

Ella Lubin

From: RANDY TRANI <RANDY.TRANI@MATSUK12.US>
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:45 AM
To: Ella Lubin
Subject: Can you share this with the Taskforce relative to my testimony last week?

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the importance of education funding. I sincerely appreciate the time and energy you and your colleagues are dedicating to understanding the complex landscape of K-12 education in Alaska and to making it stronger for all students.

I wanted to follow up on a few key points that I was unable to expand upon during my brief testimony. Hopefully I can add clarity in writing that I was not able to at the hearing. In particular, I would like to expand upon my comments about graduation rate differences between correspondence and brick-and-mortar students and emphasize that my intent was not to draw comparisons between programs, but rather to highlight how underfunding affects *all* students, regardless of the model they choose.

First, I want to reiterate that both I and the Mat-Su Borough School Board are strong proponents of homeschool education. Our district is proud to offer three robust correspondence programs. The largest of which is Mat-Su Central School, which occupies a state of the art brand new building also home to our new Hybrid Learning Academy (HLA). We recognize that many families seek flexibility, and we value their commitment to active participation in their children's education. The HLA is one example of how we are expanding opportunities for homeschool families by providing hybrid in-person and at-home learning options simultaneously.

Our support for homeschool programs goes hand in hand with our commitment to ensuring that *all* students, homeschool and traditional alike, have equitable access to quality learning opportunities. Culminating in all students graduating on time and leaving our district with the skills and training to access a variety of choices after high school. My top priority has always been to ensure the highest level of student success and achievement. Unfortunately, as education funding fails to keep pace with inflation, districts like ours are forced to make reductions that impact everyone. Larger class sizes, fewer electives, diminished extracurricular offerings, and constrained transportation services often push families to seek alternatives.

However, when students transition to correspondence programs, the district loses not only instructional funding but also critical support such as transportation dollars. In the Mat-Su, over the past decade, more than 2,000 students have shifted to correspondence programs. This shift has resulted in a loss of more than \$2 million in transportation funding alone, resources that we must then replace from our general education budget. While there are fewer students to transport our correspondence students live throughout the borough, we cannot reduce bus routes or fixed costs, so we must absorb those expenses at the expense of classroom resources and programming. This creates a cycle of diminishing support that affects both brick-and-mortar and homeschool students.

It's important to note that the lower graduation rates among correspondence students are not a reflection of the quality or intent of homeschool education, but rather a symptom of a funding system that no longer meets the needs of today's students. Families are no longer choosing between two separate systems, traditional versus homeschool. Instead, they are seeking blended, flexible pathways that draw on the strengths of both. The funding formula must evolve to reflect that reality.

Mat-Su has already taken steps to address funding concerns and their impact on graduation rates and created a new alternative program. The Mat-Su Hybrid Learning Academy demonstrates how innovation can respond to family demand while maximizing resources. We anticipated 480 course enrollments in our first year; we received over 1,800. The model is working, both educationally and financially, it will generate over \$2 million in additional revenue that directly benefits students.

As the committee continues to look for solutions to improve K-12 education in Alaska, we believe progress can be made through changes to the state's funding formula which recognize the hybrid educational programming available. Specifically, allowing students who attend *resident district correspondence programs* to be funded through the full formula would provide much-needed equity. These students use their local district's infrastructure, transportation, extracurriculars, CTE programs, special education, administrative services, and should therefore generate the same level of support as other resident students. Students who access statewide programs offered outside of their district of residence could continue to access those options and the current funding level.

I understand there is discussion about moving all correspondence students from a 0.90 to a 1.00 funding level statewide. While that would be beneficial, I am specifically advocating for resident correspondence students to flow through the *entire* funding formula. This adjustment would strengthen local programs, stabilize districts, and ensure that homeschool, hybrid, and traditional students alike receive the support they need to thrive.

Thank you again for your time and for your ongoing commitment to Alaska's students. Please feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss this proposal further or see firsthand how the Mat-Su Borough School District is working to support all learners through innovative, responsive, and high quality approaches

Sincerely,

Randy Trani

Superintenent MSBSD