

From: [Barbara Thurston](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: School funding
Date: Thursday, April 02, 2015 8:29:46 AM

Dear members of the Fiance Committee:

I am a long-time Alaska resident and a member of the Juneau school board, and want to encourage you to keep the promise made a year ago and fully fund the "one-time" money to school districts.

Juneau, like all other districts in the state, has been cutting our budget each year to reflect increasing costs and lower revenues. We've cut more than 10% in the last five years, and are looking at potential cuts of another \$2 or \$3 million this year.

While we've lost the ability to offer critical opportunities to students, and are no longer able to do things like provide nurses in each school, or sufficient counselors to help all students plan for their post-high school years, we have been able to focus our resources on the items that are the most critical for student learning. The changes we've made to our practices that have paid off in increased achievement - our graduation rate is now around 80%, which is among the highest in the state.

We can't keep cutting, however, and still expect these gains in learning to continue. If we don't receive the one-time funds for the upcoming year, we're looking at (once again) increasing class sizes for students - we've simply cut everything else that can be cut.

Alaska's children are our greatest resource. While it might appear to save some money now to cut funding for education, this will hurt the economy of the state and the quality of life of its people in the long run. Assuring that all of our students (even the ones that are expensive to teach) are able to learn what they need to become successful adults is critical if we want Alaska to be a strong state with a reliable workforce.

Please, restore the one-time funding as established by the legislature last year. If maintaining such funding is only possible with a tax or fee increase, then so be it. I would be happy to pay such a tax, and go on public record supporting it, in order to assure the future of our children and our state.

Thank you.

Barbara Thurston

Juneau