-intentioned, quality education for all to provide them with a good educational foundation and, eventually, a solid place in their communities. To those who voted for the draconian education cuts, I urge you to quit gambling with Alaska's future and do the right thing for all Alaskans, not just your small interest groups. This is not a game.

To those who cast NO votes, it's time to quit holding education hostage every single session. It's time to do your job working with fellow legislators to support Public Education. Do your Constitutional duty! Our children are our future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee

My name is Richard Saville. I am a staff person for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

I am testifying today in favor of Sections 11 and 12 of this bill. The language in these sections was formerly HB 111 the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights.

17 states have passed a Deaf Children's Bill of Rights. In the fall of 2022 Alaska's DHH community approached the Council and asked us to bring the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights forward. These sections will not only ensure information and resources are available to all families with deaf and hard of hearing children; but will signal support for the value of the Deaf community in Alaska.

Deaf and hard of hearing children have the right to:

- Have their ability to communicate and to acquire language treated as a priority.
- To learn from qualified professionals who can communicate directly with Deaf children
- To have opportunities to interact with Deaf adult role models
- To have Deaf peers of the same language mode, level, and age and
- To have full access to unbiased information, specialized personnel, school programs, social activities

Sections 11 and 12 of this bill will ensure these rights are protected. They will ensure parents and families of DHH children have the information and access to resources they need to make informed decisions about what is best for their children's future regarding language acquisition, development, and their education. Information and resources on American Sign Language (or ASL) are not always presented to families of children who are hard of hearing leaving them unaware of that option. Children who are hard of hearing are often put into regular classrooms where spoken English is the mode of communication. When this happens those children often do not develop language as quickly or as normally as hearing children do. Missing language milestones can lead to language deficits and will see them fall behind in their education because they are unable to communicate and/or understand the lessons effectively.

The Council urges you to support sections 11 and 12 of this bill which will ensure information and resources are available to all families who have children who are deaf and hard of hearing and will reinforce to them they are valued members of our communities.

Thank you for listening.

Richard Saville
Program coordinator 2
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

From: [Kyle Schneider](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Cc: [Sen. Gary Stevens](#); [Rep. Sarah Vance](#)
Subject: CSSB 140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 6:07:54 PM

Good Afternoon, Chair Johnson, and members of the House Rules Committee:

My name is Kyle Schneider, and I am calling from Homer, AK. I testify today regarding concerns I have over aspects of CSSB 140.

I am an Alaskan-by-choice, having moved here in 2008 from the Lower 48 to take a hard-to-fill teaching position that had gained and lost 6 teachers in 5 years. Today, I speak to you as a sixteen year veteran teacher of my district, the spouse of another Alaskan-by-choice who is a ten year veteran school secretary, and a proud believer in the power and importance of an well-educated community.

While the “internet in schools” and “pupil transportation” aspects of this bill are essential for our students and schools, and I favor these portions, I am appalled by a number of the other topics included.

We must respect local school board control for charter schools, and not extend chartering or control rights to a statewide board filled with political appointees.

We must restore the BSA increase previously established - minimally to, and preferably above - the \$1413 recommended by the AK Association of School Boards, especially in recognition of the Legislative Finance Director’s Feb. 2023 report to House Finance that this is the lowest allocation to the BSA in 20 years when adjusted for inflation.

Following this, I encourage you to forward fund primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools in perpetuity. The State Constitution is clear: We MUST adequately fund and maintain public education.

Alaskans used to believe that we were headed “North to the Future” so fervently that it became our State Motto, but what future does functional disinvestment in public education such as this build for our schools?

Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Kyle Schneider
kylelschneider@gmail.com
(773) 620-3833

From: [Jodi Severson](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:46:30 AM

House Rules Committee
Jodi Severson
Petersburg, Alaska

I support a permanent \$1,413 increase to BSA

I am against state board of education charter school authorization - should be up to local school boards

I oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, would like to reinstate either pension or more equitable retirement system

We should add to the needs of students rather than taking away programs, resources and staff.

Jodi Severson
Concerned parent

From: [Rich Sewell](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SN 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:51:59 AM

Good morning

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA.

AK working age population is decreasing, I think because of diminishing educational opportunities at K-12 and at UA system.

Of the kids that go to college out of state, 80% never return!

Also we must think about who will manage AK business and government in the future???
Will we choose to educate our future leaders, or just have a bunch of dummies running things?

Choose wisely.

Rich Sewell
PO Box 100347
Anchorage 99510
907-727-7876

From: [Kirsten Shelton](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:28:12 AM

1/20/2024

Kirsten Shelton

Hello I am writing as a mother of two school children, a site council member, and as an Alaska employer worried about the education of our future labor force. While certain provisions of SB 140 are incredibly important – transportation funding and internet – those should stand alone. This bill takes away local control from those in our education system who are most knowledgeable about the needs of our district: the local school districts. They are at this point underfunded to such a degree that there is nothing to reprioritize as Commissioner Bishop suggested in her testimony. I'm appalled by the funding our schools have received in the past decade. Make no mistake – this bill is another cut to education. With inflation, increasing costs in the economy, we need a substantial and real BSA increase that will help our entire state not just a select few chosen by a few people at the state level. Fund the BSA as high as you can. This is a workforce issue, an economic development issue, and this is a basic act of respect for the young people in this state.

I was born and raised in Alaska back when we paid Alaska teachers competitive salaries and when we adequately funded our schools. That education provided me with the choices in life I needed to follow a career path. When my children were born there was no question I would return to my home state to raise them. I have to say there is not much that would even make me consider leaving this place I love. This bill, this lack of education support for our children, had made me seriously consider leaving for the first time in search of an education for my children that respects them with adequate funding. This hurts. It is important to note though that my family has this choice. Many families do not have the means to move out of state – what about them? Who will be left behind if we have completely ruined our education system by not funding it at its base?

In conclusion, please raise the BSA as high as possible. There are charts that show what is needed and I don't need to reiterate that for you. I heard this committee asking good questions and believe you are all caring and thoughtful individuals. Please help us retain the ability to make the best decisions for our students at the local school district level – the people who know their community and their needs - through a strong BSA. Do not allow Commissioner Bishop and others to take that away through state government dictating what is best. We need the BSA.

From: [John Sherman](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: State Charter School
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:22:53 PM

As a grandparent of four children who have benefited from attending a charter school I would like to add my opinion that they are a benefit to a broad range of children and their families.

I am in favor of State established charter schools and not leave it to local school districts.

Thank you

John Sherman

907 333 1157

Anchorage

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Aimee Sims](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB 140
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:27:40 AM

I am writing to ask you to support SB 140. I support SB140, correspondence, charter and deaf and hard of hearing. I am so grateful this bill is supporting our Alaskan students.

Aimee Sims
Anchorage
District 22

From: [Christopher Sis](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 Testimony
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:48:59 PM

I'm a graduate of Juneau-Douglas High School, University of Alaska, and a parent of Alaska elementary school students.

Alaska, more than any other state, can afford to invest in our students with a world-class education. Not only do we not tax our citizens, but we hand them money annually in the form of a PFD. We can absolutely afford and must invest in our young.

Anyone, elected or otherwise, suggesting flat BSA funding or meager increases, such as \$300, are embarrassing themselves as unable or unwilling to do basic math. I've been utterly surprised by those willing to embarrass themselves, in public forums, with their inability to perform simple math calculations when it comes to inflation and the BSA.

Flat-funding, and cowardly hiding behind immaterial BSA increases, such as \$300, is choking public education in Alaska. This will continue to send many Alaskan families, like mine, out of Alaska and deter many families from ever coming here. This negligence by state government will cement social and economic hardship for our state in decades to come. Our lack of investment in youth today will result in a weak, unprepared, or non-existent citizenry.

It's important as ever to channel Alaska's finite natural resources, as they are liquidated, into infinite human resources. Substantially increasing the BSA to make up for many years of inflation, and inflation-proofing it for the future is not spending. It is investing in our youngest human resources. The status quo—through immaterial increases to BSA—is your resignation and complicity with a depressing future for our state.

Respectfully,
Christopher Sis

From: [Lia Slemons](#)
To: [House Rules](#)
Subject: SB140 testimony for public record
Date: Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:55:10 AM

Honorable Representatives,

I'm encouraged that the House is considering education early in the session, but concern compels me to share my experiences as an Anchorage School District parent and substitute teacher that indicate that the effective cut (in inflation-adjusted dollars) to the BSA is a significant mistake.

Our children are fortunate to attend a well-supported neighborhood school with high teacher retention. Even here, we've experienced the squeeze of shrinking educational funding, nothing compared to the upcoming fiscal cliff. Last year my youngest child's kindergarten class was at a record 26. Student assessment, which is required to be done 1:1 would take a full week in kindergarten, pulling the experienced teacher away from the rest of the class repeatedly over the course of a week, even with parent volunteers helping. Now in first grade, the teacher loves the Alaska Reads curriculum, but it was the school PTA that bought first grade a new printer, in large part to keep up with voluntary printing of leveled readers for each student weekly and even daily. This teacher is also buying out of pocket or seeking parent support to purchase enrichment materials from human body jigsaw puzzles to astronaut vests. I realize that optional enrichment funding is a local school choice, but I think it is important for the Legislature to understand that teachers are creatively working extra to infuse hands-on materials in their classrooms. This is happening while Trailside was unable to recruit an administrative assistant, so the principal and school nurse handled the front desk phone and public greetings along with their other critical duties when the attendance secretary was out. When the cafeteria manager is out, kids on school lunch got chips and shelf-stable snacks for lunch.

My fourth grader is inspired by the IGNITE program, and is motivated weekly to attend school largely for that. She complains loudly at the monthly loss of her IGNITE teacher assigned other assessment duties and it is achingly hard to tell her that IGNITE faces further erosion and/or loss next year.

Schools are suffering under unfilled positions that teacher bonuses won't solve. I substitute teach at Service High to give back to the schools and see teenage brains in action (or attempt to activate them!). I quickly learned of the missing paraprofessional positions because students with special needs are simply in the mix of the general education classroom, either falling through the cracks when they miss assignments or spreading teacher attention thinner. As a sub I was initially floored at the difference 1-2 students with extra needs can make in a classroom (especially a classroom of 30+, as all of the Biology classes I taught have been). Service High also has only one IT support person, although high schools are expected to be highly tech-based and ready to switch to remote learning seamlessly. That meant I wouldn't expect to have help for fixes to class speakers until close to the end of the day, but the gap was very clear while long-term subbing last semester and my school Chromebook died while the IT support person was on vacation. I ended up borrowing another teacher's spare classroom Chromebook for a week because I struggled to find a window when the librarian who was trouble-shooting other people's problems as well could help me.

I fear gaps and stretches like these will become more common, more difficult, and more frustrating as purchasing power is effectively cut and trained teachers lost over time. Please increase the BSA by closer to \$1200 and inflation-proof the funding. Our schools are working hard to serve complex, public needs.

Most of my testimony focused on the school-level impact of BSA erosion, but I also do not understand why this Legislature is considering removing local control of charter schools to pass that responsibility up to the State Board of Education.

Best,
Lia Slemons

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Dena'inaq elnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. (Dena'ina)  
I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina. (English)  
*Translation by J. Isaak and S. Shaginoff-Stuart*

**From:** [Melissa Steritz](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Please Increase BSA  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:38:05 AM

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Dear Alaska Legislators,

Our rural schools are currently underfunded, and therefore our students are underserved. We need your help. Please increase the BSA!

Sincerely,  
Melissa Skye Steritz  
4th Grade Teacher  
Mt. Eccles Elementary School  
Cordova, AK

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Sharon Stockard](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 3:42:49 PM

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Dear Rules Committee Members:

I wish to comment on SB 140, which includes a ridiculously inadequate increase in the BSA for our schools -- \$300 instead of the much-needed \$1,403 districts are asking for. I am a parent who lives in Anchorage, and I support a quality, well-funded public school system that guarantees a future for our children and for our state.

Our workforce is dwindling, young people are leaving the state for better opportunities, and young professionals are not moving to Alaska. Continuing to underfund our public schools dashes any hope of reversing that trend.

Additionally, SB 140 diverts funds from our public system to charter schools and religious schools. I am a religious, church-going person, and I believe strongly that public funds should be spent on public education, not religious education.

If we want our young people to remain here, we need to give them hope. We should be focused on building a talented, educated workforce that can help ensure a thriving economy and positive direction for our state.

We should be creating incentives -- not obstacles -- to keep young people here and to attract young professionals to move here, put down roots and start a family. To do that, we need to offer them a well-funded, quality education for their families. If we want to attract top teachers, we must pay them competitively. We can't nickel-and-dime them if we have any hope of persuading good teachers to work here.

Most Alaskans support a well-funded, quality public school system staffed with top teachers who are paid competitively. Our children deserve a quality education system. I believe in the future of our state, and the future is a well-educated, talented workforce.

Please stop nickel-and-diming education, stop trying to divert public funds to religious purposes. Instead, fully fund our public schools. A good start would be to override the governor's short-sighted veto of the Legislature's education funding.

Sharon Stockard



Good afternoon, committee members, I sincerely appreciate that you have now sat through over 4 ½ hrs of public testimony. My name is Caroline Storm, the Executive Director of the Coalition for Education Equity. Mister chairman, at 12:58pm you said we are here for the kids, so if that's true, I trust this committee will have the integrity to take into account the overwhelming majority of articulate testimony today that's in opposition to this committee substitute, and in favor of robust educational resources for our kids.

A \$300 dollar BSA increase is woefully inadequate. The coalition supports an amount of \$1,413 to account for inflation, and to fund the Reads Act which continues to be a burdensome unfunded mandate. Yupitt School district paid \$420,000 more for fuel in 2023 than they did in 2021. LKSD is paying \$1.3 million more for insurance in 2023 than in 2021. Those costs have been paid by cutting teachers and programs. If the legislature continues to grossly underfund Public Education litigation is inevitable given that our constitution is unambiguous about the requirement for the state to provide an adequate public education system.

We strongly oppose the State Board being given the power to approve charter schools. This amendment is the epitome of overreach, which undermines local ELECTED control, and gives the power to an appointed board. This State Board could just as easily terminate any existing charters with zero accountability, and if I'm not mistaken many members of this committee have been calling for districts to be more accountable.

I believe that legislators have the duty to be stewards of the state. That means not only passing laws that protect the rights of all Alaskans and passing a balanced budget, but also ensuring that the revenue exists to pay for public services.

Please set aside this committee substitute and take up the original bill to focus on the need for robust internet access in rural Alaska school districts.

**From:** [Daniel Sullivan](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony on SB 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:29:46 AM

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I am writing in opposition to SB 104 for the following reasons: a \$300 increase to the BSA is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of my school and makes no account for inflation or rising fuel costs, not to mention all the curriculum requirements that have been imposed, such as the Alaska Reads Act. I fully support the proposed \$1430 increase. I am opposed to the state board of education charter school authorization. Authorization should be decided by local need and school boards. I oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, call for the reinstatement of either a defined benefit pension or more equitable retirement system. The "bonus" idea is both inequitable for all school employees and likely ineffective at retaining young teachers after they have served their bonus requirements. Finally, I oppose increasing the funding multiplier for homeschool correspondence programs. As a private music teacher with many home school clients who use state money for lessons, books, instruments, concerts and more, I have never once had a client concerned about lack of funds for their students. In fact, they usually tell me they have extra funds they need to burn and ask for suggestions. Our schools are our most important resource and this bill does little to help that resource survive and thrive. Thank you.

**From:** [Molly Miller](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 9:38:13 AM

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Date: January, 20, 2024  
To: House Rules Committee  
Re: Not in support of BSA

My name is Molly Taiber and I live in Petersburg, Alaska and I am writing to oppose the Base Student Allocation funds of \$300 to our public schools.

I would like to talk about increasing the need for BSA funds to \$1,413. For years we have done "more with less". Our students, school staff and our local government is in dire need of increased funding.

Our students need more programs, staff, security and support services. Not less. This is breaking the public school structure; in turn this adds to our "brain drain" of younger families, active in our workforce leaving the state.

We must take a stand against the state board of education charter school authorization. This should be left up to our local school boards.

I am in full support of fair wages for teachers and supporting a pension in place of the current defined benefit retirement plan for all public employees.

This matters to our youth, to our communities and to our future of Alaska.  
I ask for your support in increasing the SBA to \$1,413.

Sincerely,  
Molly Taiber  
Petersburg, Alaska

**From:** [Mary Jane Tenney](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** AKBSA--increase funding please!!!  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:21:50 AM

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My name is Mary Jane Tenney. I live in Juneau, AK.

I strongly support a significant increase in the Alaska Base Student allotment. Teachers shouldn't be expected to do their jobs with less and less resources including support staff. It will be increasingly hard to find good teachers willing to work under conditions that don't adequately support teachers and consequently, students. Our students are the future! I support the recommendation of the Alaska Association of School Boards of a \$1424 increase to the \$5,960 per-student amount and at minimum the \$680 increase originally included in SB 140. I do not support the effort to empower the State Board of Education to decide which charter schools best serve our widely diverse local communities. That needs to be a local school board decision.

Sincerely,  
Mary Jane Tenney

**From:** [Michael Teo](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB140 comment  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:27:07 AM

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I a writing to comment on SB140.

I feel that the bill needs to have a BSA of over \$1000 and closer to \$1500. I see the value of education in Alaska and when our State's children have quality education, funded in all dimensions, not just busing or teacher pay alone, those children will have a economically successful life. I have the privilege of working in a job that takes me to many parts of the world. When I go to countries where there is a poorly funded education system, I see more people without meaningful work as adults.

I feel that by spending a thousand or more on the BSA now saves our state from spending 10s if not 100s of thousands on children with poor education that grow into adults that are a burden on our society.

Sincerely,

Michael Teo  
Anchorage, AK

**From:** [Thompson JonEric](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB140  
**Date:** Monday, January 22, 2024 9:21:16 AM

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Hello, God bless you

The Anchorage school district is crying about not getting enough money, because the enrollment is down, 20% or so, and that goes along with the birth rate being down 20% or so as well. The Anchorage school district, if it were run by intelligent people, would have taken into account that they are mostly supported by Planned Parenthood, and those that are support the lessening of the population. Did they think that the district would not be negatively impacted by this that they fully support. I say let them taste the consequences of their own beliefs. Why should everyone have to suffer and pay for their bad choices. If they support abortion, the death of children, children who they would've otherwise been educating and receiving the funds for, then they are the ones to blame for this deficit. Not the taxpayers, or the Alaskan government. Abortion has its consequences, and this is one of them. Those who support abortion, the intelligent ones who govern our school district, need to come up with another solution. And shouldn't they be rejoicing, that the efforts of Planned Parenthood, to decrease the "surplus" population has succeeded? They should've planned a lot better than they did. And they should remember the old catch phrase, " Be careful with what you ask for, it might come back to haunt you"!

I reject the idea that the Anchorage school district needs the kind of cash increases that they are asking for, and I ask you to reject it also. They did this to themselves.

Thank you

Jon Eric Thompson +

**From:** [Todd, Kathleen](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Substitute for Senate Bill 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:21:23 PM

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Kathy Todd, member of the Valdez City School Board for 15 years but speaking for myself. In the interest of brevity I have chosen a few points about the bill to comment on. A school for the deaf as an option is important - it is important to have a language and to have adults and peers that can interact with you in that language for intellectual as well as social development. Individual kids in far flung schools won't have that, no matter how much money we pour into training aides and parents. I would love to share more details from my hearing daughter's experiences as an ASL interpreter in the Hawaiian schools, a state with just as much flying ( but with better weather to do it in) with any of you who are doubting that providing this option to parents is a good idea.

State authorized charter schools are a bad idea. The point I'd like to make is about choice. Charter schools are purported to offer "choice", but in districts our size they will do the opposite. We have two or three classrooms per elementary grade and parents sometimes choose one teacher over another - this choice will be less if 1/3 of the students are in a separate system. There might also be insufficient students for two foreign languages at the high school, football and cross country and swimming, NYO and track, choir and band, shop and culinary arts. Simplistically, for the sake of the math, perhaps the charter school would only take a few students from each grade so that we would have only 40 students at a grade level instead of 45. We would still need two teachers (and to heat the school,etc.) but would have 5 fewer BSA allotments at each grade level, requiring something else to give, lessening choice for all the public school students. These trade offs might be worth it, in some situations. My point is, don't assume that charter schools always improve choice.

Which brings us to local control. There is no way that someone who may never have even been to a specific sized community, let alone a specific place, let alone have lived there for years can possibly do as well as a local school board in knowing what will work with the local resources and community desires. Local control is essential in making schools work, especially in Alaska where things are so varied from place to place.

Put the money in the BSA and let the boards decide how best to use it. Put it in the BSA instead of in one year allotments so they can plan long term. Do things from Juneau that require a large group to work together (like retirement plans and deaf schools) but leave the rest to the local boards.

And last, but most important, we need more money. I was on the board the last time that there was a long lag in raising the BSA. What we had to do wasn't pretty. If you look at Valdez reserves right now you might say "you folks have plenty of money". We do. But the reason we do is that we have had multiple unfilled positions for several years, partially due to low salaries. We also have lots of new teachers who are "cheaper" than the veterans that we used to be able to retain. We are in the process of revising our classified salary schedule to be able to get paras and office personnel and dietary workers. They are going to other, higher paying jobs or can't come to Valdez in the first place because they can't afford to live here. When our teacher contracts come up next year we must raise our salaries to be competitive and avoid inflation cutting so far into their buying power. We will be in a world of hurt, just like every other district in the state when we actually fill our positions. The special extra allotments to

teachers, dictated from Juneau, are more money but would complicate our process of compensating employees adequately and equitably. Instruction in the classroom requires a team, and local boards can see how to make that instruction happen. Please raise the BSA and look carefully at other parts of this bill to strengthen local control of that money for the benefit of all Alaskan students.

Thank you for your attention.

Kathy Todd 907-831-0787



**From:** [Margaret Tyler](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** School Funding  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:03:41 AM

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It is incumbent upon this legislature to look forward and ensure our state's future by funding public education to a level that meets and exceeds inflation, encourages talented teachers to work here, and provides the support to operate and maintain school facilities.

The politicalization of public education by the governor is shameful and disgraceful. Please override his short-sighted game with our state's future.

Sincerely,  
Margaret Tyler  
West Anchorage High School class of 1984

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [kvaree1@icloud.com](mailto:kvaree1@icloud.com)  
**To:** [Rep. Craig Johnson](#)  
**Subject:** Education Funding  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:10:31 AM

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Dear Representative,

I am writing regarding the need to raise state education funding. I am a retired Anchorage teacher who spent 39 years of my 46-year career in Anchorage schools. I am also substitute teaching in ASD. The state of education in Anchorage and state-wide is dire and the legislation proposed by Republicans will be like putting a band-aid on an arterial rupture. In other words, not nearly enough.

First, the proposed \$77B raise in the BSA is far short of the \$350B needed to help schools make up for funding shortfalls since 2017. Anchorage alone is running a \$98M deficit that will mean cutting teaching staff and much larger classroom numbers resulting in overstressed teachers and poorer education outcomes. In addition, it will drive current teachers to seek employment elsewhere and deter the hiring of new teachers.

While I favor the funding of increased internet speeds, the proposed bonus money for teachers is one-time money, totally dependent on the legislature and the governor for continuation. This is a deterrent to candidates considering a position here as there is no guarantee that that money will be there in the future. Salaries need to be bargained in school districts through collective bargaining.

I favor support for home-schooling, but I believe it must be tied to accountability. I have encountered many home-schooled students in my career who were well educated. Unfortunately, I have also encountered many more who were not. Teaching is a full-time job and those families that choose to undertake it, do so at great sacrifice, often without understanding the needs of the job. If schools were properly funded, I believe that fewer parents would opt to educate their students at home.

As for the charter school proposal, this is nothing more than the Governor's desire to gain more direct state control over the charter school process, which does not need fixing. Michigan is a good example of what happens when the state takes over the charter process with little oversight and lax regulation, resulting in the enriching of the school administrators at the expense of the teachers and students and the ultimate closing of the schools. I believe this is the Governor's goal here. The current system is working fine. Leave it alone.

The fact that Republicans have chosen to fast-track this bill through the House Rules Committee is a cynical ploy to bypass any relevant discussion of the proposals in the bill and avoid the scrutiny that this bill so richly deserves.

Alaska is hemorrhaging teachers and young people from the state at a steady pace that shows no sign of abating. Those currently employed are leaving because of low salaries, a lousy retirement system, and deteriorating support for schools and the university system. Young people with families are not considering Alaska as a potential home for the same reasons. Creator class, well-educated people are avoiding Alaska because of the lack of

funding support for the basic institutions that support growing families and a growing economy.

You, as a legislator have a constitutional obligation to fund a fully functioning education system in this state. I have seen what that looks in my career in Alaska. What you are currently presiding over is the demise of that system and ultimately, I believe, the demise of the state's economy as we become nothing more than a tourism colony.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the state.

Kenneth Varee

**Ken Varee**

**kvaree1@icloud.com**

**From:** [JV](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#); [Dmtbishop@gmail.com](mailto:Dmtbishop@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Thank you from remote Alaska Shishmaref  
**Date:** Monday, January 22, 2024 6:51:29 AM  
**Attachments:** [Jinsu PSAT 2023 9th grade.pdf](#)

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Thank you for passing Bill 140 and for listening to my testimony even though I was nervous and we had a bad phone connection (GCI is horrible)

I am a homeschool parent but also a licensed teacher who has been teaching in remote Alaska for +10 years. **The union should be ashamed at how overtly they are trying to demonize school choice and correspondence schools.** Why would anyone be against school choice? **My son who just entered 9th grade just scored the 99th percentile on his PSAT and just finished Alg 2.** This would not have been possible without being able to use correspondence schools. Do you have any idea how hard it was being a single mom, conservative teacher, and homeschool parent in remote Alaska? Yet, we persevered and my son has become successful with many sacrifices.

**We have been treated horribly and discriminated against by admin in remote Alaska because we homeschool, but this is another subject.**

If you need anyone to help expand the correspondence school programs into remote communities once the bill completely passes, please consider me. I currently do not have a job. According to most admins, I am a horrible teacher, because I constantly ask for change and school choice while they try to force my children into the current failing system.

I live in Shishmaref with my fiancé (who is native and the church music minister.) My 7th-grade son is the church pianist with him. My son was able to learn music through homeschooling.

Yours sincerely,  
Jessica

**From:** [Tania Vincent](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:39:31 AM

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I will be working at 10:00 and cannot testify about SB 140 in person.

For anyone wondering why we are losing our working age population in Alaska, the answer is right here: underfunding of education—primary, secondary, and at the college level. My husband and I came to Anchorage for work in 2000. We stayed and started a family here—I was so impressed by our public schools in those days. There were choices in the type of education my children could receive, there was funding for music, art, and language. I knew my kids would grow up advantaged, and they did. Until 2016, when cuts were starting to be made as my youngest entered high school. My oldest saw the way the wind was blowing and left the state for college. She wanted to come back to Alaska for graduate school at UAF but the program she was interested in was gutted by cuts so she got a Master's at University of Hawaii and is seeking a Ph.D. in Canada, ironically to document and preserve Alaska indigenous languages. My youngest left to go to college too. She misses Alaska, but I'm not sure she could find the kind of work she wants to do if she came back. I wanted my children to stay in Alaska and start families here too, but now I'm not so sure that's possible. Public Education is the foundation of our democratic ideals (ask Thomas Jefferson), but it also makes good business sense if you want to attract people to work in your state and keep working age people in your state; it is an unparalleled economic investment.

Sincerely,

Tania Vincent

Anchorage resident

Product of and user of public education

**From:** [Melanie Wahl](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:38:17 PM

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Hello,

I moved to Alaska in 2001, bought a house in 2009, and have been raising my family here since my husband and I were married in 2010. My husband and I own and run a small consulting business here helping natural gas companies bring much-needed energy to our community and the construction of major infrastructure projects like the Port of Alaska Modernization Program. We are committed to Alaska.

My wife and I adopted our two daughters from China, and they are both in the Chinese Immersion Program at Scenic Park Elementary and Begich Middle School. It is hard to overstate how meaningful this program is to them, their identity and self-worth, and their future employment prospects.

We are concerned about the funding levels of our public schools. Alaska is losing its appeal to those who, like me, wanted to move to Alaska and put down roots. Working-age Alaskans are leaving the state for better opportunities and a better quality of life. The quality of public schools and the programs offered are a major factor when choosing where to raise a family. We've seen dozens of friends, professionals in their fields, leave the state for better school options. We know doctors, federal prosecutors, and business owners who moved to or stayed in Alaska *because of* the myriad of school options the Anchorage School District has to offer.

If something doesn't change in Alaska, we will need to look elsewhere for better education opportunities for our young children.

Please make funding public schools a priority with the below items at the top of your list:

- 1) Support increasing education funding to track inflation.
- 2) Pass Senate bill 140 with the full (\$1413) BSA increase. This increase, while substantial, does not match inflation, and more will need to be inflation-proofed in the future. I also support stripping the other items of this bill and addressing them with the full attention they need in another bill.
- 3) Support and advocate to keep Language immersion programs running indefinitely

Thank you for your time,

Melanie Wahl

**From:** [Peggy and Alex](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Public Testimony SB140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 1:33:23 PM

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB140. My name is Alex Wertheimer. I have been living in Alaska for over 50 years and in Juneau for over 40 years. My children attended public schools K-12 in Juneau and received an excellent education. They were well prepared for and prospered in their further education at the University level. My oldest grandchild has now started in public school in Juneau. I am concerned that my grandchildren will not be provided the same level of education excellence that my kids had. The flat level of funding for the BSA for years has allowed inflation to slowly strangle our public schools. We are approaching a crisis situation, with the prospect of exploding class sizes, loss of teachers and support staff, and school closures. SB140 does propose increasing the BSA, but a \$300 increase is woefully inadequate. Last session this bill proposed a \$680 increase, still far short of the approximately \$1,400 increase the Alaska Council of School Administrators has identified as necessary to compensate for the inflationary impact on school funding. I urge that the amount of the BSA increase be at least restored to the \$680 level previously in the bill, and preferably increased by \$1400.

On the subject of charter schools, I very much support charter schools as an integral part of the public schools. However, I am very much opposed to taking control away from local school boards to manage the structure of the schools in their district. Much has been said about parental input and participation in our children's education. This happens at the local level. Having the state dictate the charter school structure in a district could be extremely disruptive to the operation and management of schools by the locally elected School Boards.

**From:** [John Whissel](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 10:48:03 AM

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Hello,

I am the parent of an elementary school student in Cordova, AK. I support SB 140.

Thank you!



**From:** [Bridget Wittstock](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140 comments  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 12:09:44 PM

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My name is Bridget Ann Dahl Wittstock  
I am a resident of Petersburg.

Please support a permanent \$1,413 increase to BSA.

Please please be against state board of education charter school authorization - should be up to local school boards

Please oppose cash bonuses for teachers and instead, reinstate either pension or more equitable retirement system.

Please add to the needs of students rather than taking away programs, resources and staff.

Sincerely  
Bridget Wittstock

**From:** [John Zimmerman](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140 Public Comment  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 11:38:10 AM

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Hello,

Thank you for your tireless service to our state and your consideration of SB 140.

I'm writing in support of avenues that allow for Publicly Funded Charter Schools to be created, operated and sustained with minimal interference from local school districts. My children were students in Family Partnership Charter School for more than a decade and I can testify to the outstanding educational outcomes of my own students and those of many friends. This was the best school in the Anchorage School District by nearly every metric: achievement, test scores, attendance, fiscal responsibility, flexibility and outcome satisfaction. Sadly, a former administrator took the school down a bad path against the wishes of the Academic Policy Committee. This caused the Anchorage School District to seize an opportunity to steal millions of dollars of designated student funding to plug a small portion of their budget shortfall by closing the school. The Anchorage School Board conveniently blamed the FPCS board of "dysfunction" which ironically appears on the surface very similar to ASD's own level of board dysfunction. In less than a year since the Anchorage School District dissolved the charter and made it their own correspondence school, FPCS has become a shell of its former greatness and by many metrics is struggling. District oversight failed in every imaginable way and ruined a nationally ranked charter school.

There are detractors that make outrageous and uninformed claims against charter schools about money going to schools prohibited by the Alaska Constitution (but allowed by Alaska Statute) and all of that leads back to one person who unilaterally made decisions against the votes of the APC, can be witnessed attacking board members during meeting, and conducted other questionable business practices. Those very real concerns remained unresolved with moment-by-moment oversight from ASD, and the problems only intensified and became more untenable as a result of ASD intervention as ASD actively blocked the APC from taking the hard actions that were necessary to bring the school back into conformity with regulations.

Many of the other charter schools in ASD are for language immersion and also produce some of the best student outcomes in the district. When the ASD Superintendent speaks of closing those schools as a cost saving measure, he shows he is completely out of touch with the needs of students who want academic achievement and he shows his attempt to "force" students back to conventional neighborhood schools so he may receive 100% of their Base Student Allocation rather than the 4% that a charter school remits to the district. He is wrong in his assessment. Many of those students will not migrate to neighborhood schools where the student outcomes are arguably some of the worst in the nation and among the most costly. How can any of this possibly be about finding the best outcomes for students?

Raising the Base Student Allocation is needed in many cases, but so is accountability for districts like ASD which is rife with wasteful allocation of funds that do not in any measurable way improve student outcomes. Any part of the Inlet View Elementary saga shows ASD's astounding wastefulness. Please include language to regularly audit every district (not just randomly) and focus on improving learning and achievement while allowing the ability for charter schools to tailor education to meet the unique needs of students on an individual level

without the conflicted and compromised relationship of local school districts with charter schools. I hope partisan boundaries can be put down and you can come together for the ultimate good of students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Zimmerman  
PO Box 190427  
Anchorage, AK 99519  
907-250-1566  
[jlzim1@gmail.com](mailto:jlzim1@gmail.com)

## **Comments to House Rules Committee, January 20, 2024**

### **Mike Bronson, NAACP**

Please pass SB 140 out of committee with a big bump in school funding. Here's why:

For the Legislature to meet its constitutional duty for schools, we believe that it has to raise reading and math proficiency by one grade level on average for the state's 127,000 kindergarten to twelfth grade students. As you may know, Alaska students are behind the rest of the U.S. by a full grade level.

Actually, our students start off even further behind. Nevertheless, they manage to close the gap somewhat by junior high school.

In reading, for example, about 2,000 out of Alaska's 10,000 third graders can meet the state's reading standard. By eighth grade, almost 4,000 can meet the standard, but a majority still don't meet it by then, and they never do.

For a student to catch up and keep up takes a huge effort. First, they have to make up for being behind. In that same year, they also have to learn their grade level's regular curriculum too.

That kind of super-charged learning takes super-charged instruction which will require applying three new things statewide:

First, the right curriculum and techniques from teachers.

Secondly, homeroom class sizes of about 15 students in kindergarten to third grade, and 25 students in higher grades' core classes.

Third, expert tutoring in small groups for the thousands of kids needing to catch up.

The Legislature itself can do three things:

First, make it clear that the Legislature's aim is to gain a grade level on average. You should aim for a big majority of kids to meet state standards.

Secondly, hold schools accountable for those big academic gains and soon.

Lastly, pay for your expectations and mandates to reach the level of school adequacy that the constitution requires from you. For example, the recommendations by the Picus expert that Dr. Bishop cited today had pointed to thousands of new teachers as needed for instructional gains.

**From:** [deanne51@aol.com](mailto:deanne51@aol.com)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB140 testimony for public record  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 6:47:45 PM

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Please include the following testimony in the record for the January 20, 2024 hearing on SB140 on education funding.

I am a graduate of Chugiak High School, a graduate of UAA, and the aunt and great-aunt to over a dozen students who have graduated or are in schools in Alaska. I volunteered at Northwood ABC Elementary for 6 years and was president of their PTA. I have a good understanding of the needs of students and school staff.

I read with despair the news of our shrinking workforce and see a direct link to the lack of investment in our schools and our youth. Increasing the Base Student Allocation to \$680 (a huge compromise from the needed \$1200, as advocated by supporters of Alaskan education) is an essential step.

I urge the Legislature to approve the \$680 BSA and remove the additions added by the Rules Committee, in particular allowing the governor-appointed State Board to authorize charter schools, bypassing local boards and the governor's proposed teacher bonus. Increased BSA is a much more effective incentive for teachers.

Thank you for this hearing.  
Sincerely,  
Deanne L. Adams, Chugiak  
[Deanne51@aol.com](mailto:Deanne51@aol.com)



# Anchorage School District

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## Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • [www.asdk12.org](http://www.asdk12.org)

January 19, 2024

Representative Craig Johnson, House Rules Committee Chair  
State Capitol Room 216  
Juneau AK, 99801

Anchorage School District  
Dr. Jharrett Bryantt and School Board President Margo Bellamy  
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.  
Anchorage, AK 99504

Dear Representative Johnson and House Rules Committee Members,

We write this letter with urgency and for your thoughtful consideration concerning the House Rules Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 140. As leaders of the Anchorage School District (ASD), the largest and most diverse school district in Alaska, we have undertaken a review of the latest proposal from the Committee. We appreciate the Committee bringing forward the issue of education funding so early in the session. Any efforts made to finalize the education budget early in the legislative session are tremendously appreciated and will help the District avoid sending layoff notices to educators and staff by the statutory deadlines in May.

While the original intent of the bill focused on increasing internet speed in schools, a concept ASD fully supports, our comments will focus largely on the following: **the BSA increase, charter school provisions, transportation funding, teacher bonuses, and changing the funding formula for correspondence schools.**

Certain provisions of the bill have merit, while others are concerning. Our detailed thoughts on the Committee substitute, version 33-LS0687\U, are as follows.

ASD faces a \$98 million structural deficit for FY25. A combination of inflationary pressures without a corresponding permanent increase in funding has resulted in this daunting situation. To close this deficit, ASD is faced with draining its emergency reserves and implementing significant cuts to programs, services, and staff – choices that will all impact student outcomes and undercut our current efforts to transform the District through initiatives such as the Academies of Anchorage and implementation of the Alaska Reads Act.

ASD appreciates the House Majority recognizing the need for a permanent BSA increase. However, the \$300 permanent BSA increase contained in this version of the bill will actually provide the District fewer funds than received in FY24 following Governor Dunleavy's budget veto of one-time education funding. Since 2016, inflation in Anchorage has risen nearly 27%, while the BSA has risen just 0.5%. This imbalance is eroding public education across our state. ASD is advocating for a permanent BSA increase of \$1,413, for a total of \$7,373, and to inflation-proof the BSA going forward.

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*Educating All Students for Success in Life*

**Anchorage School Board** Margo Bellamy, President  
Carl Jacobs, Vice President Kelly Lessens, Treasurer  
Dora Wilson, Clerk Dave Donley

Pat Higgins  
Andy Holleman

**Superintendent** Dr. Jharrett Bryantt

Considering the increase to pupil transportation, ASD supports this. However, the \$50 increase in transportation funding only covers approximately 25% of our \$8.5 million transportation deficit. ASD took significant steps to address a bus driver shortage at the beginning of last school year by increasing wages and offering year-round work to employees. Addressing this problem came at a cost, and as such, ASD supports a transportation funding increase of at least \$209 per pupil to \$690 per pupil for FY25.

One of the most concerning and problematic portions of the bill deals with charter schools. To be clear, ASD supports and welcomes charter schools. Our district has a thriving community of charter, alternative, and optional schools offering a wide array of educational choices to the community. ASD has a clearly defined vetting process for charter schools that ensures they are successful from the start. We adamantly oppose the new section giving the State Board of Education the ability to authorize charter schools within a district. This state overreach would undermine local control of school districts, a principle backed by state statute.

Looking at the proposed change to correspondence funding, it's important to reiterate ASD's core mission, which is to educate all students for success in life. Singling out funding for a small portion of students diminishes our ability to provide adequate education for all students. While an important choice, correspondence schools serve a specific population within our district. Correspondence schools don't have the additional costs of maintaining buildings or providing transportation like traditional neighborhood schools. Under this proposed bill, correspondence schools would receive almost as much funding per pupil as ASD receives for our largest comprehensive high schools. Therefore, ASD supports a permanent BSA increase that supports all students.

Lastly, we have reflected on the incorporation of the teacher retention bonus proposal. While ASD greatly supports our teachers, and just approved the largest one-year wage and benefits increase for educators in over a decade, we have concerns with the underlying intent of this idea. ASD strongly supports recruiting and retaining educators. However, with a price tag of nearly \$60 million a year, this proposal leaves out all other staff - including paraprofessionals - who are vital to the success of our students. ASD believes these funds should be applied to a larger, permanent BSA increase to enable districts to make targeted investments tailored to their specific needs.

ASD will continue to analyze the remaining portions of the bill as the session progresses. At this time we wanted to share our foremost concerns regarding the BSA increase, charter schools, transportation funding, teacher bonuses, and changing the funding formula for correspondence schools.

We recognize the state's fiscal situation and know how difficult it is to balance competing interests when resources are strained. Without your support we cannot deliver the world class education we all want for our students. Our students are Alaska's most valuable resource. They are our future leaders, business owners, and public servants and deserve a commitment from us to safeguard their education to ensure Alaska thrives for decades to come.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jharrett Bryant  
Superintendent, Anchorage School District  
Board



Margo Bellamy  
President, Anchorage School

**From:** [b farris](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB 140 testimony  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 9:07:54 PM

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I am writing today regarding SB 140. This bill increases the Base Student Allocation for education by a modest \$300/student; school districts have asked for a \$1403/student increase to account for inflation and increased costs.

We cannot continue to underfund public education in Alaska and meet our constitutional obligation to provide a quality education to our students.

This bill could also potentially expand charter schools in a way that undermines local control, and could also divert public education funds to religious charter schools.

We need a larger increase of the BSA in order to fund our schools fully and to provide Alaska's students with quality education.

Barbara Farris  
Constituent from Anchorage, Alaska



**From:** [Melissa Burnett](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Cc:** [Brandy Harty](#); [Carmella Richardson](#); [Lon Garrison](#); [Luke Meinert](#)  
**Subject:** SB140  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 10:20:14 PM

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Hello legislators,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of advocating for an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1413, a measure rooted in the Alaska Urban Consumer Price Index (CPU) data.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Senate Bill 140 addresses the need for additional funding in education. However, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that a mere \$300 increase to the BSA may fall short of addressing the comprehensive needs of our educational system. The continuous neglect and under investment in our public schools must end, for the benefit of our students, families, and communities.

Also, this bill includes lump sum payments directly to teachers. Lump sum payments to teachers are not a substitute for pensions and do not support other staff who are critical to school operations. To attract and retain quality teachers, a competitive retirement program is needed that includes both defined benefits and defined contributions.

Our educators play a pivotal role in shaping the future, and while the focus often centers on teachers, it's equally vital to ensure that support staff receive the necessary support. A robust educational system relies on the collaboration and dedication of both teachers and support staff. Neglecting the latter can have detrimental effects on the overall quality of education. By advocating for a \$1413 increase in the BSA, we are not merely addressing a numerical figure; we are investing in the future of our students, teachers, and support staff.

This financial boost is indispensable for maintaining competitive salaries, fostering a positive working environment, and ultimately elevating the standard of education in our district. I urge you to consider the long-term impact of this decision and champion the cause for an increase that truly reflects the needs of our educational institutions.

A significant investment in Alaska's school system is needed now. Our district is facing a budget deficit of \$28 million and as a result we are looking at not only increasing class sizes but closing schools. These drastic measures are a disservice to our students' education and postsecondary success. Let us work together to ensure that our schools receive the support necessary to thrive and continue providing quality education to our students. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your unwavering commitment to the betterment of our educational system.

--

*Melissa Burnett*

*Board of Education*

*Fairbanks North Star Borough School District*

*907-699-7034*

*[melissa.burnett@k12northstar.org](mailto:melissa.burnett@k12northstar.org)*

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" - Ghandi

**PLEASE NOTE:** Written communication with public officials generally are considered a public record and subject to disclosure (viewing and/or copying of the communication) pursuant to a public records request.

**From:** [Dave Garcia](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** BSA  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 8:50:13 PM

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If your not going to invest in our students now you might as well invest in the prison later. On average if you fail to support our students it will cost approximately \$37,000,000 if a student has 4 or more ACES in their life.

We need to invest in our children and families to teach them to be more productive citizens rather than to depend on state handouts later in life.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Please support our BSA!!

--

David Garcia, FME Counselor

**From:** [Marnie Graham](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Support our future! Fund schools!  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 9:26:57 PM

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A governor that runs on a platform as an education governor should be ashamed at his lack of support for public schools. We need to fund public schools and raise the base student allocation for school funding! Give me a school tax if that's what is necessary. When we don't fund our schools, what message do we send our kids? That we don't care about them or their future. Or the future of Alaska. We hear all the ways legislators support industry like mining and oil and gas, but we can't support our kids?! I have watched the steady erosion of our public schools for the last 15 years, as more funds pore away from public education to homeschooling, leaving public schools with no funding or community support to educate those children who need public education the most. If people want religious schools, they should be private and they can pay for it themselves!

Public funds have no place supporting religious schools or programs. I've watched homeschooling families want the benefit of public funds and freedom to teach kids at home and not have to get out of bed in the morning to feed them and put them on a bus, but then want the local public school to allow them to participate in sports and extra curricular activities. You can't have it both ways! If you want to participate in the benefits of public schools, then put your kid in public school! If you live 30 minutes from Anchorage or the Mat-Su, you live in Alaska! And guess what, the schools in real Alaska don't have local taxes and benefits contributing additional funding to schools, non profits building fancy sport centers, etc. In real Alaska, we can't afford teachers and staff to meet the basic needs. We can't afford busses, fuel to heat buildings, classroom supplies.

If you won't change the formula or provide an increase, then please look into the revolving door of superintendents in each little school that get bought out of contracts. Why do we need a business officer and superintendent for every small school district. Let's combine resources. Why can't the state take on school payroll? Let's find solutions to reduce overhead.

Most of all, let's send a clear message to our youth that we want to invest in their future! That we care about them. That their future is Alaska's future!

Sincerely,  
Marnie Graham  
Copper Center

**From:** [Dianne Holmes](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** SB140 testimony for public record  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 6:17:39 PM

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While the original bill was about internet service to schools (which IS needed), I've learned more items have been added to the bill and that is confusing to residents.

Above all the BSA needs to be MUCH more than what some are proposin Nothing less than \$1,000 per student increase will do the job that is needed to make up for inadequate funding over past years.

A teacher retention bonus is worthless if teachers still have 30 kids in their class. Money can't make up for the critical need to lower class size and all of you must surely be aware that (class) SIZE MATTERS when it comes to education.

Don't beat around the bush--increase the BSA to \$1K and be prepared to override any veto quickly. If you care about AK's future you must start with education.

Dianne Holmes

**From:** [Nicole kimball](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Increase BSA  
**Date:** Saturday, January 20, 2024 8:50:22 AM

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Please increase the BSA by more than \$300. Please increase by \$600 to even start to keep up with inflation and support public schools that are the foundation for why many working age people will or won't come to Alaska.

If you want people to stay here (or move here) and are concerned with not having enough people to keep Alaska's economy moving, please consider the well researched connection between public schools and people's desire to stay in a community. It is one of the most important things to keep families in this state.

We clearly do have the funding, you just need to spend it in ways that are not short sighted. A big PFD does not get working age, skilled people to live here. It's good schools, jobs, infrastructure, livable communities. Thank you.

Nicole Kimball  
Anchorage

## Testimony

### Re: SB 140

Taylor Sheaffer Beard  
9179 Glacierwood Drive  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

There exists a simple maxim: Behave as you expect your children to behave. Straightforward. Yet, we, the state of Alaska, consistently show them their education is not a priority. My children will be fine. I'm intelligent, innovative and driven to ensure they have a rich, well-rounded education. But I'm not just concerned for *my* children. John Donne eloquently states: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee."

This suggests what I strongly believe: that we are all infinitely connected, impacting one another directly or indirectly. The children affected by your choice will someday have volition capable of influencing the lives of others. They *need* the best tools to make sound, informed decisions. I keep hearing the word "hope" regarding them, and while everyone has it, at the end of the day, it's hyperbole and not a plan.

This administration prioritizes public safety, understandably. And yet, there is substantial evidence correlating poor education and the propensity to commit both petty and violent crime. Imagine you're adrift in the ocean; you've run out of drinking water, and your thirst is beyond words. Continuing to underfund education in favor of public safety is akin to drinking salt water to quench that thirst rather than collecting rainwater. Sure, it briefly provides instant relief...while magnifying the issue. Funding good education has lasting ramifications, creating contributing members of society who are less likely to resort to crime or rely on public assistance. Funding good education, at its base, funds public safety.

Further, we exist in an arena of consequences, and I promise you that whether you vote to fund education or not, your choice will come back to you; you *will* feel it. In the annals of history, how will you be remembered? As someone who enacted real change, rectifying public education *and* public safety, or as someone who allowed our youth to wallow in mediocrity, exacerbating the issues we currently struggle to resolve? The choice is yours.

**From:** [Melissa Wechter](#)  
**To:** [House Rules](#)  
**Subject:** Fund Education!  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 9:59:11 PM

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- Funding Alaska's public school system is a Constitutional duty. The far majority of students in Alaska attend public schools.
- The continuous neglect and under-investment in our public schools must end for the benefit of our students, families, and communities.
- A BSA increase of **\$1,413** is necessary to keep pace with inflation and ensure that all students have access to quality education, resources, and opportunities that they rightfully deserve under our state constitution.
- Lump sum payments to teachers are not a substitute for pensions and do not support other staff critical to school operations. To attract and retain quality teachers, a competitive retirement program that includes both defined benefits and defined contributions is needed.
- A significant investment in Alaska's school system is needed NOW. Our district is facing a budget deficit of \$9.5 and, as a result, will have to cut programs and increase the student to teacher ratio.
- Without properly funding education Alaska will continue to lose young working families to seek better job and educational opportunities in the lower 48.

Thank you,  
Melissa

Juneau Resident and Educator  
Mom of two small children



January 19th, 2024

Greetings Members of the committee,

My name is Rick Dormer. I serve as principal of Ketchikan High School, as well as President of the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 140 to ensure greater broadband access for all students of Alaska. While I strongly support increasing the BAG grant broadband speeds from 25 Mbps to 100 Mbps, a major equity issue amongst the children of our state, this committee substitute bill for SB 140 has become too much of a Frankenstein's monster of legislation to adequately support public education; I do not support SB 140 as it is written.

Adequate funding for Alaska's public school system is crucial, as well as a Constitutional duty, to support quality education for every student, the majority of which attend public schools. The continuous under-investment in our public schools must end now to prevent further degradation of our education system, including the availability of effective staff, experienced administrators, and safe school buildings.

Just this last week, one of the top administrators in Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District announced they are leaving Alaska for a job in Washington State. With many Districts posting teaching and administrative positions now, we are seeing fewer and fewer quality applicants that want to work and live in Alaska. This downward trend is much worse in smaller, more rural Districts. Lump sum payments to teachers are not a substitute for pensions and do not support other staff critical to school operations. To attract and retain quality education staff, a competitive retirement program that includes both defined benefits and defined contributions is needed.

Recognizing that effective teachers and administrators that have built positive relationships with their students are the top two indicators of student success in schools, the lack of quality applicants for school positions is detrimental to our Alaskan schools.

A significant investment in Alaska's school system is needed NOW.

Thank you for serving the youth of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Rick Dormer