

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 339:

Public school funding is roughly \$25 million less than it was in 2015, according to Alaska's non-partisan Legislative Finance Division. If you consider the effects of inflation, the loss is even greater – more than \$90 million.

In Anchorage, 394 teachers and support staff have been cut mostly due to funding shortages in the last five years. Last year, the Mat-Su School District lost almost 90 teachers and other staff, and in Juneau, the district has cut 92 full-time positions since 2011, and more are on the chopping block. This impacts student opportunity and achievement. A student can't do the 6th grade over again later, when school funding eventually gets fixed.

This bill would mitigate this funding crisis by increasing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by a modest \$100. It would generate roughly \$25 million for districts statewide, which is roughly equal to the amount lost since 2015.

School funding cuts are resulting in increased classroom sizes, reduced course offerings and less support for teachers and students. These cuts are demoralizing educators and parents to the point where many are leaving the state. We must not shortchange our youth and deprive them of opportunities the need to succeed.

Many educators, students and parents from across the state support this modest but critical BSA increase.