



March 7, 2018

Chair Stevens and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Mary Wegner, and I am the superintendent of the Sitka School District. I am testifying today in support of SB 185, Reemployment of Retired Teachers & Admin.

Thank you for your support of public education in Alaska, and thank you for putting forward this bill to support student learning throughout the state.

As of December 2017, there were 153 open teaching positions in the state of Alaska, and we desperately need qualified teachers to fill the vacancies. We used to have the option of hiring retired teachers and administrators; however, in 2009 the law sunsetted leaving a large pool of experienced teachers unavailable to us in the schools. We can hire retired teachers from any other state in the U.S., but we can't rehire retired teachers from Alaska - teachers who understand Alaska standards, communities, and our unique cultural needs. SB 185 simply provides a tool for districts to use and does not require any district to use this resource, which is a flexibility that is appreciated.

Providing an excellent education to every student every day requires experienced teachers, a culturally responsive learning environment, and targeted instruction to meet a student's individual learning needs. All of which helps us strive to achieve the three commitments of Alaska's Education Challenge, which are increasing student success, cultivating safety and well-being, and supporting responsible and reflective learners. By shutting out retired Alaskan teachers, we are wasting a valuable resource.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and thank you for your commitment to public education in Alaska! I hope you will pass SB 185 for reemployment of retired teachers.

Sincerely,

Mary Wegner, Ed.D.