



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

February 24, 2021

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB SB06/HB153, version O and CSHB 153

Hello Committee Chairs, Members, and all Legislators,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 8, which would provide a stronger foundation for Alaska's children. Though I am writing in support of Senate Bill 8, which I believe is a stronger bill, I would also support Senate Bill 42. Senate Bill 42's weakness is the overwhelming initiatives within, and the lack of alignment between Preschool and K-3. However, we as a state, need to do something about our educational system not providing evidence-based instructional practices in a multi-tiered system of support, which has resulted in our extremely poor test results.

As a member of the State Task Force on Reading Proficiency and Dyslexia, it was well documented in the Final Report (March 29, 2019) the convergence of research and scientific evidence that with early intervention and effective reading instruction almost all students can achieve 3rd-grade reading proficiency. There is now settled science regarding teaching students how to read and unfortunately, this settled science has not made its way into Alaska classrooms. We need to bridge this gap and provide students with evidence-based reading instruction based on the science of reading starting in preschool. As a former Reading First (NCLB) Instructional Coach and Principal of a Title I school, experience proved that once teachers were trained, implemented evidenced-based instructional practices explicitly, and students were provided a multi-tiered system of support, student achievement improved.

As you are voting on this bill please consider that a student who can't read proficiently by third grade is four times less likely to graduate by the age of 19. If that student comes from a low-income family, that student is 13 times less likely to graduate. Our state pays a price for those students who do not graduate, such as lost earnings, productivity, tax revenue, and increased government services costs. Making sure every Alaskan student can read well by the end of 3rd grade starts with providing access to a high-quality preschool. This helps with equity, giving children with difficult circumstances the chance to succeed alongside their peers. With this high-quality preschool, a well-aligned, systemic K-3 system of evidence-based instructional practices and supports that makes sure no child falls through the cracks adds to the equity discussion in allowing students' the ability to have future choices and to be productive members of our society.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

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Alaska ranks 49th in the nation in Education. It is time to do right by our students and expect more from our educational system. Adopting universal preschool and reading intervention measures will ensure students are armed with tools and knowledge for future success. Senate Bill 8, which includes these vital actions, should be our state's top focus, with everyone's attention on this moral imperative.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dianne Orr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "O".

Dianne Orr
Anchorage School District
Director, Teaching & Learning