



LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 · Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

www.lysd.org

George Smith

Chairman

John Hargis

Superintendent

April 6, 2025

Subject: Urgent Call to Action: Support HB69 for Enhanced Educational Outcomes in Alaska

Dear Senator Olson and Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

As an ardent advocate for the educational success of Alaska's students, particularly those in our most isolated and rural communities, I urge your strong support for House Bill 69 (HB69). This bill is a pivotal opportunity to adjust the Base Student Allocation (BSA), ensuring that funding is predictable and sustainable and reflective of the real-time needs impacting our students' daily learning experiences.

Our school districts have consistently faced severe financial challenges, further exacerbated by inconsistent funding streams. This ongoing uncertainty has forced many schools into untenable positions, cutting crucial educational programs, increasing student-to-teacher ratios, and eliminating vital extracurricular activities. These reductions directly undermine the quality of education we can offer and impede our ability to attract and retain the talented educators crucial to our students' success.

Currently, our district is grappling with a daunting \$9 million budget shortfall, projecting a scenario without one-time funding allocations. This stark financial predicament underscores the urgency for increased support. A proposed BSA increase of \$680 would significantly alleviate this burden, reducing our deficit to \$3.5 million and curbing the need for deep educational cuts. An adjustment to \$850 would further decrease the shortfall to \$2 million, providing some flexibility to adapt and plan proactively. However, a more robust increase of \$1,000 in the BSA is essential; it would minimize impacts on our current programs and allow our educators to focus entirely on fostering environments conducive to teaching and learning.

Despite our best efforts to maximize every resource through the absorption of several positions and restructuring our classified staff, the rising costs in utilities, staffing, transportation, and healthcare, compounded by inflation, continue to strain our budget. These increasing expenses, reflecting broader economic trends, highlight the critical need to reassess the BSA. Over the past decade, as costs have risen, funding has not kept pace, making it increasingly challenging to sustain the high educational quality and operations our communities deserve.

Our recent district achievements further illustrate the effectiveness of targeted educational investment. Over the past two years, we have seen a 3.5% increase in our 4-year graduation rate and an 8% increase in our 5-year rate. Last year, nearly 60% of our K-5 students met or exceeded their growth goals in literacy and math, with four out of seven grade levels surpassing national growth norms in early literacy. These accomplishments are a testament to the exceptional quality of our classified staff and the creativity of our teachers, who are committed to crafting effective educational solutions. Our students attend school filled with hope and good humor, contributing to a vibrant learning environment that is supportive and conducive to progress.



LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 · Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

www.lysd.org

George Smith
Chairman

John Hargis
Superintendent

However, despite these encouraging trends, the challenge remains that our students often appear to be below grade level when assessed against national norms. This discrepancy raises significant questions about our long-term educational strategies and the resources necessary to support them. As we envision where we want our communities and students to be in the next 5 to 10 years, aligning our educational practices with this vision is crucial. We are poised to make necessary changes to ensure our students are competitive in the 21st century, but continual budget cuts and financial constraints severely limit our capacity for innovation.

I appreciate your commitment to our state's educational system and implore you to support the passage of HB69. By doing so, you will make a decisive investment in our communities' future and ensure that our educational system can focus on teaching and learning, helping our students meet and exceed the expectations set before them.

Thank you for considering this crucial legislation and for your continued dedication to the welfare of Alaska's students.

I also encourage you to read the opening letter from our spring family newsletter, written by our board chair, George Smith. Chairman Smith's letter uses the metaphor of a turtle on a fence post to describe the current state of Alaska's public school funding formula. Originally established under Senate Bill 36 in 1998, the funding formula has seen only a minor increase of about 5% in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) from 2011 to 2024, despite a roughly 30% inflation rate during the same period. This discrepancy highlights the outdated nature of the formula, influenced by past political decisions rather than current economic realities. The letter argues that, much like the turtle that didn't get to the top of the fence post, the funding formula is placed and maintained in its current state by external forces, namely outdated policies and political backroom dealings. Chairman Smith calls for revising the funding formula to make it fair and equitable, advocating for an annual adjustment of the BSA to account for inflation and need, not political influence. This change is presented as necessary to honor the intentions of Alaska's founding fathers, who established education systems that allowed children to remain local for their schooling. The legislative session is an opportunity to correct this issue, hoping the legislature will recognize the inequity and vote for an updated, fair formula.

Thank you for your dedication to the welfare of Alaska's students. I implore you to support the passage of HB69, making a decisive investment in the future of our communities and ensuring our educational system can prioritize high-quality teaching and learning. I also invite you to read our board chair's insightful letter in our spring family newsletter, which eloquently parallels our current challenges with a vivid metaphor that underscores the urgent need for reform. Please find the letter attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Time to Act – A Message from the RSB Chairman

If you are walking along a fence and spot a turtle sitting atop a fence post, you know the turtle didn't get there by itself. The State of Alaska Education Funding Formula is like that—someone put them there.

The current Alaska public school funding formula was adopted under Senate Bill 36 in 1998 and is defined in Alaska Statute 14.17, State Aid to Public Schools.

From 2011 to 2024, inflation has risen by approximately 30%, while the Base Student Allocation (BSA) has increased by only about 5%. It has remained flat for a long time while inflation and the costs of education and operations have risen.

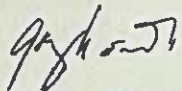
Today's BSA reflects the backroom politics of a previous generation and has not been adjusted for inflation.

A turtle temporarily elevated on a fence post needs to return to its humble roots. We must remember the quarry from which we were dug—the strong determination of our founding fathers, who paved the way for our children to remain home and receive their high school education and helped create the REAA program as a solution.

When you see a turtle on a fence post, the right thing to do is set it back on the ground. You don't just stare at it, expecting it to escape the predicament alone. It's the same with the education funding formula. With the current administration, we can't just sit and stare in silence, and it is unreasonable for the state legislature to stand by and expect the program to fix itself. We must demand that the Alaska legislature take that turtle off the fence post and make the BSA fair and equitable, adjusted for inflation.

The legislature should adopt a BSA formula that adjusts for inflation annually.

This legislative session has the chance to take the turtle off the fence post and fix the BSA formula. Hopefully, when the House and Senate take up the bill, they will recognize the inequity in the program and vote to adopt a formula that allocates the BSA, adjusted for inflation and need, not political influence.



George Smith
Chairman of the Board



George Smith



Max Aagyar



Christine Teganlakla



Fred Beans



Sheila Minock



Edgar Hoelscher



Fred Lamont



Doug Redfox



Caroline Ulak



Esther Brown



Tungwenuk Family Qupak Design, used with permission

KAWERAK, INC. April 3, 2025

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitaisaq

Council

Akauchak

Diomede

Iqaliq

Elim

Neviarquarlua

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Igloaruk

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuami Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Kigiqtaq

Solomon

Anuutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tupqogruk

Unalakleet

Uqalaqliq

Wales

Kinigin

White Mountain

Natchigvik

Office of Governor Mike Dunleavy
3rd Floor, State Capitol
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

Kawerak, Inc. is a nonprofit tribal consortium that provides over 30 different programs to the Inupiaq, St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Yupik people who reside in 16 communities of western Alaska and represents the 20 federally recognized tribes in the Bering Straits region. The Kawerak Board of Directors is comprised of the Tribe's President or representative.

The region 2023 Nome census area population is roughly 9,628, with one-third of the population under 18 years of age. More than half of households (54%) in the region include children younger than 18 years of age, compared to 33% statewide. In some communities, a much larger proportion of households include children: 77% in Savoonga, 78% in Brevig Mission, and 80% in St. Michael.

Within the Bering Strait region there are two school districts: Bering Straits School District (BSSD) and Nome Public Schools (NPS). For the FY' 26 school year, BSSD anticipates a budget shortfall of \$8-\$10 million and NPS anticipates a \$2.25 million shortfall.

The mission of Kawerak is *To advance the capacity of our people and our Tribes for the benefit of the region.* Education has been a strategic priority area of the Board for many years and is an important avenue to ensure the success of our people.

Therefore, the Kawerak Board of Directors strongly support:

- An increase to the Base Student Allocation(BSA). Keeping a \$1,000 increase to the BSA will allow both school districts to better support staffing levels. Without an increase to the BSA, NPS would have to cut personnel in classrooms. With a \$8-\$10 million shortfall for BSSD, the Kawerak Board anticipates potential cuts to personnel, classroom aides/supports, extracurricular activities, staff training and travel would have to take place (areas important to student success).
- An increase to the BSA, will allow school districts to continue to support children and families served by each district and to maintain the positive gains that have been made with math, reading and language scores.
- Having adequately funded schools is significant to recruiting qualified professionals to meet the needs of our communities and students. NPS hired five

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

international teachers in 2023-24 to address teacher shortages, and one-third of the BSSD staff are from the Philippines. The 2023-24 school year was the first in which NPS sought international teachers, whereas BSSD began hiring internationally in 2020.


- Funding for education must keep pace with inflation. Each year districts are having to make difficult budget decisions. The cost to provide education is increasing and the BSA must keep pace with these rising costs.

The Kawerak Full Board of Directors urges a minimum increase of \$1,000 to the BSA. The increase to the BSA will provide school districts and professional staff and teachers with a sense of stability, allowing them to focus on what is important – educating our children. Our schools play a critically important role to our communities, and in many instances is the heart of the community.

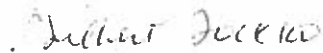
Thank you for your public service and attention to this important issue.

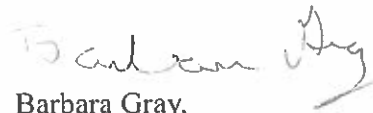
Sincerely,


KAWERAK, INC.


Frank Katchatag, Chairman
Native Village of Unalakleet


Melanie Bahnke, President



Gilbert Tocktoo,
Native Village of Brevig Mission



Barbara Gray,
Native Village of Council



Robert Keith,
Native Village of Elim


Jill Campbell,
Native Village of Gambell


Martin Aukongak,
Chinik Eskimo Community


Lola Hannon,
Native Village of Koyuk


Lucy Oquilluk,
Mary's Igloo Traditional Council

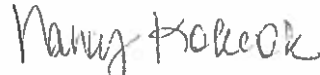

Dawn Warnke,
Nome Eskimo Community


KAWERAK, INC.


PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.



Benjamin Pungowiyi,
Native Village of Savoonga

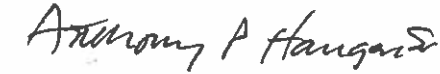

Nancy Kokeok,
Native Village of Shishmaref


Agatha Foxie,
Stebbins Community Association

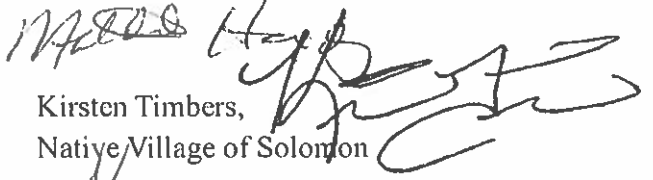

Robert Tokeinna Jr.,
Native Village of Wales



Rebecca Ozenna,
Native Village of Diomede


Merlin Koonooka, Elder Representative
Gambell

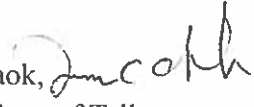

Anthony Haugan, Representative,
Norton Sound Health Corporation

Matilda Hardy,
Native Village of Shaktoolik


Kirsten Timbers,
Native Village of Solomon


Charlene Kobuk,
Native Village of St. Michael


Katya Gray,
Native Village of White Mountain


Jerry Okbaok,
Native Village of Teller


Charlie Fitka Jr., Elder Representative
St. Michael

Cc: Chief of Staff: Tyson.Gallagher@alaska.gov;
Legislative Director: Jordan.Shilling@alaska.gov

Senator.Donald.Olson@akleg.gov

Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov

Senate.Education@akleg.gov

Senate.Finance.Committee@akleg.gov

senator.gary.stevens@akleg.gov

representative.bryce.edgmon@akleg.gov

Lobbyist: Jordan Marshall <jm@jordanmarshallalaska.com>

Kawerak Board of Directors

Bering Strait School District

Nome Public Schools

KAWERAK, INC.

PO Box 948 • Nome Alaska 99762 • 907.443.5231 • www.kawerak.org

Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.

From: [Marilyn Menish-Meucci](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: school funding
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 10:46:32 AM

Hello, my name is Marilyn Menish-Meucci and I live in Petersburg. I am asking you to pass HB 69 and increase the BSA by \$1000!! Right now our district is on a bare bones budget and the senate proposal of \$680 is too low and will force our district into deficit spending. Now is the time to step up and give the funding our constitution demands. You cannot kick this down the road anymore.

I know you are concerned about the state budget. I support you passing SB 112 (which will reduce oil tax credits), SB 113 (which will collect income tax on outside business and SB 92 (which will eliminate the oil tax loophole) . Also you need to support SB 109 (for a sustainable PFD formula).

Thank you,
Marilyn Menish-Meucci

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Katy Ruff Soden](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support for HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 8:12:55 AM

Dear Senate Finance Committee members,

I am an Anchorage voter and public school parent writing in support of the bill to raise the BSA. An increase of at least \$1000 is needed. I have an 8-year old in a mixed grade 2/3 class with 30 students. I have a 9-year old in a mixed grade 4/5 class with 31 students. Despite having great teachers who are doing their best, there are simply too many kids in the class to allow for meaningful educational growth for all students. An increase to the BSA is needed to keep class sizes at this level or, ideally, smaller.

Thank you for your consideration.
Katy Soden

From: [Jill Kisaka](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support for House Bill 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:05:45 PM

Dear Representative,

I am writing as a concerned parent with three children attending the Sitka School District. I urge you to support House Bill 69, which seeks to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1,000. The current funding levels have been devastating to our district, the teachers, the staff and our community.

Since the last BSA increase in 2017, our district has been struggling to provide a high-quality education. We are seeing talented, dedicated teachers leave for other states with more competitive salaries and a lower cost of living. Many families are being forced to make difficult decisions about whether they can continue to live and raise their children in Sitka or even stay in Alaska. The teachers who remain are stretched beyond their limits, often working extra hours, using personal funds for the classroom and juggling multiple roles to make up for the lack of resources. I fear that if this trend continues, we will lose even more teachers, and the burnout will only intensify.

My children's education is being directly impacted. Larger class sizes, limited resources, and the loss of valuable extracurricular opportunities are just a few of the consequences we face daily. As a parent, it is heartbreaking to see the potential of our students stifled because the funding is not there to support them.

Increasing the BSA is not just a temporary fix—it's a long-term investment in the future of our students. I strongly urge you to support this bill, not only to preserve the quality of education in Alaska but to ensure that the Sitka School District can retain quality educators and offer students the opportunities they deserve.

The current funding situation is not sustainable, and without permanent increases to the BSA, we risk undermining the future of our children and our communities. Please take action now to secure a better future for all of Alaska's students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jill Kisaka

[REDACTED]

Sitka, AK 99835

[REDACTED]

From: [D.L.](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 12:51:24 PM

Dear Senate Finance Committee

I am writing in full support of HB 69 and encourage you to keep the BSA raise of at least \$1000. Our education system has leaned into "school choice" and it has failed us. School choice has left the Fairbanks school district with the "choice" of which 5 elementary schools to close just after we got to "choose" which schools to close the past year. Charter schools and home school programs are a luxury. Those luxuries have choked our public schools. Our most vulnerable students, our poorest kids, our special needs children do not have a choice of where they go to school. They need their public schools and we have failed them because we have not funded their schools. Our luxury school choices get to pick who attends those schools. Our public schools welcome all. My kid doesn't have an Art teacher at his K-5 school, neither do any of the other public schools in Fairbanks. Meanwhile, we have charter schools that get that. We have home school students that get even more than that. They get private dance lessons and horseback riding lessons. Why has such inequity occurred? Because of school choice. The rich have gotten richer while we leave the poorest behind.

I implore you to raise the BSA. I am also strongly supportive of more accountability in our education system by requiring testing for home school students that receive state funds. I would encourage you to go further and limit home school allotments to core curriculum like math, science, history, and English. Our state funds should not be used to subsidize horseback riding lessons, private dance lessons, or overseas trips. If it's not available to our brick and mortar students, why should it be available to our home school students.

Put our public schools first. They are the most important tool we have in our community. School choice is harming our schools. It is harming our communities. Fund our public schools and reform school choice so our public schools aren't left with more terrible choices to make.

Sincerely

Don Larson

Father of 3 children, 1 currently in elementary school.

From: [Kat Morin](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69 - School Funding Bill
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 12:40:43 PM

Esteemed Members of the Finance Committee.

As a parent of a school-age child in Alaska, I support a \$1000 increase to the Base Student Allocation. It is our responsibility to our kids and our state's future to keep up with inflation and anything less than a \$1000 increase falls short. I strongly support Alaska kids and our public schools and I hope you will too.

Thank you!

Kat Morin
[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99501
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Lisa Busch](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: support education funding at the \$1000 increase
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 12:20:15 PM

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

I urge you to support the education funding bill - have a hearing on it in the senate finance committee and vote in favor of it. There is nothing more important than education. And you have the courage to support what is right and good about Alaska right now. As a woman of science, I've seen first hand the value that positive learning environments, good teachers and reliable school funding. With your support we can educate a new generation of Alaskans who will innovate, think critically and solve the BIG issues of today and tomorrow.

Please,
Lisa Busch

--

Lisa Busch

Sitka, Alaska



Ask questions, think critically and validate

From: [Betty Richter](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Cc: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Raise the BSA
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 11:58:34 AM

Dear Senator Stedman and Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 69, which proposes a \$1000 increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for school funding. As a teacher at Sitka High School, parent and advocate for public education, I believe this bill is crucial for the future of our schools, communities, and youth.

Public education in Sitka and across the state has faced significant budget cuts, severely impacting the quality of education our students receive. My twin children in grade 7 at Blatchley Middle School do not have the option to take an art class and now our district is looking to make even more cuts. HB 69 represents a vital step towards achieving this goal.

I respectfully request that you schedule a hearing for HB 69 in Senate Finance and move forward with the proposed BSA increase. Our schools are in desperate need of this funding to ensure that every student has access to quality education and the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I urge you to consider the positive impact that passing HB 69 will have on our schools and communities.

Sincerely,

Betty Richter

Doniece Gott

From: Susan Compagno <susancompagno2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 03, 2025 11:46 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Sitka School District

Senate Finance Committee

I am writing as a concerned parent of two children in the Sitka School District. I am concerned about the continued cuts to our school affecting our teachers and school programs. We are unable to retain our teachers and we are unable to hire good teachers as our salaries and retirement packages do not offer incentives to come to our state. We continue to put education as a low priority and I am encouraging you to make education a top priority . Please pass the bills and finance our schools as they should be, we owe it to our future to invest in our children today.

Thank you for your service

Susan Compagno and Robert Calhoun

Sitka AK

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Judith Phillips](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 11:05:01 AM

Dear Senators,

We can no longer excuse or ignore the dismal state of public education in Alaska. I don't believe that increasing funding will solve all our problems, but we have got to fund our ailing schools, provide a decent benefit package for our teachers, and provide proper ongoing training to teachers so they can be at the top of their teaching game. As a retired teacher, I understand the value of good mentoring and continuing education. My teaching improved from the district sponsored classes I was able to take, the programs like Alaska Tsunami Education Project (ATEP), and Science Teacher Education Project (STEP). Please continue to fund our public schools. HB69 has passed the house, please pass it in the Senate.

Thanks for your continued service,

Judy Phillips

Kodiak, AK

From: [jeff.budd](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: School Bill
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 11:05:00 AM

Dear Senate Finance Committee, To my thinking, the school bill is most critical. How can we get out of the mess we are heading for and are already in if we do not have educated students. Thank you. Cheers, Jeff Budd

From: [mtrotter](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Please save our Schools and education for Alaskans
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:09:05 PM

Dear Alaska Senate Finance Committee ,

I am reaching out to you today to please help save the Alaska education system and I am begging for your support of HB69, which would raise the BSA by \$1,000.

We do appreciate the concern for the deficit, education should be the **first call** - not the last - on our state's resources. States that fail to educate and invest in their future leaders, fail.

I have witnessed & watched friends and neighbors leave the state, frustrated with the declining support for schools and anxious about the real or threatened loss of beloved schools and programs. We have also watched an exodus of teachers who have lost their jobs or are voting with their feet due to uncertainty and erosion of pay and benefits.

We truly believe that we are at a breaking point. For example in Ketchikan, the superintendent and school board chair, and another school board member resigned in the past month amidst distress over budget cuts.

Our schools are not failing, they are starving. Alaska has a low debt burden, no broad-based taxes, and a massive sovereign wealth fund. There is no reason to starve our schools and deprive our kids of opportunity.

Thank you for all you do for the communities and education of Alaska schools, we so appreciate this and you

With Respect & Grace
Mike
Mike and Sally Trotter
BARANOF WILDERNESS LODGE

[REDACTED]
Sitka, Alaska 99835
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Melinda Shore](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Base Student Allocation
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:08:59 PM

Hi -

I'm a Two Rivers resident, where we've recently seen our school closed. Although I don't have children, I am a strong supporter of increasing the Base Student Allocation by \$1000, to keep up with inflation. Alaska's future depends on educating our kids.

Melinda Shore
[REDACTED]
Two Rivers, AK 99716
[REDACTED]

--

Melinda Shore
melinda.shore@gmail.com

Software longa, hardware brevis

From: emmcdonald28@gmail.com
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support for HB69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:24:28 PM

> Good Evening Senate Finance Committee,

>

> I am writing to urge you to support HB69 and an increase in the base student allocation of no less than \$1,000. The inflationary cuts to our school budgets have gone on for too long. I am the mother of a three year old and I am very concerned about what the state of our schools will be by the time he is ready for kindergarten. should the current trajectory continue. Investing in public education is an investment in the future of our state.

>

> Best,

> Erin Clay

>

> [REDACTED]

> Sitka, AK

> 99835

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Nancy bERG](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Sb 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:10:30 PM

Good afternoon

I am a constituent in Petersburg Alaska requesting that you match the bsa from hb69 of 1000. This would bring much needed relief to our school district who has been cutting to maintain a balanced budget over the last several years. More cuts would mean higher classroom sizes and losing teachers

The revenue needed for this could come from for instance sb 112 that could raise from 100 million to 300 million in revenue from oil companies

Let's not hurt our children and teachers who are doing so well with the children here

Nancy Berg



Petersburg ak

From: [Jenny Ballif](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: School funding
Date: Friday, April 04, 2025 8:09:27 AM

Hello,
I'm writing to urge you to support an increase to the BSA. Education is essential to our community's well being. Anything less than a \$1,000 increase won't keep up with inflation. Please support Alaska kids and public schools.

Sincerely,
Jenny Ballif

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] 10

--

Jenny Ballif

Science Mom | www.science.mom

jenny@science.mom



From: [Tiffany Pearson](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: [Mindy Barry](#)
Subject: Addressing the funding crisis in Alaska
Date: Friday, April 04, 2025 8:02:32 AM

Dear Senator Stedman and Members of the Finance Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you as a concerned member of our community, deeply invested in the future of our schools and the education of our children. Our educational system is not merely a pillar of our community; it is the foundation upon which our future leaders and innovators are built. As we watch our friends and neighbors express their frustration and leave the state in search of better educational opportunities, it becomes increasingly clear that we are at a crossroads.

While we understand and appreciate your concerns regarding the state's budget deficit, I urge you to consider that education should not be the last priority for our state's resources; it should be our first. States that neglect to invest in education inevitably fail to secure a prosperous future for their citizens. We cannot afford to allow our beloved schools and vital programs to fall by the wayside.

The Sitka School District has experienced an alarming 31% loss of classroom teachers since 2014, with 19% of that loss occurring just last year. This exodus of dedicated educators is a grim reflection of the uncertainties surrounding funding and support. Our teachers, who are the backbone of our educational community, are leaving, either due to job loss or disillusionment caused by diminishing pay and benefits. If the current trend persists, we risk reaching a breaking point where our educational quality is compromised, to the detriment of our children's future.

It is also crucial to recognize that our schools are not failing—they are starving. As the cost of living and inflation has increased by 28% since 2014, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) has only grown by a mere 5%. This discrepancy leaves our schools with a significant funding shortfall. To uphold even the status quo in staffing, we require an additional \$1,460 to the BSA. The proposed increase of \$680 will not suffice, and we are left with unanswered questions about our children's educational experience.

We are at a pivotal point in time, and I cannot emphasize enough the urgency of addressing these funding challenges. Alaska is uniquely positioned, with a low debt burden, no broad-based taxes, and a sizable sovereign wealth fund. We have the resources to ensure that our schools are well-funded and equipped to provide every child with the opportunities they deserve.

In conclusion, I ask you and the Finance Committee to prioritize increased funding for education in Alaska. The students of Sitka and the entire state depend on your

commitment to investing in their future. Together, let's ensure that no child in Alaska is deprived of a quality education.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter. I appreciate your service to our community and your dedication to building a brighter future for all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Pearson

[REDACTED]

Sitka, Ak 99835

[REDACTED]

--

Tiffany Pearson

Sitka Weddings and Events

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

From: [Susan Brandt-Ferguson](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 9:32:10 PM

Dear Senator Stedman and Senate Finance Committee,
I am in my 31st year of teaching music, my 29th in Sitka. The past few years have been hard ones in the Sitka School District. Budget cuts due to flat funding from the state (in fact reduced funding due to inflation) have meant larger classes, people teaching in positions outside of their area of expertise, less planning time and more classes to prepare for. Teachers have moved away to find better-paying and security. They have taken their families with them. Alaska needs to support the education of our children. The \$1,000 increase to the BSA in HB69 is a step in the right direction. Please support Alaska's future by supporting HB69!

Sincerely,

Susan Brandt-Ferguson
[REDACTED]

Sitka, AK 99835
[REDACTED]

From: [Sharlay Mamoe](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 8:42:02 PM

Hello,

My name is Sharlay Mamoe. I am a mother of three children who will be studying in the Petersburg School district next year. My oldest will be in her first year of middle school, my middle child will be in third grade, and my youngest would be in Kindergarten. I work as the executive director of a childcare facility and I know how expensive it is to educate the youth of today; I also know how important good wages and benefits are to keeping staff members and how that subsidy would be from the state of Alaska because we do not have any other way to obtain money for public education.

Without this necessary funding the children in Alaska will be suffering from ill prepared and underfunded schools and teachers. This isn't fair to our children and when the governor says he wants a family friendly state for people to want to live in I imagine he wants our schools to be strong and beautiful.

This funding is absolutely necessary and I hope you fund our future, by funding the organizations who care and educate our children.

Thank you; please fund our children's education in all the ways we need it to be funded.

From: [Kristine Fulton](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Please schedule hearing on HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 7:22:36 PM

Dear Senator Bert Stedman and Senate Finance Committee,

Our public schools are facing a funding crisis.

Please schedule a hearing for HB 69 and support the \$1000 BSA increase.

Public education in Alaska has been underfunded for far too long. The consequences of this neglect are felt in our classrooms—larger class sizes, fewer resources, and the loss of critical programs that support our students' success.

Sincerely,

Kristine Fulton

From: [Daniel Sullivan](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 7:02:13 PM

I am asking the Senate to match the House to increase the BSA to \$1000. My school District, Petersburg, has always had a conservative, balanced budget, with local matching support. While they always "done more with less, an erosion of services is inevitable, especially with the unpredictable nature of current federal funding and the decimation of the US Dept of Education. Thank you for your work and consideration.

Dan Sullivan

[REDACTED]

Petersburg, AK 99833

In Support of House Bill 69 - Education Funding: Increase Bsa

Rebecca Olson

April 3, 2025

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Rebecca Olson, and I live in Sitka. I am the parent of students at Xóots Elementary and Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary in the Sitka School District. I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 69 - Education Funding: Increase Bsa.

In 2022, the Alaska Reads Act was passed, setting some high expectations for the children. Despite being a family that always read to our children right from the time they were babies, and always having books and reading in our home, our son was identified as needing reading intervention. As a mother, I questioned what we did wrong... He's such a bright kid! Was it that his first years of school were during the height of COVID, did we not do something right? Whatever the case, he is behind in reading. That first year, the school was able to provide a reading interventionist to help him, and they were hoping to do a summer reading program, but it wasn't able to happen. Due to budget constraints, Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary has lost two reading interventionists and there currently isn't any to support the students in grades 2-5.

This year, our youngest started Kindergarten and he too needs additional support. In the 2023-2024 school year, his school received a grant from Alaska Reads allowing three reading interventionists to do amazing work with the students. Now, in the current school year, there is one reading interventionist left to take care of the youngest students in our school district.

In a time when the expectations of reading and education are higher than ever, the Sitka School District, like a lot of schools around Alaska, don't have the funding to get behind their students to fully support their needs. The education of our students should be the highest priority. I strongly support House Bill 69 and the positive impact it will have on our students and their future, if passed. Thank you for your time and effort in support of Alaska's students.

Rebecca Olson

[REDACTED]

From: [Susan Beesley](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support the Full \$1,000 BSA Increase in HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 5:05:17 PM

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

As a pediatrician and mother of three, I urge you to support the full \$1,000 increase to the Base Student Allocation in HB 69. I care for children and families across Anchorage, and I see every day how deeply underfunded schools are harming our kids—especially those who rely on school-based support systems for learning, safety, and mental health.

We cannot ask schools to continue doing more with less. When districts are forced to cut teachers, counselors, nurses, and special education staff, it doesn't just affect academics—it impacts the emotional and developmental well-being of our children. School is often the first and only place where kids receive mental health support, social-emotional learning, and early intervention. These services are essential to preventing crises later in life, from dropouts to incarceration to untreated mental illness.

Over the past several weeks, multiple families in my practice have told me they are preparing to leave Alaska. They originally moved here, bringing their families, businesses, and talents, because of the strong public school system. Now, they feel they can no longer stay. If we do not invest in our schools, we will continue to lose not just students and teachers, but entire families and the economic vitality they bring.

Funding our schools isn't just about preserving programs—it's about protecting children's futures. Please pass the full \$1,000 BSA increase in HB 69 without delay. Our kids—and Alaska's long-term health—depend on it.

Sincerely,
Susan Beesley, MD
Anchorage, Alaska

Susan Rymer Beesley MD

Mindful Growth LLC

[REDACTED]

Anchorage AK 99503

[REDACTED]



From: [Norman & Toby Campbell](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Please!!!
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 4:25:25 PM

- While we appreciate the concern for the deficit, education should be the first call - not the last - on our state's resources. States that fail to educate and invest in their future leaders, fail.
- We have watched friends and neighbors leave the state, frustrated with the declining support for schools and anxious about the real or threatened loss of beloved schools and programs.
- We have watched an exodus of teachers who have lost their jobs or are voting with their feet due to uncertainty and erosion of pay and benefits.
- We are at a breaking point. In Ketchikan, the superintendent and school board chair, and another school board member resigned in the past month amidst distress over budget cuts.
- ***Our schools are not failing, they are starving.*** Alaska has a low debt burden, no broad-based taxes, and a massive sovereign wealth fund. There is no reason to starve our schools and deprive our kids of opportunity.

Children are our future!! Please fund our schools!

Toby Campbell, retired teacher





Sitka, AK 99835

From: [Lorene Bertagnoli](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 4:08:06 PM

Hello, I am Lorene Bertagnoli, a Petersburg constituent. I am asking the Senate to match the house and pass a \$1000 BSA increase. \$680 is too low and will force our district into deficit spending.

Petersburg's schools are the heart of our rural, remote community; not only do they do an excellent job educating students But they do double duty for all citizens as theater, gym event, space, etc.

Thank you,

Lorene Bertagnoli

Petersburg, AK. 99833

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Keri Gray](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 3:24:11 PM

Hello,

My name is Keri Gray from Sitka, AK. **I am writing in support of HB 69.** I currently have 1 child in 3rd grade and another who will be entering the school system soon. I've seen first-hand what lack of funding has done to our school district. Last year, we lost 19% of our classroom teachers. My son's class size went from 18 to 24. The amount of work his 3rd grade teacher has to do has increased tremendously, not to include the extra behavior problems because of the number of kids in the room.

I've seen great non-tenured teachers leave the district because they are not certain if they will have a job next year. I've seen fewer elective course offerings at the middle and high schools. How are we preparing our students for jobs in the trades if we can't offer these classes for students to try?

The time to fund education is now. Inflation has risen 28% over the past 10 years, and the BSA has only risen 5%. This does not seem right. How can you expect schools to stay open, stay warm, and stay well-maintained with no money to work with?

Please support HB 69 to the full amount and provide schools with money to help them stay open.

Thank you,
Keri Gray
Sitka, AK

From: [Judith Lehmann](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: \$1000 BSA increase
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 3:14:12 PM

Hello Bert Stedman.

I have met you and appreciate the many opportunities that you have given our children in Sitka. I know that \$ now are tight, but our schools and our students are having difficulty because of it. I have three grand children in the school system and hate to see more drastic cuts made. Please move forward with the \$100 BSA increase.

Thank you, sincerely, Judith Lehmann

Sent from my iPad

From: [Lisa Hodges](#)
To: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 3:09:57 PM

I have 2 children in the school system and work with young children and families who will benefit from your support of HB 69!

Thank you in advance for placing value on education!

Lisa Hodges, MA, IMH-E®
Early Learning Program Coordinator
Developmental Specialist
Infant Mental Health Specialist

Center for Community
Early Learning Program

[REDACTED]

Sitka, AK 99835

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Becky Martello](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 2:40:45 PM


Hello Senators,

I'm a homeschool parent concerned about the latest additions to HB 69. I won't take up too much of your time, but treating homeschool students differently than students in brick and mortar schools is wildly inequitable and may be illegal. For example, tying homeschool allotment funds to testing or submission of a portfolio would be akin to requiring districts to submit tests or portfolios for each enrolled student in order to receive their BSA. If this passes, it at least needs to have equal standards between homeschool and brick and mortar students.

It is troubling that so many amendments that affect homeschool students are being stuffed into a bill being promoted as simply "raising the BSA." This is divisive and not transparent. I believe that many teachers and parents who are supporting this likely don't understand the entirety of the contents of the bill that negatively impact homeschoolers. In part, this feels like an underhanded attempt to make things more burdensome for homeschool families hidden under the guise of "supporting education."

Additionally, I have concerns as a citizen where extra BSA funding will come from. Without first identifying how these funds will be procured, and giving citizens a full picture of how the funds will be raised (and used), ignores fiduciary responsibility to Alaskans.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Becky Martello
Sitka, AK


From: [Kimberly Bakkes](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 2:35:22 PM

Please support HB69. Please support increasing the BSA by \$1000.

There has been no increase for years. Meanwhile costs are going up.

I hear lots of talk about how can we get more people to move to Alaska?... Meanwhile, declining school funding is pushing people to move out of Alaska.

I love living in southeast Alaska, and I have started to wonder whether I should take my kids elsewhere for high school as I watch school budgets decline, excellent teachers leave, programs disappear.

Thank you for your support.

Kimberly Bakkes
Sitka, AK

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [M.O'Shea Spring](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support \$1000 BSA increase
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 2:16:44 PM

I am a parent who homeschools my children. I come from a family of public school teachers and I support public education. I was fortunate enough to attend a well funded public school district in northern VA in middle school & high school. I have seen first hand the difference between well funded public education & underfunded schools. Alaska children deserve well funded public education.

I support a \$1000 increase to the Base Student Allocation. Anything less does not keep up with inflation. Well funded public education benefits all of our communities and helps Alaskan kids have a better future.

Thank you,
Meghan O'Shea
Kasilof, AK

From: [Pat Race](#)
To: [Sen. Jesse Kiehl](#); [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: What I would like.
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 2:08:24 PM

To my Juneau delegation and to the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to request that you increase the Base Student Allocation. And, if it's not too much to ask, that you balance our budget without drawing down savings or gutting the dividend.

I'm not too prescriptive about numbers, just do the very best you can and don't shy away from the revenue measures that are necessary to get us there.

The effort to close the corporate tax loophole is a good one. It probably shouldn't be targeted at one company, anyone who is making tens of millions each year in our state can and should pay taxes to support the firm and lucrative foundation on which they stand. Our schools, our public safety officers, our courts, our ports, are all essential to doing business in Alaska and they must be funded. Particularly by those who benefit most.

The per barrel credit has cleverly been exempted from the budget debate as forgone revenue. I find it unsettling how willing the legislature is to take money out of my Permanent Fund year after year while leaving hundreds of millions on the table for oil companies.

I suggest that if you don't have the stomach to tamp down on this forgone revenue, a good first step would be to put it on the books. Make it part of the budget. No more forgone revenue, but a line item for all to see. A check to the companies for their claimed credits each year. This will help Alaskans to see what a huge part of our financial equation these credits actually are and will entirely change the debate so that these dollars can be weighed equally in consideration with education spending and PFDs. I think all forgone revenue should be treated this way for transparency's sake.

There are other revenue options as well. It's broadly unpopular but legislators and leaders need to start being more vocal about our lack of an income tax or any broad based revenue. If we experience a population boom driven by climate refugees, Alaska is in a position where our underfunded state services will be swamped and see no corresponding increase in revenue. We need to tie some aspect of state revenue to population sooner rather than later. [Gov. Gruening made this same argument](#) over half a century ago. His income tax was the foundation for statehood, but only after we missed out on an incredible growth spurt and influx of jobs during the build out of WWII infrastructure.

I encourage you to work together, House and Senate, to put a plan on the table that pencils out. A plan that identifies new sources of revenue, increases education funding, pays a respectable dividend, and balances the budget.

Then give that plan to our terrible dead-end governor and message hard to your constituents on your successes. Paint him in as best you can.

"The governor gave us an unserious budget with a massive \$1.5 billion dollar deficit. The legislature listened to countless hours of public comment and worked with the people of Alaska to develop this budget that identifies new sources of revenue, increases education funding, pays a respectable dividend, and outlines a real fiscal plan for the FIRST TIME in decades. Now it is up to the governor to sign that budget or to recklessly blow it up after months of out-of-state travel, disengaged from the process."

The best thing you can do, the incredible opportunity you have here, is to put a real fiscal plan on the table and show this state what's possible. Maybe Dunleavy just forgets to veto it. Maybe it's something we can build around in 2026 and into the future.

Thanks for all your hard work. I realize you're all far more in the weeds on these issues but I hope this perspective can at least offer some helpful direction from one engaged citizen.

Pat Race

[REDACTED]

Juneau, AK 99801

From: [craig powers](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: HB 69
Date: Thursday, April 03, 2025 1:56:08 PM

Good afternoon Senator Steadman et al.

I write to this afternoon from beautiful Sitka. We're a Coast Guard Veteran family with three kids in the school system. We retired here despite the rest of our family living down South, in the mid west.

We love Alaska and we want our children to have a successful future here.

Representative Himschoot has been working hard and communicating with her constituents to share the importance of education funding bill HB 69.

This bill is so important for our communities, teachers and families to ensure a happy and healthy future for upcoming generations and prosperous Alaska communities.

Let's do the right thing and give this bill the green light and be proud to support our state, communities, families and constituents.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Craig Powers

USCG Ret.

From: [Anthony White](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Sen. Gary Stevens](#)
Subject: Strategic Investment in Alaska's Future through Responsible Resource Management
Date: Monday, April 07, 2025 9:56:22 AM

Dear Senators,

As the Senate Finance Committee deliberates HB 69, I urge you to address the critical need for strategic adjustments to our state's fiscal policies, particularly in resource extraction revenue, to support and sustain our educational systems. Alaska stands at a crucial juncture where immediate action is essential to reverse a concerning trend impacting communities across our state, including the Kodiak Island Borough School District, which currently faces an alarming [\\$8 million budget deficit](#).

In Kodiak, our community has struggled painfully to determine which school must close to address this deficit. The chosen closure directly affects my family, as we reside within the impacted service area. While consolidation may be necessary under current budget realities, the repercussions are severe: increasing class sizes despite established caps, exacerbating teacher shortages, prompting parents to withdraw their children, and creating a tangible sense of desperation and frustration. Recent school board meetings have become platforms of fear and anger, not directed at our local leaders but toward a broader system of inadequate legislative funding.

Alaska can learn from other states [such as New Mexico](#), where strategic fiscal adjustments, like raising oil and gas royalties to 25% and creating permanent education-focused funds, have provided significant, sustainable investment in schools. Leveraging similar fiscal opportunities through responsible management of our state's abundant natural resources is imperative. This would ensure substantial revenue streams that directly benefit our educational systems, stabilizing funding, and enabling long-term planning and growth.

Given uncertain future federal support, Alaska must now "grab the moose by the horns" and boldly commit to investing in our children and our communities. By reallocating fiscal priorities toward education and adjusting legislation such as resource extraction policies, we can secure robust economic development, improve workforce stability, enhance community infrastructure, and ultimately attract new residents and businesses.

Your leadership and decision-making at this pivotal moment will significantly shape Alaska's trajectory. Please commit to adequately funding education and positioning Alaska as a beacon of innovation and responsible resource management.

Thank you for your careful consideration and your commitment to Alaska's future.

Sincerely,

Anthony White

[REDACTED]

Kodiak, AK 99615

[REDACTED]