



2019 Joint Position Statements

Adequate funding for public education is our number one priority.

Priority Funding for Education

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools; funding the true cost of education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding is crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Revenue Enhanced Fiscal Plan Imperative

Alaska has made progress by cutting the budget and restructuring the use of Permanent Fund earnings for sustainable funding of both the permanent fund dividend and a portion of government services. State expenditures have been cut by 40% (\$3 billion) since FY13 when the current run of deficit spending began.

The passage of SB26, which set a sustainable percent of market draw from Permanent Fund earnings, along with government funding cuts, have closed a high percent of the budget deficit.

A \$1.6 billion deficit is now estimated at the projected oil prices of \$64/bbl.

The need to finalize and implement a complete and long-term multi-revenue fiscal plan remains, especially with the commitment to additional PFD payments. Diversified revenue streams would address the remaining deficit, and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development and inflation, deferred maintenance capital requirements, and would maintain existing, yet minimal, reserves in the CBR. The need remains to finalize and implement a complete long-term multi-revenue fiscal plan that includes additional revenue streams.

We oppose cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

Increasing Bandwidth in Outlying Areas

Alaska's students need and deserve the full transformative power of technology and equitable access to online resources. Students, teachers and school leaders of Alaska, some of whom live in the most remote areas of the world, require access to modern technology in order to transform learning, create efficiencies, provide online health services, and keep pace with their peers globally.

ACSA supports continuing the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) and increasing the level of state funded bandwidth for schools to a minimum of 25 megabits of download per second. This funding leverages federal e-rate funds at 8:1 to provide Alaska's students and educators fair access to the digital world.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional development and management between the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOL) with educators and industry based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, regional and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving on-time graduation rates, higher career earnings and decreasing dropout percentages, while also offering more dual credit opportunities.

School Safety

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. ACSA supports providing school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. The National School Safety Center identifies and promotes strategies, promising practices and programs that support safe schools for all students as part of the total academic mission. Schools should have the choice to create and maintain safe schools for secure and effective places of learning.

ACSA supports improving the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities and tribes. ACSA supports full funding for law enforcement, VPSOs and state troopers. School districts should have access to these public safety supports.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

By age six, 27% of Alaska's children have experienced at least two Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Higher exposure to trauma increases the likelihood of suicide, the second leading cause of death for American teenagers. Alaska has the highest rate of teen suicide attempts in the nation. The state must provide financial support so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that support and foster the health and development of students.

We support funding to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Increased professional development opportunities for school leaders and other school staff in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges is also needed.

Early Childhood Education

ACSA believes equitable access to fully funded, sustainable preschool programs provides a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade. Early childhood education should be considered as part of public school funding through the BSA.

Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators

Retaining effective educators and leaders is essential to closing achievement gaps and increasing student performance in all subjects across all grade levels. ACSA strongly encourages the development of comprehensive statewide programs to prepare, attract and retain high quality educators and professionals. ACSA further recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts.

The national teacher shortage makes the need to better align the state's K-12 system with the University of Alaska paramount. We strongly support the University of Alaska College of Education. Exploring innovative alternative pathways is needed to attract high quality educators to the education profession and address unique circumstances. A more competitive state teacher retirement system must be considered.

Health Care Costs

We encourage solutions to the escalating costs of health insurance in the state. We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease health care costs by such measures as: allowing employers to purchase health insurance policies across state lines, appropriate controls of the cost of medivacs, and promotion of pro-wellness lifestyles and proactive health care options.

Other State Issues

- Capital Improvement (CIP) Funding must be restored. Infrastructure cannot be left to deteriorate indefinitely or maintained with a band-aid approach, which is short-sighted with regard to long-term spending.
- The state should continue efforts to control the cost of Workers' Compensation claims, including adoption of medical treatment guidelines, improved management of claims, and an improved Reemployment Benefits process.
- We're proud and supportive of educational alternative programs, but public funds should not go to private schools through vouchers or other mechanisms.

2019 JPS Federal Issues

Forest Receipts (Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act)

ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the Federal Government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership.

Without a revitalized revenue stream to fund Safe and Secure Rural Schools, Alaska will lose \$11.2 million dollars in revenue, mostly tied to education. Districts will face staffing reductions and some school districts will face closure.

ESSA

We encourage the United States Department of Education to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control and avoiding federal overreach implementing ESSA.

Further, we encourage Congress to eliminate discretionary funding caps, to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every School Succeeds Act. We also ask that the department stick to the intent of the law and not attempt to create regulations that "fix" problems not addressed in legislation such as the "supplement, not supplant restrictions" and the insistence by USED to require that a school's performance be defined by a single designation.

Affordable Care Act

We support repeal or modifications to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) "Cadillac Tax" and how it applies to Alaska. The current calculation, due to begin in 2022, would unfairly penalize Alaskan employers for factors beyond their control. Solutions may include a geographic differential or other mechanism to recognize Alaska's unique cost structure.

Other Federal Issues

- We strongly oppose use of public money to fund private education through vouchers or other mechanisms.
- We support full funding of E-Rate and Impact Aid, with no significant program changes needed.
- We oppose the PROSPER Act and any other legislation that weakens teacher recruiting programs at a time of nationwide teacher shortage.
- We encourage increased financial support and focus on school safety issues but do not support arming school personnel.



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