

KENAI LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

Email: Kenai_LIO@akleg.gov

Phone: 907-283-2030 / Fax: 907-283-3075

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME: Cathy Carrow
REPRESENTING: Self
BILL # or SUBJECT: HB 259
COMMITTEE: HWAM **DATE:** 02-17-2022

Dear Representatives,

First, I want thank each of you for your public service. I appreciate the work done on this bill and the work to solve the issue of uncertain funding for public education.

The Permanent Fund was established in order to save a windfall of money to be used into the future, to the best benefit of the people. What could more benefit the people of the State of Alaska than stable, forward funding of our public education system? Public education, which is an integral cornerstone of a strong, healthy democracy best benefits the people. In fact, the Alaska Constitution spells out the State's responsibility to fund public education.

Our schools need adequate funding, rather than the fluctuating and deteriorating funding as has been the case over the decades that I've been following education funding.

Our schools need early funding, the financial costs due of attrition of known, trained employees to districts across the state has been well documented. Additionally, entire programs can be in jeopardy when districts find themselves in precarious funding situations each year.

Year after year, stakeholders in public education come before the legislature looking for a long term solution to funding. I believe HB 259 will provide that long term solution and I urge you to support it. Again, thank you for your work and thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion today.

Sincerely,

Cathy Carrow

Soldotna, Alaska

Speaking in support of HB 259

From: [Laura Bonner](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Cc: [Laura Bonner](#)
Subject: *****SPAM***** Support HB259
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 9:12:27 PM

Representative Spohnholz,

I support HB259. It provides for a reasonable and sustainable amount for PFDs. It repeals the old statutory formula that Alaska can no longer afford. The 50/50 split is not sustainable for future PFDs.

HB259 provides for a predictable and sustainable way to fund public education. Flat funding for the past few years were, in reality, cuts. Predictable funding means school districts can plan and focus on educating our future leaders, medical providers and tradespeople.

HB259 also provides funding for services Alaskans need like public safety, the court system and snow plowing.

For these reasons, I support HB29. Thank you for proposing this bill..

Respectfully,
Laura Bonner
Anchorage, AK 99516

From: [Joan Diamond](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: HB 259 Investment in education k -12
Date: Saturday, February 19, 2022 5:21:32 PM

Rep. Spohnholz,

My mother told me that public education is the best investment one can make. Our son and daughter attended k-12 here in Anchorage from 1990-2003. They are both productive young people who contribute to the greater good. Without quality education of all children regardless of color, region or ethnic status, we will never have a capable population of young people to grow our economy. Quality education available to every Alaskan child will make the difference as to whether young families want to settle here and Companies will move here because we have an educated workforce facing tomorrow's challenges. We are going backwards ! Do you really want people to leave Alaska because the opportunity for quality education is being trashed? Do not hesitate to pass HB 259 this session. In fact, all legislators should "burn rubber on the bottom of their tennis shoes" to pass this bill now!

Thank you,

Joan Diamond
Anchorage

.

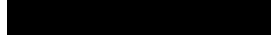
,

Sent from my iPad

From: [Maggie Price](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: HB 259
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 7:33:53 AM

I support HB 259 to stabilize our education system in Alaska and to help protect the education of our most valuable resource... our children.

Margaret Price



Anchorage AK. 99507

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Russell Marilyn](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: HB 259
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 2:15:46 PM

Hello Representative Spohnholz,

As a retired teacher, I am writing to ask that all possible support be aimed toward the passage of HB 259.

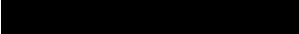
Education is the KEY. The key to all of our lives, and the positive future of Alaska.

We need to be sure that all things related to the education of Alaska citizens, particularly our next generation, be Just and Strong.

Thank you for your efforts.

Best,
Marilyn

Marilyn Russell


Anchorage, AK 99507

From: [Emily Youcha](#)
To: [Rep. Grier Hopkins](#); [Sen. Robert Myers](#); [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: HB259 support
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2022 11:23:57 AM

I am writing to express my support for public education funding through HB259 and increasing the base student allocation, which has not been increased for years. I previously wrote in a similar comment to my legislators also supportive of HB272 and HB273. The current State government refuses to establish a state income tax or restructure the oil taxation scheme to help pay for public services like education. So, it is unfortunate that the PFD will have to fund these public services, but what other options remain if the State refuses to tax its citizens or the oil/mining industry?

Please increase funding for my child's education. Our schools across the nation are currently in severe financial trouble - attributed to declined enrollment during the pandemic and losing funding due to low enrollment numbers. Some parents continue to homeschool due to pandemic fears and the federal related pandemic funds have been used up. It is likely that school enrollment may increase in the future as the pandemic eases. However, the pandemic enrollment decline is now causing major budget shortfalls at all school districts. Three elementary schools will close in Fairbanks, and large numbers of teachers will be cut. The school board is threatening to close more schools next year. The budget shortfall is that huge.

The quality of our children's education has been negatively affected by the pandemic. Due to "learning losses" associated with the pandemic, many students need additional educational support after 1) being out of school for lengthy periods (sickness, quarantines, year of remote school) and 2) inadequate remote learning / online teaching methods for a year or more. The schools cannot afford to provide additional educational support for these children, they simply don't have the money to decrease class sizes by adding additional teachers and teaching assistants that are necessary to improve educational outcomes.

I am a parent of a 2nd grader who has had to spend nearly half of her school career in remote learning (which was inadequate despite her teacher's best efforts). I am very concerned about the quality of her education and increasingly large class sizes for the next decade. The current state of public education, especially in Alaska, seems very dire. In fall 2021, my child came back to a full 2nd grade classroom with nearly 30 students in her class - most other classes in her grade level were also very large (the school could not afford to hire another teacher to bring class sizes down). These students are at highly variable educational levels due to inconsistent/inadequate remote education and pandemic issues affecting families. My child's 2nd grade teacher said it was the largest class size she had ever had at this school. They should be decreasing class sizes after the pandemic, not increasing class sizes, so that students can have more one-on-one instruction and additional help from their teachers!

Additionally, it seems that every year so many teachers are given "pink slips". This job instability, combined with decreasing teacher benefits (i.e. increased health care

costs, defined contribution retirement plans, and lack of social security benefits for public employees), likely causes low teacher morale and the loss of good teachers to out-of-state schools or other industries.

Please increase the base student allocation and provide stable funding to public education to improve the quality of education for Alaskan children. Most parents cannot afford to send their kids to private school and the vast majority of parents do not want to or cannot homeschool. One thing all parents want is for our children to be well-educated at their public schools, and right now, that won't happen due to each school's budget crisis and the continued loss of many good teachers.

Thank you for listening to my comment.

Sincerely,
Emily Youcha, parent
Fairbanks, AK 99712

To: Ways & Means Committee, Chair Sponholtz, Vice Chair Wool, and Members Josephson, Schrage, Story, Prax, Eastman
From: Jamie Rodriguez
Re: Testimony in support of HB259 and support of fully funding public education

Good morning to all members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I write to you today as a mom who has raised two children, both graduates of the Anchorage School District (ASD), and as a proud, now retired, 30-year teacher for the ASD. Thus, I feel more than a bit qualified to discuss the state of education in Alaska. I've experienced a fair amount of what I address today over the my years of teaching, however, never as drastically as what's going on in these most recent few years.

It's time to get back to fully funding education and doing so in a timely manner, from bottom to top. It's time to value education and put a stop to the strangulation of our public schools, school personnel, and the very futures of our children.

School districts across the state have been suffering extreme cuts for years and, as if that's not bad enough, it's become absolutely draconian in the most recent few years.

The situation has gotten so bad that districts across the state have been forced to close schools, five and counting in just Anchorage and Fairbanks alone. There's also been discussion about villages sending students out to centralized, consolidated locations. That's moving backwards and completely unacceptable.

Drastic cuts result in fewer personnel. Fewer teachers and support positions (Special Ed, teacher aides, other education specialists, school nurses, office and custodial staff to name but a few) With all of these cuts, students are forced into packed classrooms, staff workloads increase, and quality education quickly erodes due to too much stress put upon a now too delicate system.

Crowded conditions mean individualized attention is spread too thin. With teacher aides and other support positions eliminated, specialized programs cut, classrooms, essentially, become holding tanks. Warehousing. Crowd management. The time required to focus on crowd management, draws from the time available to give students individualized attention. It only takes a few extra students per classroom to tip the balance. When classrooms grow by even greater numbers quality learning environments erode.

Additionally, if this is not bad enough, on top of everything else, with smaller staff across the board, school buildings deteriorate. With the lack of proper upkeep, buildings are cleaned and repaired less frequently and deterioration sets in. When this happens, building inhabitants are at risk of becoming ill or injured, and, again, learning is impaired. ALSO, keep in mind that any repair following neglect is ALWAYS more expensive.

Is this what we really want, especially in a state that professes to want improved test scores? We can't have it both ways. We can do better than this. We either invest in our kids and Alaska's future, or collectively throw ourselves under the proverbial bus. Draconian cuts send the message that education, teachers, teacher aides, specialists, school staff, and families don't matter. Our kids are our future and education is the foundation to reach a positive outcome.

To any legislator who stands ready to slash and burn school funding year in and year out, are you really ready to throw an entire generation of kids and an entire infrastructure that's supports education to the side of the road like trash? Don't have kids? It will affect you, too. I hold out hope you have more sense, and heart, than that. If you really don't, you probably shouldn't be here. Perhaps legislative life is not a good fit.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Lili Misel](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Cc: Grier.Hopkins@akleg.gov; [Sen. Robert Myers](#)
Subject: I support HB 259
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 7:11:26 PM

Dear Ivy Spohnholtz,

I am writing to voice my support of HB 259 which provides support to a stable and drawing designated fund source for public education.

I live in Fairbanks where we are facing the closure of three elementary schools. The student allocation has not changed in 6 years and it's affecting the quality of education in our city. I believe that HB will help in fixing this situation. The education of Alaskan children should be one of the most important investments we make and I urge you to continue your support of this bill.

Thank you for supporting HB 259 and thank you for your work on behalf of Alaskans.

Lili Misel
Fairbanks, AK

From: [Mary Corcoran](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: Public Testimony HB 259
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2022 11:19:48 AM

To the House Ways and Means Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 259.

I Do Support this bill. I defines fair and consistent treatment of various financial needs that the State is obligated to. Most importantly education funding presents more predictable funding for school districts and the students they serve. Secondly this will remove some of the political manipulations of the PFD.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Mary Corcoran

From: [Luke Boles](#)
To: [Rep. Grier Hopkins](#); [Sen. Robert Myers](#)
Cc: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: Re: HB259 support
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2022 12:07:45 PM

Representative Hopkins and Senator Myers,

First off: thank you for your service to Alaska!

I am writing to express my support for public education funding through HB259 and increasing the base student allocation, which has not been increased for years.

Please increase funding for my child's education. The pandemic enrollment decline is causing major budget shortfalls at all school districts. Three elementary schools will close in Fairbanks, and teachers will be laid off. The school board is threatening to close more schools next year.

The quality of our children's education has been negatively affected by the pandemic. Due to "learning losses" associated with the pandemic, many students need additional educational support after 1) being out of school for lengthy periods (sickness, quarantines, year of remote school) and 2) inadequate remote learning / online teaching methods for a year or more. The schools cannot afford to provide additional educational support for these children, they simply don't have the money to decrease class sizes by adding additional teachers and teaching assistants that are necessary to improve educational outcomes.

I am a parent of a 2nd grader who has had to spend nearly half of her school career in remote learning (which was inadequate despite her teacher's best efforts). I am very concerned about the quality of her education and increasingly large class sizes for the next decade. The current state of public education, especially in Alaska, seems very dire. In fall 2021, my child came back to a full 2nd grade classroom with nearly 30 students in her class - most other classes in her grade level were also very large (the school could not afford to hire another teacher to bring class sizes down). These students are at highly variable educational levels due to inconsistent/inadequate remote education and pandemic issues affecting families. My child's 2nd grade teacher said it was the largest class size she had ever had at this school. They should be decreasing class sizes after the pandemic, not increasing class sizes, so that students can have more one-on-one instruction and additional help from their teachers!

Additionally, it seems that every year many teachers are given "pink slips". This job instability, combined with decreasing teacher benefits (i.e. increased health care costs, defined contribution retirement plans, and lack of social security benefits for public employees), likely causes low teacher morale and the loss of good teachers to out-of-state schools or other industries.

Please increase the base student allocation and provide stable funding to public

education to improve the quality of education for Alaskan children. Most parents cannot afford to send their kids to private school and the vast majority of parents do not want to or cannot homeschool. One thing all parents want is for our children to be well-educated at their public schools, and right now, that won't happen due to each school's budget crisis and the continued loss of many good teachers.

The current State government refuses to establish a state income tax and/or establish other taxes/fees to users of public services. So, it is unfortunate that the PFD will have to fund these public services, but what other options remain if the State refuses to tax its citizens and/or other users of its services?

Thank you for considering to my comment.

Sincerely,
Luke Boles, parent
Fairbanks, AK 99712

From: [Barbara Rath](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: Support for HB 259
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2022 12:19:32 PM
Importance: High

Representative Spohnholz,

I am writing to express support for HB 259 to reinvest critical funding into public education in Alaska. The continued reduction of options, increasing size of classes, and mounting impacts of budgetary shortfalls across the state create a less desirable education journey for our young students. HB 259 creates a means by which to create sustainable appropriations for the purposes of further supporting public education in Alaska. I believe that the percentage appropriation formulae from the Permanent Fund earnings for distribution to the public education fund as established under AS 14.17.300 as outlined in HB 259 creates ways to increase distributed fund for statewide public education needs. This bill further addresses appropriations above the subsection percentages calculated for state aid under AS 14.09.010 and AS 14.17 with remaining amount to be appropriated to school districts.

Please vote to pass HB 259 in support of our Alaskan students who will populate our workforce and drive our economic development in the future. Our collective support for our students now will create greater opportunities for successful career paths and retention of Alaskan residents who will further invest their own work and support of education here in our state.

Respectfully,

Barbara Rath, MSW
ED/Chief Executive Officer
[The Arc of Anchorage](#) | 2211 Arca Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508



CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: The contents of this email, including attachments, are intended for the use of the person or entity to which it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient of the transmitted information, you are hereby notified that any disclosing, copying, distributing or taking action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited. If you have received this transmission in error, notify the sender that you have received this information in error and then delete the information transmitted.

From: [Leon J.](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: Support for HB259
Date: Saturday, February 19, 2022 5:49:45 PM

Hello Representative Spohnholz,

I am writing to encourage you and other representatives to pass HB259. Funding for education is incredibly important. Our education system is under incredible stress, and especially teachers. We need to be able to keep class sizes at a level where it is optimized for educational success. That's not happening when class sizes are pushing up into the 30s and 40s.

As an entrepreneur that provides services to other businesses, I recognize the importance of having a highly skilled workforce pipeline available to bolster the economy. The shortage of talent in Cybersecurity is a magnification of that. The lack of local talent makes it more expensive for businesses to start in or relocate to Alaska. That talent pipeline starts with things like food security, housing security, early childhood education, and great public schools. Alaska cannot afford not to pass HB259.

Warm regards,

Leon Jaimes [mobile]

From: [Felisa Wilson](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#); [Rep. Adam Wool](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. David Eastman](#)
Subject: Support for HB259
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 9:07:40 AM

I am writing to express my support for HB259. It is a good bill that will benefit our education program in Alaska.

Please pass HB259.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Felisa Wilson

From: [Sandra Murray](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#); [Rep. Adam Wool](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. David Eastman](#)
Subject: Support for HB259 K-12 Education
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 9:31:34 AM

I am in support of HB259 for K-12 Education.

Sincerely,
Sandra Murray

From: [Merri Rowe](#)
To: [Rep. Ivy Spohnholz](#)
Subject: Support HB259
Date: Sunday, February 20, 2022 10:37:29 PM

Representative Spohnholz,

Please support HB259. Supporting and funding public education is the most important investment that can be made for future Alaskans. Educating our children and ensuring funding for schools and educators will encourage them to stay in Alaska and contribute to our state. By not supporting education we are driving talented students and educators out of the state. We cannot remain competitive with the lower 48 states. Please support HB259.

Thank you,
Merri Rowe

Sent from my iPhone