



Alaska Council of School Administrators

Leadership, Unity and Advocacy for Public Education

234 Gold Street • Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 586-9702 • Fax: (907) 364-3805
www.alaskaacsa.org

March 10, 2019

Re: Written Testimony Against SB 23 and SB 24

Honorable Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee:

I'm writing in opposition to SB 23 and SB 24, two pieces of legislation proposed by Governor Dunleavy to make 'full' payment of Permanent Fund Dividends for 2016-2018 and to set PFD payments using the original formula through 2023. The maximum payment under this scenario would cost the state an estimated \$2.4 billion.

The governor's proposed 24.3 percent cut to public K-12 funding for the next fiscal year, a whopping \$325 million decrease to districts across the state in one year, is shocking. When coupled with the proposed PFD boost of \$2.4 billion under SB 23 and 24, it appears this administration considers larger PFDs of paramount importance, more so than public education. I have a difficult time believing this is also what the Alaska State Legislature believes.

Further, SB 23 and 24 in the current climate do not align with values held by your constituents. According to a new statewide survey, **Alaskans see investment in K-12 public education as a top priority for government spending**, ahead of funding for health and social services, corrections and public safety, among others.

The scientific survey, conducted by Zogby Analytics on behalf of the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), and Coalition for Education Equity of Alaska (CEE) clearly demonstrates Alaskans commitment to quality public K-12 education. See the survey here: <http://www.alaskaacsa.org/new-survey/>. These results are reflective of your own Senate Majority poll.

Gov. Dunleavy's plan to decimate public education in favor of larger PFDs will hurt K-12 education and Alaska's economy. What does our future hold if our citizens are not adequately educated when they are young? For the sake of Alaska's children and a healthy state economy SB 23 and SB 24 must not see the light of day in their current form.

Last year, the legislature made early funding of PreK-12 education a priority. Our members urge you to again demonstrate such leadership. Sound fiscal management of our school districts must include the ability to submit realistic budgets to local governments as part of the budgeting process. It is extremely challenging to provide children with high-quality learning without sufficient, predictable, timely and stable funding. States with high educational outcomes understand the linkage between reliable funding and student success.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Elizabeth Skiles Parady'.

Dr. Lisa Skiles Parady, Executive Director



March 7, 2019

Chair Shower and Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee,

My name is Dr. Mary Wegner, and I am the superintendent in the Sitka School District. I am testifying today against SB 24, PFD Supplemental Payments, and SB 23, the Supplemental Appropriation for the Payments for Prior Years' PFD.

Governor Dunleavy has proposed a budget that will fundamentally shift public education in Sitka, and not for the betterment of student learning and not in a way that is aligned with our community's values. Gutting public and higher education including Head Start, and reneging on previous commitments made regarding school debt bond reimbursement does not make an acceptable fiscal plan for Alaska... and it is not necessary. Providing for a public education is not optional, whereas SB 23 and SB 24 are optional.

For our student's sake, please do not prioritize the optional funding associated with SB 23 and SB 24 over investing in the future of our state, our youth. In Sitka, 70% of the people elected to represent us in the State Legislature, on the City Assembly, and as School Board and Tribal Council Members graduated from the Sitka School District. Our students are the future leaders of Alaska and deserve a quality public education that is open to each and every student in the state.

As a citizen, I am willing to forgo any supplemental Permanent Fund payments, and am willing to have a reduced Permanent Fund going forward if it means that public education and essential services will continue to be funded. From what I have researched, austerity has never been an effective solution to economic challenges. As a state we need to decide what we are willing to invest in, and I argue that our investment should be in our future – the youth of Alaska.

Thank you for your service to our great State of Alaska and for taking my testimony. I urge you to not move SB 23 and SB 24 out of your committee, and let them die so that our students can thrive.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Wegner
Superintendent



Denali Borough School District

P.O. Box 280 • Healy, Alaska 99743 • (907) 683-2278 • FAX (907) 683-2514

5 March 2019

My name is Dan Polta, I live in Healy, Alaska and I'm the superintendent of the Denali Borough School District. I am opposed SB23 and 24 at this time

Passing these bills now would remove important tools that we need use to solve Alaska's fiscal morass. You would not take a hammer away from a carpenter and then ask him or her to build your house. You would not take a wrench away from a mechanic and then ask him or her to fix your car. Please do not lock away such an important tool from yourselves when our state has so much work to complete.

If political decisions lead us to lay off teachers, I'm actually not that worried about them. They are smart, hard working people. They will find jobs, probably not in this state, but they will find jobs. I worry about the students they would leave behind, the lack of attention each child will receive, the reduced support to help them learn to read, to write, and to problem solve. I worry about our children's ability to gain the skills demanded of workers in our modern economy and their ability to secure well paying, productive jobs to provide for their families and for them to help build Alaska into a great state for everyone.

For these reasons I oppose SB23 and 24.

Thank you,

Dan Polta

Dan Polta
Superintendent
Denali Borough School District
P.O. Box 280
Healy, AK, 99743

Mission Statement

Nurturing, empowering and inspiring today's student to positively shape tomorrow's world