



February 9, 2022

Madam Co-Chairs and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Frank Hauser, and I'm the Superintendent the Sitka School District. I am providing written testimony today in support of HB 272 and HB 273, Increase Base Student Allocation and Increase Base Student Allocation Inflation.

The Sitka School District is facing a budget deficit of \$1,959,425 for FY23, which represents almost 10% of our total general fund budget.

“Flat funding” sounds benign and static, but every year of flat funding, since 2017, has represented a loss to districts because it does not provide for inflation and for increased fixed yearly costs, such as utilities, student transportation, and insurance. Multiple years of flat funding have eroded Alaska’s ability even to keep educators in classrooms.

We have been forced to make significant cuts to teachers, administrators, support staff, and programs due to flat funding of the BSA since 2017. In my district, we no longer have a dedicated librarian at either our K-1 or middle schools. Alaskan students today do not have the benefits of the same programs, resources, and staff that I did, when I attended public school in Alaska.

We are not able “cut ourselves out” of this deficit without having significant negative impacts on our pupil teacher ratio (PTR), programs, and educational system as a whole. HB 272 or HB 273 would not close our existing \$1,959,425 deficit in Sitka, but any increase to the BSA would help save teaching positions and valuable programs in our district. It would also support our ability to retain and attract the high-quality educators and educational professionals the students of Alaska deserve. Reliable funding brings stability. The stakes have never been higher, and the needs, never so great.

In my 24 years as an educator in Alaska’s public schools, my students have included Alaska’s welders, engineers, construction workers, Ivy League graduates, doctors and health care professionals, computer scientists, culinary workers, and even the first Miss America from Alaska. Money invested in Alaska’s schools and students is money well invested in the future of Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your continued commitment to public education in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Frank Hauser