

Tammy Smith

From: Amanda Johnson [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2025 6:51 PM
To: Rep. Will Stapp
Cc: Rep. Rebecca Himschoot
Subject: In Support of House Bill 69 - Parent Testimony - A. Johnson
Attachments: Parent Testimony, House Bill 69.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please see my attached testimony in support of House Bill 69.

Thank you for listening,

Amanda

Representatives Stapp, Rufridge, Bynum, Kopp, Coulombe, Underwood, Edgmon, Prax, Schwanke, and Josephson,

House of Representatives

In support of House Bill 69

Amanda Johnson / Mother / Sitka School District

1/31/2025

Dear members of the House of Representatives,

My name is Amanda Johnson, and I live in Sitka, Alaska. I am the parent (mother) of 3 students enrolled in the Sitka School District. These schools are Xoots Elementary, Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary, and Blatchley Middle School. I am writing to you today in support of AK House Bill 69, Approp: Operating Budget/Loans/Funds.

My husband and I are lifelong Sitkans, educated within this district and will hopefully continue educating our 3 children within this district. We can attest to the detrimental changes in our schools due to continual budget cuts and the uncertainty of funding from year to year.

It is likely that you have not heard many parental voices advocating for school funding in the past, I believe this is because not many parents realize what has been cut systematically over time. Many parents are working multiple jobs to get by and have little time to consider what's happening behind the scenes at the schools. Many others are new to town or are Coast Guard families who move often. From the outside looking in, our schools not only meet the expected academic standards, but they utilize every local resource to bring our students as much fine arts and science as possible (this is thanks to innumerable volunteers from the Sitka Science Center, the Sitka Fine Arts Camp, and more), after most of this was cut from our budget. Many families specifically choose to stay in Sitka because of our great school system. Yet, every year a relentless effort is made to simply retain the fundamentals and keep the lights on...prioritizing academics over all else. Our buildings are aging drastically, our playgrounds are falling apart/ boarded up, and many of our teachers are wearing multiple hats (one ex: Xoots Librarian was also the Music teacher last year). Corners were cut and cut again, but they were making it work.

This year there is a palpable difference, we are down to bare bones and it shows. The halls are quieter, helping hands are spread thin, and many classrooms are closed or repurposed. In the last year alone, the Sitka School district had to cut 18 certified positions and 6 classified. Our maintenance department was removed entirely, and our multi-school burden now falls to the city maintenance crew. These cuts were not confirmed until right before school started in August, as they awaited the final word on funding – leaving the entire district in a lurch.

These losses have left massive holes in our education system. Between all schools, we have lost imperative programs and positions like music, ALL libraries, science, fine arts, after school enrichment clubs, reading specialists, and more. Our libraries and librarians have always been a vital resource and a place of wonder, now none of them are staffed. The librarians were moved to classrooms with little time to prepare for the year ahead. Our teachers are maxed out, their hearts are hurting from losing vital teammates and coworkers. Luckily for our children, the remaining teachers do a fantastic job of not letting their fear, exhaustion, and uncertainty show. They want our children and our district to continue to succeed.

As a child educated within this district (K-12), I cannot tell you what the budget looked like when I was a student. What I can remember, however, are teachers who were compassionate, innovative and consistent. Most importantly, they were vested, and they stuck around. Many of these (now retired) teachers remain in Sitka and continue to show up and support Sitka's youth by substituting, volunteering for fundraising events, and helping lead youth activities. They continue to support a system that supported them. I fear this may not be the case for my children or our current teachers, as this once sturdy district continues to be chopped down bit by bit.

While the teacher to student ratios may have been higher in the past, the time needed to collect and report data was far less. Increased education standards require more dedicated time, manpower and support staff to attain standardized achievement goals. As the specialized classes are stripped away, so are prep times and subject matter experts (librarians, musicians, artists, science teachers, reading specialists, etc.). More and more content is being pulled from online resources and presented via videos (ex: Science). This proves difficult with connectivity issues on our remote island (just this Fall we had no internet in Sitka for two full weeks, after our main internet cable was severed).

Our teachers, now more than ever, finish each school year wondering what and who will remain when the Fall semester begins. Some are left scrambling at the last minute to put new or combined classrooms together, others are given pink slips and asked to wait months before finding out if they even have a job come fall. Sitka, an island, is not an easy or cheap location to move to and we currently have a housing crisis due to skyrocketed property values and limited land. Just last year Sitka lost two elementary teachers who had independently moved their entire families up here for a chance to settle down and teach in Sitka. Sadly, being not tenured, the threat of not having a job to pay the bills proved too much and they moved back down south, we will not see them again.

I can tell you for a fact, having experienced burnout myself (in healthcare), that this climate will lead to staff burnout, decreased retention, difficulty hiring new staff, and undoubtedly poorer student outcomes. Our schools are struggling to cover the basics and our children will bear the consequences, they deserve better. Without a consistent and increased budget, I fear my children's public education in Sitka will deteriorate. These are not adults asking for free tuition, these are our youngest minds growing exponentially and creating a foundation for the rest of their lives. Our town is too small and too expensive for charter schools to survive.

I hope for the day when our educators can take a deep breath and look ahead without so many unknowns. Please help us maintain the staff and programs needed to provide a well-rounded education for Sitka's children. Public schools need to thrive for a bright Alaskan future. Being able to plan three years ahead would make this possible.

I strongly support Bill 69 and the positive impact it will have on our school district and our community if passed. Thank you for your time and effort in support of Alaska's students, educators and families.

Sincerely,
Amanda Johnson



Tammy Smith

From: Rep. Andi Story
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 6:52 AM
To: Tammy Smith
Subject: Fw: Support HB69

FYI

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Tim Ryan <timwryan@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 8, 2025 12:16:50 AM
To: Rep. Alyse Galvin <Rep.Alyse.Galvin@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andi Story <Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andrew Gray <Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ashley Carrick <Rep.Ashley.Carrick@akleg.gov>; Rep. Bill Elam <Rep.Bill.Elam@akleg.gov>; Rep. Bryce Edgmon <Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov>; Rep. Calvin Schrage <Rep.Calvin.Schrage@akleg.gov>; Rep. Cathy Tilton <Rep.Cathy.Tilton@akleg.gov>; Rep. Carolyn Hall <Rep.Carolyn.Hall@akleg.gov>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov>; Rep. Dan Saddler <Rep.Dan.Saddler@akleg.gov>; Rep. David Nelson <Rep.David.Nelson@akleg.gov>; Rep. DeLena Johnson <Rep.DeLena.Johnson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Donna Mears <Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov>; Rep. Elexie Moore <Rep.Elexie.Moore@akleg.gov>; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski <Rep.Frank.Tomaszewski@akleg.gov>; Rep. Genevieve Mina <Rep.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov>; Rep. George Rauscher <Rep.George.Rauscher@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jamie Allard <Rep.Jamie.Allard@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jeremy Bynum <Rep.Jeremy.Bynum@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jubilee Underwood <Rep.Jubilee.Underwood@akleg.gov>; Rep. Justin Ruffridge <Rep.Justin.Ruffridge@akleg.gov>; Rep. Kevin McCabe <Rep.Kevin.McCabe@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ky Holland <Rep.Ky.Holland@akleg.gov>; Rep. Louise Stutes <Rep.Louise.Stutes@akleg.gov>; Rep. Maxine Dibert <Rep.Maxine.Dibert@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mia Costello <Rep.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mike Prax <Rep.Mike.Prax@akleg.gov>; Rep. Neal Foster <Rep.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov>; Rep. Nellie Jimmie <Rep.Nellie.Jimmie@akleg.gov>; Rep. Robyn Burke <Rep.Robyn.Burke@akleg.gov>; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot <Rep.Rebecca.Himschoot@akleg.gov>; Rep. Rebecca Schwanke <Rep.Rebecca.Schwanke@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sara Hannan <Rep.Sara.Hannan@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sarah Vance <Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ted Eischeid <Rep.Ted.Eischeid@akleg.gov>
Subject: Fw: Support HB69

From: Tim Ryan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 7:15 AM
To: Senator.Robert.Yundt@akleg.gov <Senator.Robert.Yundt@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support HB69

Dear Representative

As you are well aware, state education funding is in dire need of a permanent and sustainable increase. This will allow Alaskan school districts to plan for the future, recruit and retain core teaching staff and get back to the business of preparing the leaders of tomorrow for a better future in Alaska.

I am a lifelong Alaskan. I attended O'Malley, Hanshew and Service, K-12. The education I received in the Anchorage School District allowed me to attend medical school and today I am a business owner and radiologist serving patients in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Homer. Trust me when I say, I understand the value of quality education.

Everyone wants to invest in our children's future. Moreover, we all want choice and accountability at the district level. Because fundamentally we agree on so much, compromise on funding and policy reform is happening. But I urge you to remember that fundamentally policy and funding are related but separate issues. My children already attend high performing schools and are involved in immersion education. Below are the most recent MAP math scores of their schools against alternative, charter and correspondence schools in ASD. Other than Eagle Academy, which is too far from where we live in south Anchorage, there is no better option. THIS IS PARENTAL CHOICE. I choose to send my children to these schools. These schools are a model of success. They provide my children with the education and opportunities they need. Now what these schools need are teachers, which require money. So please continue to make the bill the strongest bill it can be, but in the end keep in mind that the current crisis is a funding crisis, not a reform crisis. And while reform is great, funding is the urgent problem that needs fixing now.

In closing, where we spend money is a reflection of our values and priorities. My job as a citizen is to help you as a lawmaker understand these. On the other hand, the task of figuring out how to fund education is your job and your constitutional duty. So be courageous. Be a leader. Fulfill your obligation and solve this issue once and for all.

Please support HB69.

Thank you,

Tim Ryan

Tammy Smith

From: Rep. Andi Story
Sent: Sunday, March 9, 2025 6:53 AM
To: Tammy Smith
Subject: Fw: Strongly oppose HB 69

FYI

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From: Alexandria Stanton [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 7, 2025 9:28:23 PM
To: House Rules <House.Rules@akleg.gov>; Rep. Bryce Edgmon <Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jubilee Underwood <Rep.Jubilee.Underwood@akleg.gov>; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski <Rep.Frank.Tomaszewski@akleg.gov>; Rep. Cathy Tilton <Rep.Cathy.Tilton@akleg.gov>; Rep. Louise Stutes <Rep.Louise.Stutes@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andi Story <Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov>; Rep. Will Stapp <Rep.Will.Stapp@akleg.gov>; Rep. Rebecca Schwanke <Rep.Rebecca.Schwanke@akleg.gov>; Rep. Calvin Schrage <Rep.Calvin.Schrage@akleg.gov>; Rep. Dan Saddler <Rep.Dan.Saddler@akleg.gov>; Rep. Justin Ruffridge <Rep.Justin.Ruffridge@akleg.gov>; Rep. George Rauscher <Rep.George.Rauscher@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mike Prax <Rep.Mike.Prax@akleg.gov>; Rep. David Nelson <Rep.David.Nelson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Elexie Moore <Rep.Elexie.Moore@akleg.gov>; Rep. Genevieve Mina <Rep.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov>; Rep. Donna Mears <Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov>; Rep. Kevin McCabe <Rep.Kevin.McCabe@akleg.gov>; Rep. Chuck Kopp <Rep.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; Rep. DeLena Johnson <Rep.DeLena.Johnson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Nellie Jimmie <Rep.Nellie.Jimmie@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ky Holland <Rep.Ky.Holland@akleg.gov>; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot <Rep.Rebecca.Himschoot@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sara Hannan <Rep.Sara.Hannan@akleg.gov>; Rep. Carolyn Hall <Rep.Carolyn.Hall@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andrew Gray <Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov>; Rep. Alyse Galvin <Rep.Alyse.Galvin@akleg.gov>; Rep. Neal Foster <Rep.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov>; Rep. Zack Fields <Rep.Zack.Fields@akleg.gov>; Rep. Bill Elam <Rep.Bill.Elam@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ted Eischeid <Rep.Ted.Eischeid@akleg.gov>; Rep. Maxine Dibert <Rep.Maxine.Dibert@akleg.gov>; Rep. Julie Coulombe <Rep.Julie.Coulombe@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mia Costello <Rep.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ashley Carrick <Rep.Ashley.Carrick@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jeremy Bynum <Rep.Jeremy.Bynum@akleg.gov>; Rep. Robyn Burke <Rep.Robyn.Burke@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jamie Allard <Rep.Jamie.Allard@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sarah Vance <Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Strongly oppose HB 69

To Whom It May Concern

I am a mother of four children three of which are of school age and we have made the move to home school this year. My children struggled in the public elementary school in Wasilla for years, falling behind in math and reading, eventually hating school all together because all they did was Math and Reading. I watched as standardized test scores fell how much just these subjects were pushed on my kids with no added support to staff and increased behavior children. There were numerous reasons I pulled my children but the biggest reward, they are thriving! They are learning, they can tell you what they learned, they aren't burnt out, they can READ! IDEA homeschool program and it's staff were instrumental in helping me navigate this first year in my kids success. Please remember that one size does not fit all and our schools are failing teachers

and students alike. Let us help our kids succeed, how and where they need to, and support parents and teachers working outside the box to teach a thriving generation of kids.

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to House Bill 69, which unfairly discriminates against correspondence students and reveals a clear prejudice among some representatives against public home education in Alaska.

While HB 69 proposes a significant \$1,000 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for traditional public schools, it neglects to provide proportional support for correspondence students—many of whom depend on public homeschooling programs. This funding disparity effectively devalues these students' education, treating them as second-class within Alaska's public school system. Correspondence programs have long been a cornerstone of education in our state, especially for rural families, yet this bill sidelines them without justification.

Even more troubling are the bill's amendments imposing a master curriculum list and detailed allotment reporting requirements exclusively on correspondence schools. These measures represent unequal treatment compared to traditional public schools, which face no such mandates. Why should correspondence programs be forced to first submit curriculum lists when brick-and-mortar schools retain flexibility in their instructional materials without reporting? Why must correspondence schools submit burdensome allotment reports when other public schools do not? These requirements are not only discriminatory—they signal a distrust of correspondence families and educators by representatives, implying their choices are less legitimate than those in traditional settings.

This unequal scrutiny reflects a broader bias against public home education. The rejection of Governor Dunleavy's proposals—which included equitable support for correspondence and charter students—in favor of a narrow focus on traditional schools further underscores this prejudice. It's as if some lawmakers view homeschooling not as a valid public education option, but as a problem to be controlled or marginalized. Alaska's education system should celebrate and support diversity in learning, not punish it with restrictive policies.

I urge you to oppose HB 69 unless it is amended to ensure fairness for all students. This means providing equitable funding increases for correspondence programs and striking the discriminatory master curriculum and reporting requirements. Anything less perpetuates an unjust double standard that harms Alaska's homeschooling families and undermines the state's commitment to educational choice.

Please stand for equality and reject this flawed bill in its current form.

Sincerely,
Alexandrea Stanton

Tammy Smith

From: Rep. Andi Story
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2025 12:43 AM
To: Tammy Smith
Subject: FW: AFP-AK: Vote NO on HB 69 BSA INCREASE

From: Quincy Taylor [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 12:18 PM
To: Rep. Andi Story <Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov>
Subject: AFP-AK: Vote NO on HB 69 BSA INCREASE



March 12, 2025

Honorable Members of the Alaska House
Statehouse
Juneau, Alaska

On behalf of thousands of Americans for Prosperity activists and supporters in Alaska, I urge you to vote NO on HB 69 - EDUCATION FUNDING: INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION. **These votes may be recorded in our 2025 legislative session scorecard.**

Before Alaska increases its spending more than it has in recent years, it must prioritize proven policies that **put students and teachers first** and improve education outcomes.

This needs to start with a reevaluation of how education funding flows. Alaska leads the nation in per-pupil funding but lags dramatically in student performance. **Alaska's per-pupil expenditure - over \$22,000 per student – is the sixth highest in the country.** Despite this large investment in Alaska's education system, **Alaskan students rank 49th in the nation in performance** according to the Casey Foundation.

Too often, throwing more money into the education system is looked to as the solution and the unintended result is locking students and families into a broken, one-size-fits-all structure. **Unfortunately, HB 69 furthers this problem, by increasing the amount Alaska spends on school systems.**

Instead, we should focus on ways to improve student achievement and ensure that each student can access the educational environment that best unlocks their unique talents and interests. Such a system would also give more flexibility to educators, who would have a greater ability to create environments that work for them and for students. The provisions in the legislation creating open enrollment options for every student in the state are excellent and a strong step towards creating greater educational freedom in Alaska.

However, the \$1,000 BSA increase is an **additional \$250 million in spending. This brings our total K-12 BSA spend from \$1.5 billion to approximately \$1.75 billion.**

While we appreciate the work the legislature has done and is doing to try and solve the issues facing our education system, more meaningful reforms are necessary to get Alaska's education system back on track - especially ones that are not tied to large funding increases. Simply adding money to an antiquated, one-size-fits-all system is not the solution Alaska's students need. It is time to fund students, not systems.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to vote NO on HB 69 EDUCATION FUNDING: INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION.

Sincerely,

Quincy Azimi-Tabrizi
Deputy State Director
Americans for Prosperity - Alaska

Representative Maxine Dibert
State Capitol Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Support for HB 69: Education Funding - Increase BSA

Honorable Representative Dibert,

I wish to write in support of HB 69, which will provide for increases in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) over time across Alaska. As you know and has been demonstrated in comparative studies, funding for the Base Student Allocation is not automatically adjusted for inflation and has therefore lagged behind the average pupil spending nationally. Not surprisingly, so has student performance.

With the increases over the years in healthcare costs, housing, utilities and other living expenses, increases in pupil-to-teacher ratios, cuts to programs, and school deficits, it is no wonder that problems with staff retention have been exacerbated by our statewide school funding situation. Passage of this legislation is critical to the health and continued operation of our system of public schools, which is mandated in our state constitution.

As I have previously testified under past introduced education legislation, I have filled in as substitute staff at our local elementary school despite having other employment. Because I knew the tight financial and staffing situation in my own community's schools, I agreed to take time from one job to fill in at the school. Educational institutions should not be in the position of begging people to fill in for staff who need to attend training, or deal with family health issues, or other emergency situations beyond their control because schools don't have adequate funding and staffing to cover these situations. HB 69 is not the perfect solution, but it does get us closer to where we need to be across the state.

Investing in education is critical to Alaska. Students who receive consistent, quality education in reasonably maintained facilities with access to appropriate technology, programs and pupil to teacher ratios have greater tools for involvement, innovation and investment in Alaska's future. Living in a huge state with a largely rural population presents challenges, but adequate public school funding should not be one of them. A yes vote on HB 69 demonstrates our understanding that Alaska is, indeed, a land of promise and opportunity.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Lagoudakis
Petersburg, Alaska