



January 26, 2022

Honorable Representative Ivy Spohnholz
State Capitol Room 406
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Spohnholz,

Thank you for your support of Alaska educators and public education. I am writing today on behalf of NEA-Alaska's 11,000 members in support of House Bill 259.

We are excited about the potential impact of HB 259 on Alaska students and public schools. HB 259 represents a real acknowledgement that we can, and need to do better for our students. This legislation is a proactive approach which will create a sustainable stream of investment in our education system and begin to resolve the fiscal crisis which has plagued our state for far too long.

For years, flat-funding of public education, coupled with inflation, have significantly eroded the value of Alaska's investment in public education. The fiscal crisis has created legislative gridlock resulting in little progress or consideration of the many pressing issues our educators and students are facing on a daily basis. Fortunately, HB 259 represents a real opportunity for Alaskans to come together, put a big part of the fiscal crisis behind us, and to make an enduring investment in our state's future.

Thank you, Representative Spohnholz for bringing this proposal forward, your leadership, and steadfast support for public education.

Thank you,

Tom Klaameyer, President, NEA-Alaska

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To: House Education Committee
From: Norman Wooten, Director of Advocacy

RE: Letter of Support for HB 259 – PFD; 25/75/POMV Split

The Association of Alaska School Boards is in support of HB 259. AASB's Delegate Assembly has several long-standing resolutions supporting the elements of this legislation. These include:

- **Belief Statement #B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY,**
- **Resolution #2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE**
- **Resolution #2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**
- **Resolution #2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**
- **Resolution #2.23 FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS BY ESTABLISHING THE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION IN ADVANCE**
- **Resolution #2.50 INFLATION-PROOFED BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION (BSA) INVESTMENTS**

Each year school board members and education advocates plead for education funding. And you routinely remind yourselves and the public of your constitutional responsibility contained in Alaska's constitution. *Article 7, Section 1* requires your support and funding of a public school system. And you have never failed to fund education, however, the Base Student Allocation has not been increased from the current \$5,930 since FY 17. Six years with no increase seems disingenuous to expect constant improvement in instruction and increasing standardized test scores. Utilities, supplies, transportation, fuel, salaries, maintenance, freight, food, instructional materials, communications, internet, and a myriad of other supplies and services necessary for operating a school system have all increased. It seems as if the cost for everything has increased. About the only thing that hasn't increased is the BSA. The proposed new language in HB 259 has provisions that address those times when the formula draw does not meet the BSA and also when the formula draw goes beyond the BSA need. This seems to be a responsible solution.

The proposed language in HB 259 would remove education from competition with all other appropriations and fulfill the responsibility of *Article 7, Section 1* of Alaska's Constitution. The legislature could then concentrate on the remainder of other services that provide for Alaska's citizens and make our state such a wonderful place to live and raise families.

HB 259 directly addresses several recommendations of the Legislative Fiscal Work Group. Creating a workable and reasonable solution to funding the PFD will remove that ongoing debate and allow the legislature to focus on public policy affecting all Alaskans. Additionally, it would provide that stable funding source for education and allow districts to concentrate on educational innovation to improve student outcomes rather than continually reducing programs due to erosion of the buying power of a flat funded Base Student Allocation.

AASB encourages your support of HB 259 as a way of further support Alaska's public school system and Alaska's future through the education of its young people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman D. Wooten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D'.

Norman D, Wooten