

Good Morning Members of the State Affairs Committee,

I am writing in support of HB224 and asking that the committee do what they can to consider the bill and move that along for consideration by other committees and the full legislature's consideration. This bill, which would allow the rehire of retired teachers and administrators is a tool that is much needed to address the challenges we have in Alaska to fill positions in our most remote, and even our largest urban districts.

As someone who has worked in Alaskan schools for more than 30 years and been responsible for hiring staff in Kodiak, Bristol Bay, and Craig for the past 23 years, I can tell you that this task is becoming more difficult and we are being forced to make compromises and decisions that are not always in the best interests of students, a school, or a community. Across the state this year, as in others, schools opened with vacant positions and often those positions were in areas like special education where the needs are great and the services performed by qualified individuals is required by both state and federal law.

In Craig we were forced to hire one teacher for a special ed position this year after securing an emergency waiver and certificate. Don't misunderstand me, we found a talented, veteran teacher but he had no training in special education and will pick that up on the job and through a university program he began this summer. This is a far cry from what I had hoped we could do for the students in our high school.

I appreciate all that you are doing this session to help support the students, families, schools, and communities of Alaska. I understand we have significant challenges as a state in a variety of areas, not just education. I know you are being careful and intentional in what you do I think the same is true for school districts.

Our state constitution requires that we provide support for a quality education system to serve our young people. This investment is essential to the future of the state and every community within the state. This is not a new issue or concern. We have addressed this in the past with bills that have long since sunset, and still the need continues. I hope you will consider this in committee and move it forward for others' consideration and discussion. Thank you for your time and all the good things you do for all Alaskans. Respectfully, Jack Walsh

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