



# Aleutians East Borough School District

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**Serving the children in the Alaskan communities of:  
Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, and Sand Point**  
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February 11, 2022

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Madam Co-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 272 and HB 273

For the record, my name is Patrick Mayer and I am the Superintendent of the Aleutians East Borough School District, as well as a Past President of the Alaska Superintendents Association.

First, I greatly appreciate House Education seeking input on the BSA. As we all know, the BSA has not seen an increase since 2017. Inflation, however, has taken a significant toll on how we are able to fund the day to day operations of our school districts. The Aleutians East Borough School District is located in one of the most remote regions of Alaska. We operate 4 sites within a 12,500 square mile area. The only way in, or out, is by air or sea. The ferry system has become very limiting, our air service is not always reliable and what this all adds up to are extremely high costs for just about everything and with the current inflation rate it will only be more of a challenge. **A point worthy of noting is that Governor Dunleavy referenced inflation being at a 40 year high during his address at the beginning of session.** But, for the sake of this conversation let's address costs as they relate to our schools.

- The purchase of food for our students have risen dramatically just during this school year, roughly 10 percent.
- Transportation for goods delivered through Coastal Transportation have also risen proportionally with the increase in fuel prices.
- Fuel costs, in fact, are up 34 percent from FY21
- Increases in insurance costs are now going up 17 percent from FY21.
- Staffing costs make up the largest expenditure in most districts including the AEBSD. As we try desperately to retain teachers, we must try to support competitive salary structures which is a cost increase. I am sure that is no surprise to anyone listening to this testimony. Recruitment and retention of administrators and teachers is a big challenge everywhere in the U.S., and it is greatly magnified as a challenge in Rural Alaska. We simply must pay a competitive wage in order to retain quality educators.
- While CARES ACT and ARPA funding has been greatly appreciated, these Covid monies are "one time" that are being used for their intended purpose, Covid Mitigation. These dollars come with various strings attached that limit, especially smaller districts, in how those resources can be utilized.
- Our district has been able to backfill the loss of some teaching positions as recipients of outside monies, but, when those monies go away will there be a mechanism to replace them? That is always a challenging prospect as it is essentially an unknown.
- Moving forward, both the effort to address these challenges in the near term (HB 272) and the effort to inflation proof on an ongoing basis through the consideration of HB 273 will go a long way toward avoiding the major challenges that lay ahead when CARES and ARPA monies are gone.

I am sorry that Representative Prax had to leave. I will be certain follow up with him to help understand the realities of our increased cost in Alaska, Especially remote rural Alaska.

Again, thank you Madam Chair, Madam Co-Chair and members of the committee for opening up this discussion surrounding the BSA through the introduction of HB 272 and HB 273.

Sincerely,



Patrick Mayer,  
Superintendent