



To: House Education Committee

From: Association of Alaska School Boards

RE: Letter of Support for:

HB 272 – Increase Base Student Allocation

HB 273 – Increase Base Student Allocation; Inflation

House Education Committee,

The Association of Alaska School Boards is in support of HB 272 and HB 273. School districts in Alaska face constant increases in supplies and services necessary to operate their schools. These include utilities, supplies, transportation, fuel, salaries, insurance, maintenance, freight, food, instructional materials, communications, internet, and a myriad of other supplies and services necessary for operating a school system. These increases coupled with the inflationary loss of buying power have forced school boards to make difficult choices every year on what to discontinue offering to their students. Districts across the state have eliminated counselors, nurses, after school programs, extracurricular programs, elective courses, enrichment opportunities, travel, and the deferred maintenance list in every district continues to grow.

There has not been an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) since 2017. In some years the legislature has provided one-time funding but districts desperately need the benefit of increased funding within the BSA to provide predictable funding to allow for appropriate and efficient planning. It seems disingenuous to expect improvement and innovation while removing opportunities and personnel to create this innovation and improvement in order to pass and remain within a balanced budget.

I frequently hear legislators cite the Constitutional requirement to provide a public education system, *Article 7, Section 1*, and I believe every legislator wants effective and productive schools within their districts. HB 272 and HB 273 will put into action the spirit of Alaska's constitution relative to education funding.

AASB has several long-standing resolutions which address this issue. We have included those for your review. We encourage your support for HB 272 and HB 273.



Pete Hoepfner, President



Lon Garrison, Executive Director



Norman Wooten, Director of Advocacy

## **B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY**

Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all school age children. Public education is fundamental to democracy and economic advancement of the state and tribes. AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make early, sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth.

### **2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE**

The sustainability, reliability and adequacy of Alaska's funding for public education are of highest concern to the Association of Alaska School Boards. AASB urges the Legislature to develop a state fiscal plan. This fiscal plan would provide a long-term approach to funding the costs of public education and other services upon which Alaska's students and their families depend. The plan should be strategic, sustainable and realistic, providing a framework for balancing budgets while adequately funding public education.

### **2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide early, adequate, equitable, and predictable funding of public education. AASB believes that adequate funding should include the following:

- State funding of the TRS-PERS retirement liability;
- An increase to the Base Student Allocation to account for both inflation and adequate pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education;
- Recognition of the need to keep pupil-teacher ratios to a level in line with research-based best practices;
- Career and technical education.

- An early adoption timeline that allows school boards and district administration to effectively plan instruction and staffing for the upcoming school year.
- Programs and Initiatives focusing on Alaska Native languages and cultures.

AASB urges that in the years when the Alaska Legislature has not approved an education budget by April 1, the budget from the previous year shall be the legal minimum funding for the next fiscal year.

AASB urges the Legislature to review and recommend appropriate adjustments to AS.14.17.460, District Cost Factors, to ensure equity in school funding.

AASB urges the Legislature to provide stable forward funding that addresses inflation, including the use of an education endowment, to ensure funding predictability.

## **2.23 FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS BY ESTABLISHING THE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION IN ADVANCE**

AASB supports funding for schools in advance. At a minimum, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) should be established at least one, and preferably three, years ahead to provide sufficient time for school districts to prepare and submit their budgets in a timely manner without spending unnecessary time and resources revising budgets based on legislative action after the local budget process has begun. The Education Fund, AS 14.17.300, must also be maintained and increased for this purpose.

## **2.50 Inflation-proofed Base Student Allocation (BSA) Investments**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to make inflation-proofed incremental investments to the BSA to make up for flat funding since FY 2011.