



February 2, 2026

Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Capitol, Room 405
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: NEA-Alaska Support for House Bill 261 – Education Funding Process

Dear Representative Story,

On behalf of NEA-Alaska, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 261. Thank you for your leadership in addressing the structural budgeting rollercoaster that has disempowered our school districts and destabilized educators, students, and families for far too long.

Currently, Alaska's education funding process is backwards, necessitating guesswork budgeting and tentative program staffing that is damaging and demoralizing. The current process particularly impacts our educators who may be "pink-slipped" or laid off only to be re-hired following the approval of the state budget. This annual exercise makes it nearly impossible for districts to retain high-quality talent, and causes deep insecurity in school communities for parents and students. Educators frequently leave their school district or the state in search of more stable, secure jobs.

HB 261 will improve educator retention. Alaska faces an ongoing educator shortage and among the worst turnover in the country. We cannot expect to retain experienced educators when they are left in limbo every year anticipating whether or not they will have a contract until right before school starts. This bill allows districts to responsibly hire and retain staff with confidence during the spring recruitment window. District investments in teacher experience, professional development, and educator continuity will be protected, paying dividends in high quality learning environments.

HB 261 protects students and student learning. When districts are forced to redo budgets late in the school year due to unpredictable enrollment-driven budget fluctuations, the focus shifts from planned high quality instruction to getting by in the short term without thinking of long-term student need. By using a three-year student count average, this bill ensures that classrooms remain funded and programs remain wholly intact, regardless of shifts in the October student count.

NEA-Alaska also appreciates the policies in HB 261 intended to support intensive needs students. By allowing mid-year adjustments for this student cohort, HB 261 ensures that our most vulnerable learners receive the specialized resources they deserve the moment they enter a classroom, rather than months or years later.



Finally, recognizing alternative schools as unique entities ensures that students who require smaller, personalized environments are no longer deprived of the specific funding necessary for their success due to district-wide budget adjustments.

NEA-Alaska urges the legislature to pass HB 261 to provide our schools with the stability they need to thrive. Thank you for your commitment to Alaska's students and the professionals who serve them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Laura Capelle'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Laura' being more prominent than the last name 'Capelle'.

Laura Capelle
President, NEA-Alaska