



January 29, 2018

The Honorable Paul Seaton and the Honorable Neal Foster
Alaska State Representatives
Co-Chairs, House Finance Committee
State Capitol Rooms 505 and 410
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 287

Dear Co-Chairs Seaton and Foster:

On behalf of 13,000 teachers and education support professionals statewide, I am writing to express NEA-Alaska's support for House Bill 287.

This appropriation is a proactive step by the legislature to give confidence, predictability, and stability back to our school districts, educators, and communities. This legislation will limit pink slips, reduce the stress placed on educators, and provide districts the ability to develop realistic budgets based on accurate state funding levels.

There is no question that some Alaska educators are leaving the state due to budget uncertainty every year. Alaska started the 2017-2018 school year with 250 vacant teaching positions. Each of these vacancies means lost opportunities for Alaska students, larger class sizes, and less time for one-on-one learning. If the cycle of laying off educators at the end of every school year continues, these vacancies will only rise as our best and brightest leave the profession, and the state, for more stable careers.

Under HB 287 districts will be empowered to make early decisions regarding their budgets. This approach lends itself to more transparency, community involvement, and input from all stakeholders. Educators who are impacted by declining budgets will have the certainty they need to make informed decisions about their futures, rather than having to wait until well into the summer to find out whether or not they have jobs in the fall. Having the ability to plan for the future will help to attract and retain the high quality educators our students deserve.

I know from experience that when students have the time to get to know and trust their teacher and the teacher gets to know their students, that's when real learning happens. That trust isn't built overnight, and it's certainly not built by having teachers cycle in and out of our public schools every few years. This is one of the underlying issues that HB 287 addresses and why NEA-Alaska so adamantly supports it.



NEA-Alaska educators are eager to support this legislation because we know it will be good for kids, good for our schools, and good for Alaska families.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 287.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Parker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Parker
President, NEA-Alaska