

Michael Mason

From: Casa Person <casadeperson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 8:33 AM
To: Senate Education; Rep. Sarah Vance; Sen. Gary Stevens
Subject: Please support HB69

Dear members of the Senate Education Committee, Representative Vance of House District 6, and Senator Stevens of Senate District C,

I am writing to support HB69, a bill that seeks to increase the Base Student Allocation to keep up with inflation and to address the chronic underfunding that our schools have experienced for too many years. HB 69 also asks that school districts be informed of funding in a timely manner.

I find it unconscionable that districts are not given clear, timely and steady funding mechanisms. The stop-gap funding measures that have been used to fund districts in recent years are inadequate for long term planning. Districts have had to pink-slip teachers in July only to rehire them in August. A long term funding plan is needed.

Our schools desperately need a funding increase. Inflation has severely impacted districts. To pass balanced budgets, School districts are proposing increased class sizes to unmanageable sizes, as well as cutting sports, closing theaters and pools, cutting special education, and many other services that contribute to a quality education.

Families stay or go in Alaska because of the quality of our education opportunities. The House and Senate Education Committees have heard a lot of testimony from Alaskans overwhelmingly in favor of supporting our school's ability to provide a quality education. Schools are a vital part of our communities, beyond even their primary role of education. They are our community centers and emergency shelters. They are venues for sports events and music recitals. They prepare our children to go into the world and give back to our communities.

Alaska has a deeper challenge in deciding how it wants to fund necessary services. We have an 82 billion dollar sovereign wealth fund, no broad-base tax system, diminishing oil revenues, and a small population spread out over a huge area. Things are more expensive in Alaska because of the distance from markets and the spread out and rural nature of the majority of our state. Alaskans may want (1) no taxes, (2) PFDs, and (3) services, but the truth is at best we can choose two. Governor Dunleavy tried cutting core services in 2019 and Alaskans turned out in overwhelming numbers to keep state troopers, public safety officers, ferry systems, education departments, the university system, snowplowing and road maintenance, senior housing and more. Cutting the education system is not the way Alaskans want to solve this larger funding challenge.

Our communities need stable school funding that keeps up with inflation, and allows districts to plan year to year in order to keep Alaskan families in Alaska. Please support HB 69 and an investment in the Alaska of the future.

Sincerely,
Adele Person
Homer, Alaska

Michael Mason

From: Adrienne Voss <ahvoss267@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 11:24 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: support HB 69

I am writing in support of House Bill 69 for Education Funding and Increasing the BSA. I am an Anchorage constituent, address 550 W. 21st Ave., Anchorage 99503. I am a Registered Nurse and have previously worked for the Anchorage School District (ASD) in both roles as a School Nurse and Certified Nurse Aide Educator. I have maintained contacts within the ASD, and see and hear the stress the budget shortfalls have placed on public educators.

Alaskan public school educators and students deserve the respect to have a reliable budget supporting education. The historical one time increases to the BSA have been helpful, yet not sufficient to retain qualified educators and recruit new educators. It continues the cycle of stress on our communities. It shows a lack of commitment to public education, which should be a core pillar of our state.

Attaching a BSA increase to Governor Dunleavy's desire to increase school choice and home school programs misses the mark. I do not support his mission to increase school choice and home school programs. We have public schools currently in crisis because of a lack of a reliable and sufficient budget. School choice is good in theory, yet it caters to a small group of students and parents. Support our public schools and public school educators by passing HB 69 and providing an Increase to the BSA.

Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of public education.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Voss
phone: 907-491-0848

Michael Mason

From: April Ostrom <april.ostrom16@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 8:17 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Opposition to HB 69

To Whom it May Concern,

More and more Alaskans are finding it increasingly important to be able to choose the best education we see fit for our children. At the same time, we are finding the new house bill 69 to be concerning in language chosen and how it may affect homeschoolers as well as a lack of transparency/plan on an increase of funding toward our school system without the requirement of becoming more effective in its spending.

I oppose HB 69 because it increases the BSA without identifying funding sources or requiring any additional accountability from our public schools. We have problems that will not be fixed simply by throwing more money at it without any accompanying change. Also, HB 69 singles out correspondence schools with increased burdens without increasing the funding to their students. In addition, open enrollment language in the bill could impact our ability to enroll in correspondence programs outside of our own districts.

In this bill and future proposals, I urge you to consider the importance of homeschool and correspondence programs to so many of your fellow Alaskan families, and to acknowledge how effective they are in working within their budget and advocating for their students/children - deserving recognition, not inspection - and trust, not reservation. It is so important to us that we retain the right to autonomy over our children's education, as you can see with the growing homeschool community.

Thank you for your time,

April Ostrom, previous charter school parent and current homeschool novice

Michael Mason

From: Bev Lewanski <bevwewanski1@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 9:03 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: BSA increase

I fully support an increase of \$1,000 to the BSA. I can only share an observation from my involvement as a grandparent at an Anchorage School District Charter School and compare it to my own teaching experience in Anchorage from 1989-2009.

At my grandchildren's school, class sizes from 1st-4th are at 28 students. There are very limited additional adults that come in and out of those classrooms to lend a hand. I volunteer one morning a week to assist the 4th grade teacher in whatever way possible. Since the initiation of Alaska Reads, little has been provided to children having difficulty with reading. This school goes without a library and gym (that's the choice of this particular charter school).

During my career in Anchorage, only one year did I have a class size of 26 students as a first grade teacher. I also had a paid paraprofessional for half a day! All my other years, teaching in Anchorage, my first grade classes never exceeded 22 and often were at 18 students. In addition, if there was a particular behavior concern with a student (and I had three years where that occurred) at a neighborhood school in Chugiak, the principal always had money to fund a paraprofessional to assist with the child. These children were not eligible for IEP's. We also had additional federal funding, during the Obama administration, to provide after school tutoring to our struggling readers (first graders).

The one change I saw across my years as a teacher is a huge reduction in what teachers were allocated to cover classroom learning materials. Mandated curriculum materials demanded the majority of those monies. I subsidized my classroom all my career to enrich the environment with learning materials (games, books, music). I always purchased snacks for my classrooms and one year at a Title 1 school I purchased pencils, paper and notebooks for students. My guess is many teachers continue to subsidize their classrooms.

Of concern is what is happening with the dismantling of the Department of Education at the Federal level. This is bound to have an impact on schools in the entire state! I want the BSA increased to at least \$1,000 per student. I'm willing to pay a school tax, I'm willing to forego a PFD, I'm willing to pay an income tax on my retirement income and social security. I want my grandchildren to realize an effective public education as my daughters realized back in the '80's and '90's!

Thank you!

Bev Lewanski
Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen <lovegreensnorth@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 10:02 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB 69

Thank you for making the tough decisions and serving the state. As you probably know, the Anchorage School District has started to notify teachers and staff of potential layoffs. We are in danger of losing hundreds of teachers. Please pass HB 69 or another bill that adds a substantial increase to the BSA, preferably \$1000 or more. We need this done yesterday.

Thanks for your time,

Cheryl Lovegreen
Anchorage

Michael Mason

From: DANIEL WILLIAMS <kdalaska@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 9:34 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Opposition to HB69 – Inequities Against Correspondence Programs

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB69 due to its inequitable treatment of correspondence students and the lack of a clear financial plan to support its implementation.

This bill unfairly discriminates against families who choose correspondence education, imposing unnecessary barriers and diminishing the value of a proven educational path. Additionally, HB69 fails to outline how it will be funded, creating further strain on an already limited budget. It is irresponsible to advance legislation without addressing the financial implications.

I urge you to reject HB69 and instead focus on policies that support all students equitably, regardless of their chosen educational path and does not add additional financial burdens on taxpayers and our state.

Sincerely,

Dan Williams

Michael Mason

From: Cindy <farrens@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 6:05 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 69

As the grandfather of 3 grandkids in elementary school and junior high I urge you to pass SB 69 to give them a chance for a quality education. Thank you.

Daryl Farrens
Wasilla

Honorable Senators,

The following is my testimony I sent to the Senate Education Committee and I want all of you to note my testimony.

"Senators,

My name is David Boyle and I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 69.

The question we all need to ask is, "Will funding K12 education with millions of more dollars actually result in higher student achievement?".

Last year, the legislature added an additional \$680 per student outside the BSA. Did this funding increase student achievement? I don't think so.

Per Legislative Finance, since 2006 we have increased funding for K12 by 34%, more than inflation for that same period. This funding increase came from outside the formula, by adding more factors such as CTE and increasing the Intensive Needs from 5X the BSA to 13X the BSA.

So, saying that the K12 funding has not increased is totally misleading. Today, we spend more than \$2.63 billion on K12, not counting the PERS/TRS costs.

And the national NAEP results still show only 31% of Alaska's 4th graders are proficient at reading. That really begs the question--if we cannot teach our kids how to read, what are we teaching them?

And only 30% of our 8th grade students are proficient in reading according to the NAEP results. That spells disaster for their futures.

Alaska needs education reform to help all our kids succeed. Here are my recommended solutions:

1. Increase the number of charter schools by allowing the state Board of Education to authorize them. The demand is there. Please meet the demand for more.
2. Increasing the funding for Correspondence students by increasing the factor to one. Why are these students only worth 9/10ths of a brick and mortar student? This is not equitable funding. These Correspondence students save the state money. For every student who leaves the brick and mortar school at 1.0BSA, the state will save about \$7,200 per student per year in formula funding. These students also save the local government and capital funding.
3. Do away with the school size factor in the formula. We are incentivizing bad behavior by encouraging districts to build new schools when they should be closing schools due to fewer students.
4. As you know, the cost of providing health insurance to school employees is skyrocketing and not sustainable. Require/allow districts to enroll employees in the State's Alaska Cares health care plan. Today, the Anchorage School District pays \$22,000/per teacher union member (approximately 3,000 members) for health insurance.
5. Consolidate and reduce the number of school districts to reduce the administrative overhead and direct more funds to the classroom.

Regarding parts of the HB69 bill. "Open enrollment" is not really open enrollment when parents are restricted to enrolling their child in the local district. Open enrollment should allow a parent to enroll their child in any K12 public school, be it neighborhood, charter, or Correspondence school. Why draw imaginary lines around a child's future?

Increasing the administrative overhead costs from 4% to 8% that a district can charge its charter schools will only impact the students in that school. It will also incentivize the district to increase its administrative costs because it can merely

pass these cost on to the charter schools. This could have a seriously detrimental effect on the operation of the charter schools. We need to reduce administrative overhead, not facilitate it.

The Education Task Force mentioned in HB69 replicates the task force established in 2014. This was the House Sustainable Education Task Force which put forth recommendations that the legislature did nothing with. Matter of fact, that report cannot be found in DEED or the legislature. Please find it and follow its recommendations.

Many are concerned with the impacts of inflation on the K12 schools. And I do agree that inflation has affected our schools, especially in the energy and supply areas. But what about the Alaskans who are suffering even more from inflation? When you reduce/take away the PFD from Alaskans you are actually taxing them. That deflates their income! The lower income parents are the most impacted. How about the parents of the lower income students who now have to live off less income due to the reduction of the PFD? Will you, the legislature, help them with countering the effects of inflation as you are prone to do with increasing the BSA for public education. The K12 employees may benefit from the increased BSA because they may receive higher pay/benefits. But many Alaskans will suffer from a reduced/zeroed out PFD.

Please reform the current K12 system before adding more funding.

Our children deserve better! Only you can help them succeed in life!"

Sincerely,

David Boyle

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Below is an expanded version of my public testimony from yesterday's meeting which I had to summarize because of the 2-minute limitation. Some of the facts and data supporting my testimony have been provided below:

Good afternoon, my name is David Ignell. I'm a journalist and radio talk show host from Juneau, and a product of its public school system. I want our public schools to succeed. Our education system has been broken for a long time and needs to be overhauled. HB69 doesn't begin to fix it though, and I'm against HB69 for 3 basic reasons:

1. First, its process was substantially flawed and reeks of gamesmanship. HB69 went through the House Education and Finance Committees as a 1-page monetary bill with 1 substantive section. Then it took a weird turn and went to Rules Committee, emerging as a 9-page bill with several major policy additions and 19 substantive sections. There was no opportunity for public testimony on any of these policy additions and on the House Floor prior to the vote, dozens of meaningful amendments offered by the House Minority weren't seriously considered by the House Majority. Alaskans deserve better and the Senate would be wise to scrap HB 69 completely and help establish a higher standard in our Legislature for the public exchange of ideas.
2. Second and perhaps most importantly, what's the point of giving schools more money when students don't show up to class? Chronic Absenteeism is a huge issue in our state, as confirmed by the educators I've spoken to, including district superintendents.
 - a. The Chair of the Board of Education has asked, "what can be done to address chronic absenteeism." The House wouldn't listen. Will the Senate?
 - b. Chronic Absenteeism among all Alaska school districts this past year averaged 49%. 16 of the 54 districts had Chronic Absenteeism of at least 60%. How are teachers supposed to move an entire class from Point A to their intended Point B over the course of a school year when over ½ of the students are missing on a regular basis?
 - c. Only 5 districts had Chronic Absenteeism rates below 30%, four of which are small districts in the SE region including state run Mount Edgecumbe. The largest of these SE districts is Petersburg which should be a model for the rest of the state districts. Its Chronic Absenteeism was 24% and its three schools averaged English proficiency scores of approximately 50% despite low-income percentages averaging in the mid-50s.
 - d. In Anchorage Chronic Absenteeism makes a huge difference. In my survey of 82 schools, 11 of them had Chronic Absenteeism of 50% or higher. Average ELA and Math proficiency scores at these schools were 20% and 14%, respectively. Conversely, there were 4 non-charter schools with Chronic Absenteeism under 20%. Their average ELA and Math proficiency scores were 47% and 46% respectively.

- e. Chronic Absenteeism can also negate boatloads of money invested in our schools. A great example is the North Slope District. Despite local contributions doubling state funding and overall spending of nearly \$40,000 per pupil, their schools suffered from a Chronic Absenteeism rate of 81%, which was in turn reflected in their low proficiency scores.
 - f. North Slope District is no outlier. Last year the State invested over \$170 million into four other districts where the average Chronic Absenteeism was 64%. The average amount spent per pupil was nearly \$26,000, which is up to four times more than what was spent on pupils in other districts. Simply increasing the BSA will even further widen this gap, as the AADM of the pupils in these four districts is nearly quadruple their ADM. Perhaps this disparity could be justified if the proficiency scores in these well-funded districts were above average, but they're not. Most of the schools in these districts had reported proficiency scores of less than 5%, which in some cases might actually be 0%.
 - g. The bottom line is that for state funding of brick and mortar schools to work, entire communities must be committed to having their kids in the classroom on a regular basis. If they're not, then maybe they shouldn't be deciding how our state funds are spent.
3. Third, yesterday you heard from many educators from Anchorage and Fairbanks complaining about funding shortfalls in their districts. Is the solution solely a state issue, though? How about the communities of Anchorage and Fairbanks investing more in their schools, like other communities around the state?
- a. Take Juneau for example. According to the most recent Disparity Report, our local funding amounted to \$7500 per student. Local funding per pupil in Anchorage and Fairbanks was significantly lower at \$5500 and \$4500 respectively. If Anchorage residents had funded to JNU's level, their district would have an additional \$86 million to spend on their schools. Likewise in Fairbanks, it would have been \$36 million. That's more than enough to cover the shortfalls testified to.
 - b. Food for thought: Why should residents of communities which provide more funding to their schools be forced to subsidize via a smaller PFD check, residents of other communities which provide less funding?

In closing, I hope your Committee will launch the Senate in a new direction towards thinking outside the box in trying to solve Alaska's education crisis and working with the State's DEED. It's time for the state to quit handing over money to districts without meaningful strings attached which help compel complete community engagement. Our failed education policies are evidenced by some of our prison inmates who haven't even learned to write their own name.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



David Ignell
Forensic Journalist

Michael Mason

From: D L <runnerlars@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 12:18 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: In Support of HB 69

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.

Michael Mason

From: Donna Anderson <akm4llegcommittee@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 7:10 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose HB 69

Senate Education Committee,

Moms For Liberty stands for truth, builds relationships, informs, empowers, and unifies our community to fight like a mother for improved child education and parental rights.

Uphold Parental Rights

- Moms for Liberty Alaska supports a parent's right to direct the upbringing, education, and medical care of their children.
- We oppose legislation that diminishes the fundamental rights of parents within the education system in the state of Alaska.
- Parents are the first educators and primary support system of students. They should be able to easily review curriculum as well as any information provided to students by schools on their school district's website.

Educational Freedom

- Learning that fits the needs of each student is paramount to positive educational outcomes.
- Alaska's charter and correspondence programs outperform other systems in academic success by allowing families to coalesce around a unified vision of their choosing creating an environment of belonging and growth. Parent involvement is a core factor in these programs, prioritizing flexibility and efficient adaptation in response to changing needs of students as they progress.
- Funding should directly benefit students and improve educational outcomes rather than simply increase costs.

Moms for Liberty-AK Legislative Committee opposes HB 69. This bill is fiscally irresponsible. HB 69 also lacks reform provisions, such as statewide school choice, funding that follows the student, multiple charter authorizers, classroom teacher retention bonuses, correspondence student multiplier of 1 instead of .9, \$450 for every student that achieves reading proficiency or substantive growth toward proficiency,

Moms for Liberty looks forward to working with leaders at all levels of government to find actionable solutions that improve education and protect parental rights.

Thank you for your time,

Kim Bates, Chair Moms for Liberty-AK Legislative Committee

Donna Anderson, Secretary Moms for Liberty-AK Legislative Committee

Michael Mason

From: Bessie Green <bessie.bug@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 7:55 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: support HB 69, raise the BSA \$1000

I am a parent of a child who attends Fairbanks schools. Her kindergarten year was severely disrupted by COVID. She attended a charter school for K-2 grade, at a school that severely failed her. 1/3 of her class left when we did after second grade because of the problems in this charter. Our neighborhood school saved her education, and she has thrived there for grades 3-4. Now her school will close after this year and she will move again for grade 5. Then move to another new school for middle school.

I chose to raise my child here because we had great schools. Now I have watched in dismay as our state has starved the schools of funding and is dismantling our education system. It is so much easier to break something than to build something new. Please prioritize our children and support HB 69, raising the BSA by \$1000. Fairbanks has become increasingly unliveable. My daughter has classmates who have already experienced the closure of their previous school as well. What will the dropout rates be of a cohort of children who have received the strong message that their schools are not committed to them? We need an increased BSA. Our kids are the future of this community. Don't drive us out of Alaska with short-sighted budgets.

elizabeth green
1107 Sheep Creek Rd
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Michael Mason

From: Emily Kane <dremilykane@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 11:54 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: representative.calvin.shrage@akleg.gov; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: HB69

Dear Senators

People are our most precious resource and ensuring they get a good start with an excellent education is the most cost-effective boost the state could give all our future citizens.

There is exciting research showing that dementia can be prevented, and the single MOST important factor (reducing risk by 7%) is early education.

The House did the right thing — now please move this bill to the governor's desk and commit to making it veto proof.

Sincerely

Dr. Emily Kane

Juneau



Be well!

www.DrEmilyKane.com

Michael Mason

From: Evelyn Waltenbaugh <evelyn@waltenbaugh.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 4:16 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB69 (Education Funding: Increase BSA)

I encourage the Senate to past HB69 which includes a permanent increase of \$1,000 of the BSA. I am in favor of this funding bill in order to provide the highest quality education to Alaska's children.

1) Every **student is entitled to an opportunity for a good education** that can empower them to gain knowledge, skills, and critical thinking which will enrich them as individuals, prepare them for a good paying career and be an informed citizen who contributes to their community.

2) According to the Economic Policy Institute, “**a well-educated workforce is key to State prosperity.**” (Report by Noah Berger & Peter Fisher, August 22, 2013)

Major findings from this report include the following:

- Overwhelmingly, high-wage states are states with a well-educated workforce. There is a clear and strong correlation between the educational attainment of a state's workforce and median wages in the state.
- States can build a strong foundation for economic success and shared prosperity by investing in education. Providing expanded access to high quality education will not only expand economic opportunity for residents, but also likely do more to strengthen the overall state economy than anything else a state government can do.
- Cutting taxes to capture private investment from other states is a race-to-the-bottom state economic development strategy that undermines the ability to invest in education.
- States can increase the strength of their economies and their ability to grow and attract high-wage employers by investing in education and increasing the number of well-educated workers.
- Investing in education is also good for state budgets in the long run, since workers with higher incomes contribute more through taxes over the course of their lifetimes.

Thank you for listening to a concerned Grandmother and Alaskan resident,

Evelyn Waltenbaugh
39066 Fiddlehead Circle
Homer, AK. 99603
Sent from my iPad

Michael Mason

From: Evelyn Waltenbaugh <evelyn@waltenbaugh.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 11:24 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB69 (Education Funding: Increase BSA)

I encourage the Senate to pass HB69 which will increase the BSA. I am in favor of funding our public schools to provide the highest quality education to our children.

1) Every student is entitled to an opportunity for a good education that can empower them to gain knowledge, skills, and critical thinking which will enrich them as individuals, prepare them for a good paying career and be an informed citizen who contributes to their community.

2) According to the Economic Policy Institute, “**a well-educated workforce is key to State prosperity.**” (Report by Noah Berger & Peter Fisher, August 22, 2013)

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- Investing in education is also good for state budgets in the long run, since workers with higher incomes contribute more through taxes over the course of their lifetimes.

Thank you for listening to a concerned Grandmother and Alaskan resident,

Evelyn Waltenbaugh
39066 Fiddlehead Circle
Homer, AK. 99603 Sent from my iPad

Michael Mason

From: Holly Brooks <holly@hollybrooks.com>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 10:15 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Mike Shower; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Sen. Matt Claman; Sen. Mike Cronk; Sen. Forrest Dunbar; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson; Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. Scott Kawasaki; Sen. Jesse Kiehl; Sen. Kelly Merrick; Sen. Robert Myers; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Löki Tobin; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Sen. Robert Yundt; Sen. James Kaufman
Subject: PLEASE support Alaska's youth

Dear Alaskan Senators,

(I wanted to testify last week and it didn't happen - here is my testimony..... meanwhile, today, as you know, many valuable staff members found out about their displacements.)

My name is Holly Brooks. I am the parent of two 7-year olds who attend O'Malley Elementary school in the French language immersion program. Thank you for your time on this issue. I also want to point out what a huge waste of time this really is when this should have been signed, sealed and delivered last year. Education proponents are spending time advocating rather than helping with homework, preparing lessons and the like. I am an Olympic endurance athlete and my endurance (& frustration) on this topic is low.

Alaska's youth is our most valuable resource and our failure to provide stable funding for education would be laughable if it weren't so sad. **Education should be a non partisan issue.** Opponents to Ed funding/HB69 say our budget is "too big" and yet, we've had flat state funding for nearly ten years. Meanwhile, every other department in the state has received increases for inflation including our prison system. **Please honestly ask yourself, how can we justify funding prisons and not schools?**

For those of you that argue that we need results but want to expand investment in correspondence programs/home-school, **please show us the results of the tens of millions of dollars of public funding people are receiving.** According to a recent ADN article, only 14% of correspondence families are taking state-wide assessments. How do we know they are learning anything? It is absolutely hypocritical to demand accountability from public schools and nothing from correspondence programs. My teacher friends tell me of 4th & 5th graders they've received from homeschool who can't even begin to read? (Yes, I realize that there are people who are doing it well & it's warranted in many scenarios but again, how do we know our investment is being used to properly educate our kids?)

For the reasons mentioned above, I am having a hard time believing that opponents of this bill truly care about educating our kids. Rather, it feels like ulterior motives are running the show, ie defunding public schools (scaring away all the high quality educators) and thus giving vouchers to use public money for religious education. Also, it seems that politicians are scared to do the right thing because they feel so strongly about "buying votes" in the form of giving out huge, unaffordable PFDs while our schools literally crumble to the ground. Alaska already has the lowest tax burden of all 50 states and at some point we are going to need some **real leadership** to step up and figure out a way to increase revenue rather than bankrupt our state. That said, we CAN afford a 1k BSA if education is truly a priority.

Just this week I learned that one of the most qualified teachers I know is taking a leave of absence to pursue alternative employment, (amongst 250 resignations) another is taking early retirement, and I attended a going away party for a highly educated family who brought a lot to this state but is leaving to pursue opportunities elsewhere. At this rate, why would anyone want to teach in Alaska, and why would qualified professionals want to bring their families here to raise? **The finger pointing and inability to come to a consensus is literally GUTTING our education system and is effectively making us look horrible** - please, Alaska, we can and must do better!

We must fund our schools at similar increases to our prisons, we must demand accountability for all state-funded educational options, (as it's our constitutional responsibility to educate our youth) and we must, *must* pass a stable BSA of \$1,000 and band together for Alaska's future.

Please, let's pass this bill so we can be "efficient" and move onto other things. Our state has a lot of work to do. Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Holly Brooks

--

Holly Brooks (she/hers), OLY, LPC, PMH-C
Owner/Practitioner

hollybrooks.com

Simple Practice access: <https://holly-brooks-llc.clientsecure.me>

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Instagram: [hollybrooksllc](https://www.instagram.com/hollybrooksllc)

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Homer Middle School Site Council

500 Sterling Highway

Homer, AK 99603

March 24, 2025

Senator Loki Tobin

Alaska State Legislature

State Capitol Room 115

Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Support for a Base Student Allocation (BSA) Increase for Alaska Public Schools

Dear Senator Tobin,

Last year, nearly **every legislator agreed** on a funding compromise that would have finally provided **stable, predictable support** for public schools. As members of the Homer Middle School Site Council, we are writing to urge your support for an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for Alaska's public schools.

For years, the BSA has failed to keep pace with inflation and the growing demands placed on our schools. As a result, districts across the state, including the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), have been forced to make difficult budget cuts—impacting class sizes, teacher retention, and essential programs that benefit students. KPBSD is currently facing a **\$17 million deficit for the upcoming school year**, a crisis that will inevitably lead to painful reductions in staff, programs, and services if additional funding is not secured. These financial constraints limit our ability to provide the education our children deserve and put the future of Alaska's workforce and communities at risk.

And let's be very clear: **we are not asking for luxuries**. We are trying to **keep our doors open, keep our buses running, and keep our teachers from walking away**. When fuel prices rise, when utilities increase, when insurance costs go up, schools have nowhere to turn—except to **cut the very programs and staff that make education possible**.

We need **stable, long-term, and predictable funding** for our schools so we can focus on lasting school improvements and the recruitment and retention of excellent educators. Being a teacher is hard—being a teacher in Alaska is even harder. We have amazing, dedicated teachers in our state, but when their jobs are constantly on the chopping block due to potential budget cuts, year after year, it becomes unsustainable. Many times, these cuts are temporarily stayed off by one-time funding outside the BSA, but eventually, even the most committed teachers will have had enough. And when that happens, we will struggle to find educators to replace them.

Public schools are the backbone of our communities. They serve **every child who walks through the door**, regardless of background, ability, or financial situation. Charter schools and homeschool programs may work for some, but the majority of Alaskan students rely on **fully**

funded, functioning public schools—and they deserve better than what they are getting from this legislature.

Investing in our schools is an investment in Alaska's future. By increasing the BSA, we can ensure that schools have the resources they need to retain high-quality educators, maintain smaller class sizes, and provide students with the opportunities they need to succeed. Our community values education, and we hope that you will stand with us in advocating for sustainable, adequate funding for our schools.

We appreciate your service and your commitment to representing our district. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and to share how these funding challenges are affecting our students and teachers here in Homer. Please let us know if you would be available to meet with our Site Council or attend a future school event to hear directly from our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your support in ensuring a strong future for Alaska's public schools.

Sincerely,



Lisa Asselin

Chair, Homer Middle School Site Council

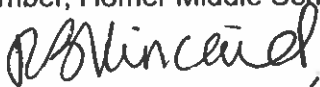


Adam Diaz

Member, Homer Middle School Site Council

Rachael Kincaid

Member, Homer Middle School Site Council



Michael Tozzo

Member, Homer Middle School Site Council

Erica Marley

Member, Homer Middle School Site Council



Damara Burnett

Member, Homer Middle School Site Council



Honor Kincaid

Student Member, Homer Middle School Site Council



Isaiah Kincaid

Student Member, Homer Middle School Site Council

Michael Mason

From: Jen Huvar <jenhuv@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 11:27 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB 69

Hi,

I'm writing in support of HB 69, to better fund education in Alaska. Smaller class sizes are key to student success and student success is key to attracting and retaining families. It's the best investment I can think of for a vibrant future for Alaska, and an expenditure I'm willing to support with my tax dollars (or a forfeiture of PFD monies, whatever the case may be.)

I wish I didn't feel compelled to add this paragraph, but I do. Federal funding for education is under threat. If this happens, our education situation here in Alaska will become even more dire. As a retired special education assistant, I can easily predict which families would be hit hardest, and it breaks my heart. If these students are not appropriately served, they will have zero chance of becoming productive members of society and, as a state, we'll need incur additional, emotionally draining, financial costs such as increased homelessness and increased incarceration. All the more reason to support HB 69.

Thank you,
Jen Huvar
8435 Jupiter Dr
Anchorage, AK 99507

Jennifer M. Collins
1736 Amherst Ct
Anchorage, AK 99508
907-727-3473

Jenklugh@gmail.com

115
Senators Giessel, Kiehl, Claman, Tobin, Bjorkman, Dunbar, & Stevens
State Capitol
Juneau AK, 99801

March 11, 2025

Dear Senators,

First of all, I'd like to sincerely thank you for your continued support of public education in Alaska. I am a proud, 23-year Alaska resident working as an Environmental professional in the Oil & Gas industry. Together with my husband who also works in Oil & Gas, we are raising two boys, ages 9 and 13, who both attend public schools in the Anchorage School District.

My request is simple: fully fund education in Alaska through HB69. We don't need a larger PFD. We don't need more standardized tests that take up valuable time when our kids should be learning. What we need is to increase the Base Student Allocation through House Bill 69 to ensure our students have the best chance at success in life, starting with the education we provide to them. As you are well aware, HB69 has gone through an amendment process and is now a Bill that is a compromise, which is something that I know was requested.

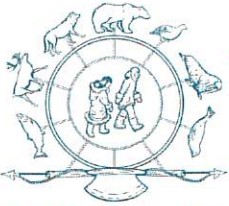
THANK YOU for your sponsorship of Senate Bill 28 to add a defined benefit option for teachers and public employees! We need to ensure that we are attracting and retaining teaching talent through competitive pay, benefits, and retirement programs. It is no secret that the Anchorage School District (ASD) is struggling to fill teaching positions, and this will only get worse as increasing costs put more strain on the budget. In the last few years, I have watched many exceptional teachers have left our public elementary school. This is not surprising considering we are the only state in the country that doesn't have defined benefits or Social Security for teachers. While we have the means to send our boys to private school, we are strong believers in public schools and are determined for our children to remain in our neighborhood schools, just as we did for our entire upbringing. Again, I sincerely thank you for your support and sponsorship of Senate Bill 28.

School funding in Alaska has not meaningfully increased in years. This is against the state constitution since it mandates that "the legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all students of the State."

Thank you for your support of HB69, SB28, and seriously considering overriding Governor Dunleavy's veto of the funding if it occurs.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Collins



Tungwenuk Family Qupak Design, used with permission

KAWERAK, INC. April 3, 2025

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitaisaq

Council

Akauchak

Diomedea

Iqaliq

Elim

Neviarcuarluk

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Iglaaruk

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuami Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Kigiqtak

Solomon

Anuutaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tupqaqruk

Unalakleet

Ugalaqtiq

Wales

Kinigigin

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.

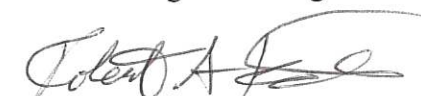
Thank you for your public service and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

KAWERAK, INC.


Frank Katchatag, Chairman
Native Village of Unalakleet

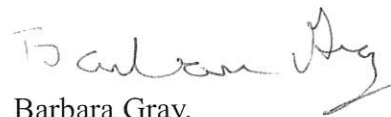

Gilbert Tocktoo,
Native Village of Brevig Mission



Robert Keith,
Native Village of Elim



Martin Aukongak,
Chinik Eskimo Community



Lucy Oquilluk,
Mary's Igloo Traditional Council


Melanie Bahnke, President


Barbara Gray,
Native Village of Council


Jill Campbell,
Native Village of Gambell



Lola Hannon,
Native Village of Koyuk



Dawn Warnke,
Nome Eskimo Community


KAWERAK, INC.

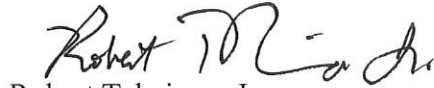
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Advancing the capacity of our people and tribes for the benefit of the region.



Benjamin Pungowiyi,
Native Village of Savoonga

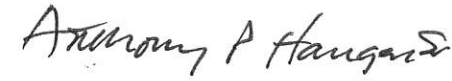

Nancy Kokeok,
Native Village of Shishmaref


Agatha Foxie,
Stebbins Community Association

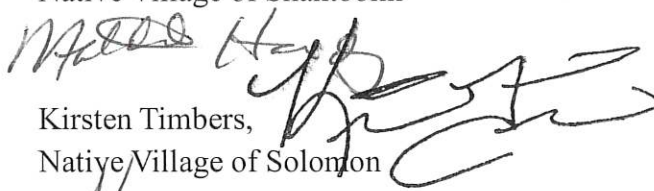

Robert Tokeinna Jr.,
Native Village of Wales

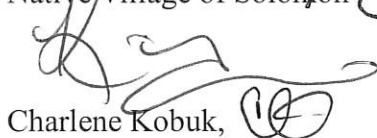

Rebecca Ozenna,
Native Village of Diomede


Merlin Koonooka, Elder Representative
Gambell

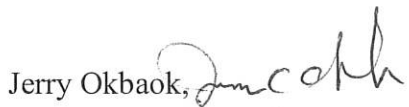

Anthony Haugan, Representative,
Norton Sound Health Corporation


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.

Michael Mason

From: Kevin Voss <kevin_voss@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 7:59 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: In support of HB 69

Dear Senators and Fellow Alaskans,

As a Title I secondary school educator in Anchorage for 18 years, I have sadly been witness to what can only be described as a gradual deterioration of our public school system, and the worst part is that it is impacting the children who most rely on a quality education. Over the last eight years, the pupil-to-teacher ratio in my classroom has increased by 20% (resulting in my average class size being 32 students), ancillary positions from English Language Learner counselors to technology support have been cut, and there has been a shocking exodus of staff who have left state or the profession altogether.

In the face of such diversity, I have been humbled by the job that my school continues to provide. Despite these efforts, however, continuing in this manner is not sustainable, and the cracks are beginning to show. We were unable to fill five full-time positions with certificated staff. For the first time ever, we needed to recruit teachers on J-1 visas and allow student teachers to take on emergency teaching responsibilities. These educators show promise, but they are simply not as capable as a veteran educator.

The proposed cuts for next year go beyond anything our society should ever be okay with. There is most certainly a point when not only will the quality of education suffer, but I start to wonder whether schools can actually keep their kids safe. The fact that my school has seen a reduction in staff of about 25% over the past eight years means there are that many less adults monitoring the lunch room, the hallways, and the playground.

A substantial increase to the BSA is needed. Every single one of us would struggle if we were expected to live off the same income that we had in 2015 given the high costs of inflation, yet that is exactly the position our districts are in. Further, one-time funding is causing too many problems for districts who are having to lay off the very educators that we hope will be around for 20 years or more. We need a long-term solution and stability in our state's model for funding education. Please support HB69 and do what is right for kids.

Sincerely,
Kevin Voss
(907) 331-9296

Michael Mason

From: Landa Baily <landabaily@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2025 12:05 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Sen. Gary Stevens
Subject: HB 69 Support & Fix the Oil Taxation Statutes

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Please support the increase in education funding for the BSA as passed by the Alaska House of Representatives.

The easiest way to ensure the necessary state income is for the Alaska Legislature to fix the S Corp taxation loophole *and* to stop the per barrel tax credits on legacy oil from the North Slope.

A strong public school system in Alaska is a critical component to strong local and state economies. Every lost position in the public school system is a mortgage which affects real estate, banks, insurance companies, as well as utility providers.

Thank you and regards,
Landa Baily
Homer, Alaska

Michael Mason

From: Leah Maltbie <leahmaltbie@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 5:29 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee; Senate Education; House Education; House Finance
Subject: All I Want for my Birthday is Education Funding

Good evening state lawmakers,

Today is my birthday. Mid-afternoon, I received word that the Senate Finance Committee stripped HB69 to all, but the BSA increase, ensuring its veto by our governor. This was devastating.

All I want for my birthday is education to be funded to the level of quality as the state constitution commands.

Simple, as adults please stop playing politics with our children's future and fund education in the state of Alaska. Our youth deserve high quality education and that cannot happen without a BSA increase. HB69 is not perfect, but it has provisions that both sides want and the governor is willing to sign into law.

Please, do the right thing and listen to the vast majority of Alaska constituents that are loudly saying, "fund education!".

Thank you

Leah Maltbie

--

Wakaga & Niyan

Michael Mason

From: Lisa Miller <lisakopec83@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2025 7:38 PM
To: Senate Education; Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support of \$1,000 minimum BSA increase and reduced oil tax cuts

Good evening, Senate Education and Finance Committee members,

As a parent of a 4th-grade student enrolled in the Anchorage School District, I see firsthand why raising the BSA by a minimum of \$1,000 is critical. I'm encouraged by the progress on HB 69, though inflation-proofing would truly break the cycle we are currently in.

I am writing to challenge the narrative that a BSA increase equals a PFD cut.

I strongly support discussions in the Senate on alternative solutions, including reducing oil tax credits as a means to fund education.

When my son was approaching kindergarten age, I considered returning to my hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, to be closer to family. After comparing the Cleveland School District and surrounding districts to ASD, I decided to stay in Alaska because I appreciated the "choice schools" offered throughout the Anchorage School District. By staying in Anchorage, I had access to a wide variety of charter, alternative, and specialized programs through ASD, as well as strong neighborhood schools. My son was selected through the lottery for Polaris K-12 in kindergarten and is thriving in their optional program. The Polaris classroom model of intentionally combined grade levels has allowed him to advance to 5th-grade math. He also receives reading interventions—through his own dedication and phenomenal support from educators, he is part of the "COVID kindergartener cohort" that has made above-average gains in testing and is now reading at grade level.

The work of the educators in his school every day is incredible. Please think outside the box to make high-quality education sustainable in Alaska.

Please note that while I am an ASD employee, this message represents my own opinions and experiences as a parent and does not reflect the Anchorage School District.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Lisa Miller
Turnagain/Anchorage resident

Michael Mason

From: Lucas Smith <lucas.smith28@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 10:40 AM
To: House Education; Senate Education
Cc: Sen. Cathy Giessel; Rep. Chuck Kopp
Subject: Education Bill?

Alaska House and Senate Education Committees:

In the eleven days since the legislature effectively stopped working on an education bill while knowing HB69 would be and has been vetoed by Governor Dunleavy, the House and Senate education committees seem to be continuing to ignore what parents want, what good teachers deserve, and the merit-based investments which should be made instead of reinvesting in those focused on equal outcomes. There is no explanation for this except that the legislature's majority appears stubbornly committed to doing only what is best for the teachers' union. No series of urgent hearings are scheduled for a bill that will reward student performance and provide associated incentives for teachers. No series of urgent hearings are scheduled for a bill focused on increasing options and access to school choice. The expectations for this session's education bill are not a surprise. One could easily view the time spent on HB69 as a waste of 90 days, leaving the legislature now with roughly 30 to satisfactorily complete its work. While I am doubtful about the odds of success, I look forward to seeing the legislature quickly make progress on delivering these necessary education solutions in an acceptable education bill.

Sincerely,

Lucas Smith

Senate District E

House District 10

Michael Mason

From: Marguerite Leeds <m@marguerite.us>
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 4:38 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Please increase BSA and find funding for our schools

Good afternoon,

I am writing to send my fervent wish that funding can be found to maintain school services at their current level. I support taxes and other new revenue sources that can make this possible.

It is important to increase the bsa, in order to maintain services at our schools, because these services are showing impact in my community, and I believe that they are impactful in all communities across the state. Our local school will have to increase classroom sizes, by creating combined grade level classes. We will no longer have middle school sports, which means that my son will not have the opportunity to participate in any organized sports. We will have less support from library and nursing, because these will not be staffed every day.

My children have special needs, and the services we currently get at school are making a big difference to keep them engaged in school and learning while they are there.

I believe that all students in Alaska deserve an excellent education, and cutting school services will hurt all Alaskans.

Thank you for your consideration,
Marguerite Leeds
Girdwood, AK
425-830-3940

Letter to Senate re: HB 69 "*An Act relating to education funding*"

April 1, 2025

Dear Governor Dunleavy and Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

I am writing today to urge you to raise the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for public education in Alaska.

As an Alaskan—born, raised, and educated in this state—I have extensive connections to our schools and the Anchorage community. I am a graduate of West High, a taxpayer, and a parent of a student in the Anchorage School District (ASD). I have also had the privilege of working as a graduate student intern in several ASD schools. This experience has given me an insider's perspective that many community members don't get to see.

I have witnessed our teachers' dedication, passion, and resilience as they navigate overfilled classrooms. I have seen students who need academic, emotional, and social support but are inefficiently attended to because of chronic understaffing. I have watched front office staff have to provide basic medical care, social-emotional lessons, and disciplinary consequences due to inadequate resources.

Chronic underfunding of our schools isn't only about education – it's a social justice issue. This funding shortfall unfairly affects students from historically marginalized groups, including Alaska Native students, students of color, students experiencing poverty, and those with disabilities. These more vulnerable students are more likely to experience larger class sizes, fewer academic supports, and limited access to school counselors, nurses, and other mental health supports. This is the definition of systemic inequity.

Written into our statutes, Alaska's state education policy states that, "the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them," (Alaska Stat. § 14.03.015, 2023). Every Alaskan child, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or ability, should have access to a high-quality education if we are to meet our stated policy. However, right now, we are failing that promise. When we do not fund our schools properly, we allow students, who need the most support, to fall even further behind; widening the gap between them and their peers. If we want to build a just and equitable future for Alaska and Alaskans, we must invest in high-quality education for all children, not just those with privilege and access.

Our teachers and school staff are being asked to do more with less. On the front line, they are forced to carry the burdens of a failing system. This is not sustainable, nor is it ethical. If we continue down this path, we will burnout our educators, deepen inequities, and worsen our economic future.

I urge you to take action. Spend time in a school – not as a legislator, but as a volunteer. Shadow a school counselor, help out in an under-resourced school classroom, or work alongside front office staff. See for yourself what we ask of educators every day.

Governor Dunleavy, I ask that you approve HB 69 when the Senate passes it. And to the Senate: if a veto occurs, I urge you to override it. Our children and our state depend on your leadership.

A well-funded education system is not a luxury but a moral obligation. Please act to ensure that all students in Alaska receive the education, support, and opportunities they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ma' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Marion Johnstone

Michael Mason

From: Mary Sullivan <marycatherinesullivan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 3:58 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Proposed amendment to HB 69

Dear senators,

Thank you for working to strengthen Alaska's education system. I am a homeschool educator to my two kids and I support the BSA increase and a strong public education system and a strong teacher work force.

We chose to homeschool initially because our son with his special needs was not thriving in the traditional school model and his needs were not being met. After our first year homeschooling we chose to homeschool again because he is thriving and has actually exceeded the state educational standards for his grade level, made friends, and has an improved self esteem and belief in his brain and abilities.

But that is simply anecdotal. There is a large body of evidence and research supporting homeschooling that is unfettered by state mandated testing, curriculum and prescribed pace of learning. I detail some of that below, but since you are busy let me simply state up front that our current correspondence program has educational rigorous and accountability already outlined in policy. Families work with licensed educators, create individual learning plans that align with state standards, produce work samples and progress reporting to benchmark achievement of educational goals and all of this is balanced with the inherently essential flexibility of homeschooling to allow students to pursue interests, and build on educational strengths and engage in new learning and topics at the pace that best responds to their individual developmental and academic readiness. This amendment is not only unnecessary for improving academic rigor or outcomes, but it also creates an undue burden for homeschool families that their public school counterparts are not held to.

Accountability for allotment spending is important, and is currently part of the model as well. Items are already outlined and limited to what helps meet ILP goals, are non religious in nature, and meet state requirements and rules for spending. All receipts are provided and no allotment monies can be spent without approvals first.

Please reject these unnecessary amendments requiring and mandating standardized assessment participation (something we know actually hurts academic achievement), set curriculum lists, and the unfair reporting requirements that would place undue burden on families. Below is an outline of research that supports my assertion that flexibility in homeschooling and not requiring standardized assessments actually improves educational outcomes. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Wagner, MSW, CFRE

Homeschool education, when designed with individualized learning approaches, provides an opportunity for more tailored, flexible, and effective instruction, free from the constraints of standardized assessments and state-mandated curricula. This approach is supported by a growing body of research

on child development, learning styles, and educational outcomes, all of which underscore the importance of addressing the unique needs, strengths, and developmental readiness of each student.

1. Individualized Learning and Developmental Readiness

Children do not develop at the same pace across cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Research by developmental psychologists such as Lev Vygotsky (1978) has highlighted the importance of a child's *zone of proximal development*—the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can do with guidance. A standardized curriculum, driven by predetermined timelines and assessments, often forces children to move through subjects and concepts at a uniform pace, disregarding their individual developmental timelines.

Homeschooling allows parents and educators to respond to a child's specific developmental needs. Children can progress at their own rate, advancing when they are ready rather than when the state or curriculum dictates. For instance, if a child struggles with reading comprehension but excels in math, homeschooling allows the flexibility to spend more time strengthening literacy skills while not stifling their growth in areas where they show readiness.

2. Emphasis on Learning Styles

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) suggests that students possess a variety of strengths, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. Standardized curricula and assessments are typically designed to assess only a narrow range of intelligences, often emphasizing linguistic and logical-mathematical skills over other valuable abilities.

Homeschooling provides the flexibility to engage with students' unique learning styles and preferences. For instance, a kinesthetic learner can incorporate hands-on activities and real-world experiences into their education, while a visual learner might benefit from using diagrams, charts, or multimedia tools. This approach fosters a more inclusive and holistic development of a child's skills, which is often not possible within the rigid structure of a state-sponsored curriculum.

3. Focus on Long-Term Understanding Over Short-Term Testing

Traditional standardized testing often emphasizes rote memorization and short-term recall rather than true understanding and critical thinking. As Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (2011) found in their research on higher education, standardized assessments are not effective predictors of long-term success or deep learning. Instead, learning should be approached as an ongoing process of exploration, curiosity, and mastery, rather than merely preparing students for a test.

Homeschooling allows for a more organic and thoughtful approach to mastery, with a focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, and intrinsic motivation. Without the pressure of state-mandated assessments, students can focus on truly understanding concepts at their own pace and in ways that make sense to them. This creates a more profound and lasting relationship with learning, where students are not only absorbing facts but are also engaged in the process of developing skills and competencies that will serve them throughout their lives.

4. Customization of Curriculum to Meet Student Needs

State-sponsored curricula are designed to cater to the “average” student, which often results in a one-size-fits-all approach that leaves students who are above or below average underserved. In contrast, homeschooling provides the opportunity to tailor the curriculum to the child’s specific needs, strengths, and interests, fostering a more engaged and motivated learner.

Research by Carol Dweck (2006) on mindset and motivation shows that when children feel their education is personalized and meaningful to their interests, they are more likely to develop a growth mindset—believing that their abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort. This approach not only leads to better engagement but also to a greater sense of agency and confidence in the child’s ability to tackle challenges.

5. A Holistic Approach to Education

Child development research emphasizes the importance of nurturing the whole child—addressing emotional, social, cognitive, and physical growth. Standardized testing, however, often reduces education to mere academic content, neglecting the emotional and social aspects of learning. Homeschooling allows parents to incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the daily experience, emphasizing emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills.

By moving away from standardized assessments, homeschooling creates space for a broader definition of success that includes emotional and social well-being, alongside intellectual achievements. This balanced approach to education helps children grow into well-rounded individuals, equipped not just with academic knowledge, but with the emotional resilience and social skills necessary for success in life.

Homeschooling allows us to include Non traditional and diverse learning opportunities and experiences for our children, foster strong family bonds, provide one on one attention and tailored individual learning plans and pacing, and nurture the social-emotional wellbeing of our kids in a safe, supportive environment. Mandating standardized testing and curriculum only stifles the benefits of homeschooling and does not improve educational outcomes or achievement.

6. Evidence Supporting Homeschooling Outcomes

There is substantial research showing that homeschooled children often outperform their peers on standardized tests, despite not being bound by a state-prescribed curriculum. A study by Ray (2017) reviewing data from the National Household Education Survey found that homeschoolers performed significantly better than their public school peers, with higher scores on achievement tests and greater success in higher education. Importantly, these outcomes occurred without the requirement for state-mandated assessments, highlighting that personalized, self-paced learning can lead to superior educational results.

Furthermore, homeschoolers tend to have higher levels of motivation, self-direction, and a deeper sense of personal responsibility for their learning. These qualities are essential for lifelong learning and success, both academically and personally.

Our current correspondence school program already has educational accountability baked into the policies. We wrote individual learning plans that align with state standards, we submit detailed work

samples and progress reporting on said educational goals, and have the support of licensed educators and specialists. We also submit receipts and documentation for any items purchased with an allotment - our tax dollars that we pay - to ensure that the item or service purchased aligns with and supports the ILP goals. The accountability already exists and this amendment creates an unfair burden for homeschool students that their public school counterparts are not required to fulfill. Moreover, families will simply leave the correspondence school programs, taking dollars with them, if such unfair and frankly irresponsible requirements are put into place.

Conclusion

Homeschooling without the constraints of standardized assessments or state-mandated curricula provides a powerful alternative to traditional educational models, and does not undermine public education systems. By prioritizing individualized learning, flexibility based on developmental readiness, and an emphasis on each student's unique learning style, homeschooling can cultivate a more holistic, meaningful, and successful educational experience. The evidence from child development research and educational studies suggests that this approach not only fosters academic achievement but also nurtures a love of learning, emotional intelligence, and critical life skills. Therefore, it is clear that homeschooling, when approached thoughtfully and without the rigid structure of state-imposed requirements, can offer an educational experience that is both effective and enriching.

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Michelle Price Miller <michellepricemiller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 5:57 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Sen. Jesse Bjorkman; Sen. Löki Tobin; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Jesse Kiehl; Sen. Mike Cronk; House Education
Subject: HB 69

Michelle Miller

35410 Anchor Cir
Kenai, AK 99611

March 27, 2025

Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Committee,

First, I would like to say that no one is against additional school funding. All of us, even us homeschool moms, want our public schools adequately funded. However, this bill in its current form, is much more than a funding bill. A simple 2-page funding bill is now 18 pages of more regulation and bureaucracy. But what concerns me the most, is much of the bill seems to be targeting and punishing correspondence schools and charter schools. And contrary to the anecdotal evidence offered by a couple educators last week, home educated students are not “messes that need fixing.”

I listened to public comment last Friday and learned a great deal about the bill itself and the potential problems it is creating. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that a very simple funding bill is being used to implement some unrelated partisan legislation.

I would like to express my concern on two specific topics, if I am understanding them correctly.

1. The verbiage regarding open enrollment and out of district designation is a bit confusing. How do correspondence schools fit in this description? Is this a political ‘run around’ and a way to force homeschool families into their district’s homeschool option?
2. I am a big advocate for parents to have the right to opt out of standardized testing. I have a very long list of reasons why, but essentially, I know my kids would have tested poorly and triggered an intervention. But those tests do not have a way to evaluate potential and various learning strengths. I now have a senior who has taken college courses at KPC and a 10th grader reading college level coursework.

One of the many things we love about Alaska is the flexibility in education. My son, who is a college bound senior in high school, has participated in high school sports, attended public school classes, attended college courses, and is learning a trade all while homeschooling. It has been a blessing. I am not anti-public school. I am in full support of families having the option to do what is best for their children. And Alaska offers many amazing opportunities to do so. Please, stop trying to fix what is not broken.

In closing I would like to say that additional funding is obviously needed for our public schools, and I hate the idea that your fiscally conservative colleagues will be unfairly criticized for not supporting this bill in its flawed form. Please do not play politics with this one.

Thank you,

Michelle Miller

907-740-3547

michellepricemiller@gmail.com

Michael Mason

From: Renee Salvucci <renee.salvucci@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 9:12 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Increase the BSA

I'm in favor of increasing the BSA by a \$1,000. We need smaller class size. 25 to 30 children in a class is too many to have effective learning. Increasing the BSA will help to do that.

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Sally's Email <shuntley@alaska.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 8:39 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB69

I am writing to urge your support for HB69 the Education Funding Bill. Education is the foundation of any and all young people. It is supporting the future of our state. When I moved to Alaska 47 years ago, we had one of the top scoring school systems in the country and now we are sub standard. We owe the children of Alaskans more than that. Please support HB69. It's not perfect, but it's a step I. The right direction.

Thank you!
Sally Huntley
Anchorage, AK

Michael Mason

From: Sarah B. <sarahmcbeck@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 12:20 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Alaska families need your support

Dear Senate Education Committee,

As a parent and community member, I am deeply concerned about the state of education in Alaska. House Bill 69 is essential to ensuring our children receive the education they deserve. Without this investment, our schools will continue to struggle, and our students will pay the price.

While discussions about reform continue, our schools need immediate and stable funding to provide a foundation for success. Any long-term improvements must begin with a commitment to adequately funding our schools now. Education is not just another budget item—it is the key to Alaska's future.

Should the governor choose to veto this funding, I urge you to stand with Alaska's families and educators by supporting an override. The future of our state depends on the strength of our schools, and I ask that you take action to ensure that every child has access to the quality education they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and commitment to Alaska's students.

Sincerely,

Sarah Beck
Genetic Counselor, Providence
5301 Wood Hall Dr
Anchorage, AK 99516
907-215-0075
sarahmcbeck@gmail.com

Michael Mason

From: Shannon Moeser <sjmoeser@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 1:22 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB 69 - oppose

Alaska Congress,

As a foster parent, who has housed 24 kids, I oppose HB 69 due to it restricting kids to their boundary school or Borough.

Fosters kids are already behind due to trauma, neglect and abuse. Covid and remote learning while in poor home environments set hundreds even more behind. Most kids are not on grade level this struggling to complete the set curriculum requirement of 25.5 credits in the time frame of 4 yrs.

Currently the only credit recovery classes available in Matsu Borough School District is Burchell High School and IDEA. If IDEA goes away as an option many students will not graduate. Burchell High School has very few seats and a long waitlist for credit deficient students. In the past two years I have had 3 teens graduate through Burchell ABLE program because they were credit deficient.

I currently homeschool my 15 and 11 year old daughter. My 11 year old came to my home in 2021 as a 3rd grader on a kindergarten level at age 8. She came to me at a young enough age that we were able to work with the public school to get her mostly caught up. She has attended Matsu Central for 4th and 5th grade. She is proficient or high average. She seems on track to in the Matsu Borough. Unfortunately, her older sister moved in with us at age 12, in 7th grade on 5th grade level with an IEP. She struggled with completing school work in public school for 7th and 8th grade. She would get up at 6:00am to do school work, catch the bus to school, return home at 2:40pm to do school work until 9pm. She was doing school work every weekend. We could barely get her to go anywhere, because she could never get caught up on school work. She lacks the basic skills to complete the high standards of Matsu School District. We enrolled her in IDEA due to the flexible class options, reduced credit requirements of 21 credits. She can work at her own pace, video lectures help her to slow down steps. She is excelling in school! Now we are concerned she will have to return to Matsu School District, which will make her credit deficient.

She is just one of many students that will greatly suffer academically and mentally if unable to stay enrolled in IDEA.

I also have a 14 yr old foster son attending Knik Charter School in 7th grade. He too is very behind. I am concerned I won't be able to help him pass and graduate in Matsu Borough. Again, Burchell High School is waitlisted and inaccessible to many students that get credit deficient.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shannon Moeser
Foster Parent
907-982-9683

Michael Mason

From: Terry Snyder <tisterryak@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 2:35 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Support for HB 69

I am a strong supporter of **HB 69**, the much-needed and long-overdue education funding bill before you.

After listening to hours of thoughtful and passionate testimony, I believe the many compelling reasons to pass this bill—and perhaps even strengthen it—have already been expressed. However, I would like to highlight one point that I haven't heard discussed.

Choice comes with a cost. As you know, lawmakers, parents, and educators generally agree that our public schools must offer **choice** in how we educate students. But much like capital projects, once the ribbon is cut, we must face the ongoing costs required to keep these programs functioning. If we are committed to expanding educational choice, we must also be committed to identifying and securing the necessary funding. Since school districts cannot generate revenue on their own, that responsibility falls to governing bodies like the legislature to provide funding **consistently and in a timely manner**.

As you consider the fate of this bill and the state's **constitutional duty to fund public education**, I urge you to keep in mind the **true cost of choice** and ensure that our schools have the resources they need.

Thank you for your work to improve our state. I recognize the challenges you face, especially without a long-term fiscal plan, and I appreciate the difficult decisions ahead.

Terry Snyder, Proud Alaska resident since 1975.