



Dear Members of the Alaska State House,

We are writing in united opposition to the House Rules Committee Substitute for the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 140 (HCS CS SB 140).

First, we are supportive and committed to the original and underlying legislation in SB 140, increasing the Broadband Assistance Grants (BAG) from 25 Mbps to 100 Mbps. This commonsense and basic investment is critical to our student's success all around the state, especially in rural/remote Alaska.

However, we are adamantly and uniformly opposed to the following components of SB 140 as currently proposed.

Inadequate investment in students: Last year's bipartisan agreement on a one-timing funding increase of \$680 seemed to represent an inadequate but modest compromise position. Since then we have experienced another year of inflation and have heard from districts around the state about astronomical increases in the cost of energy, health care, and insurance. Simply put, a \$300 increase to the BSA is unacceptable. We urge members to support an amendment to substantially increase this investment.

Charter schools: The provision to allow the State Board of Education to approve charter schools strikes at the heart of the long-cherished Alaska value of local control. It is a betrayal of the conservative principle that government governs best when closest to the people. This is a disruption of the policy framework that has enabled Alaska's charter schools to earn their high ranking.

Lump sum payments to teachers: There are Constitutional concerns regarding the equal protection clause and the legality of this proposal given the existence of local negotiated agreements. The Governor's Task Force on Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force was clear that what educators need is adequate salaries and a decent retirement system that doesn't risk destitution for career employees. In addition to these concerns, this proposal does nothing to support the many educators supporting students in our schools beyond classroom teachers.

District audits: This is a redundant use of resources as school districts all undergo an outside audit annually. This redundancy creates an unfunded mandate and works against the often touted policy stance of “money for the classroom.”

We are opposed to this legislation as currently drafted and urge members to support amendments on the House floor to increase the BSA, remove the charter school sections, and reconsider the lump sum payments to include all educators.

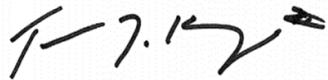
Please reach out to any of us with questions. Thank you for your consideration.



Lon D. Garrison
Executive Director, AASB



Dr. Lisa S. Parady
Executive Director, ACSA



Tom Klaameyer
President, NEA-Alaska