

**From:** [Katie Botz](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Cc:** [Rep. Andi Story](#)  
**Subject:** Continuation Testimony to HB 272/273  
**Date:** Friday, February 11, 2022 6:53:14 PM

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Greeting Madam Co-chair Drummond, Co-chair Story and other members of the House Education Committee,

So sorry for stating my testimony over the phone shorter than normal but was still working and had to return to bus barn before coworkers asking where I was. I'd like to take the time to expand on my testimony.

My name is Katie Botz, and I am a proud constituent of district 34 speaking on behalf of myself. I respectfully ask that you pass both HB 272 and 273, and get rid of the flat funding when it comes to our K-12 education!! Our future generation depends on these two bills being placed into law. I am both a school bus driver as well as an aunty to 11 nieces and nephews throughout Alaska (Kodiak and Cordova). As you well know we were just hit by COVID, and all students were forced to online schooling. What I wasn't able to say, was many of my nieces and nephews suffered being forced to stay at home instead of having in-class learning. My sister-in-law had to get a deal made to where my nieces and nephews could go to school in-person for a couple of hours just to get caught up! How many other students throughout Alaska were behind in their studies during COVID season?

I also am concerned regarding to ALL student's Mental, Emotional and Social health. As a bus driver, I can tell when students are struggling socially and emotionally considering I ask them to bring problems to my attention on the bus daily. When students were finally able to come back to school after COVID, it was evidence that not only did I transport them home, but I had to take more time of my day to help remind the students how to properly socialize with each other, once again. It was also evidence by the comments which they students would make to me, that being at home for such long period of time with their family, became a safety issue. My route takes low-income students to and from elementary school, and there are times where I will hear students having to climb onto the counter and feed themselves due to parent/guardian passed out on the couch. I'm truly thankful Gastineau Elementary are providing breakfast in the morning so my students can least eat before they head to class (oh and I make sure they get to school early enough to eat as well). It is my understanding that the school district pays for the food which the students eat. If we are flat funded, where are the funding going to be to provide for the food?

If we are still flat funded, where are our students going to be when they graduate from High School? I often question whether these kids will be college ready, or career oriented by the time they are 18.

There's one last point that I'd like for you to consider. Teachers should be able to take students out on field trips, not only to give the students different scenery, but for their mental, and emotional health. I've been actually driving for about four and a half years now, and I have noticed a decreased in field trips throughout the district due to lack of funding. Most of the field trips which other drives fight over are from teams coming in from various districts now with field trips for classes are limited.

Please pass and fully fund both HB 272 and 273 for ALL Alaskan students.

Katie Botz  
District 34



# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 • Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

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[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**George Smith**

Chairman

**Gene Stone**

Superintendent

February 23, 2022

Representative Andi Story  
Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building, Room 403  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: House Bill 272 increase Base Student Allocation and House Bill 273 Increase Base Student Allocation Inflation

Dear Representative Story,

My name is Gene Stone and I am the Chief School Administrator for the Lower Yukon School District. Recently I met with you in your office and spoke with you about school funding.

On behalf of the Lower Yukon School District Regional School Board, District Administration and the nearly 2000 students in our district, we thank you for introducing HB 272 and HB 273.

This legislation is greatly needed to offset the eroding effects of inflation and the flat funding of education that has occurred since 2017. Alaska's fiscal position has strengthened and the educational demands require a very reasonable increase in the Base Student Allocation.

Additionally, LYSD supports HB 273 to help inflation proof the Base Student Allocation and reasonably does so by using inflation comparisons using the CPI.

Our costs for teacher housing, building and maintenance repairs, basic school supplies, transportation and nutrition services have all increased dramatically. We also incur significant costs to demo old buildings and tank farms that are hold overs from BIA buildings.

Thank you for supporting Alaska education and the students of the Lower Yukon School District.

Sincerely,

Gene Stone

*CHILDREN FIRST*

Alakanuk Emmonak Hooper Bay Kotlik Marshall Mt. Village Pilot Station Russian Mission Scammon Bay Nunam Iqua

**From:** [Michael Wald](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB 272 and 273  
**Date:** Monday, February 7, 2022 8:53:58 AM

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Alaskans have a tremendous need for quality education and current funding levels are not meeting these needs. Please support HB 272 and 273 as initial steps to provide Alaska's youth with the education they deserve.

Thank you.

Michael

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Michael Wald  
Owner Arctic Wild  
[Michael@arcticwild.com](mailto:Michael@arcticwild.com)  
907-479-8203  
[www.arcticwild.com](http://www.arcticwild.com)

**From:** [Todd, Kathleen](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB 272  
**Date:** Friday, February 11, 2022 8:09:32 PM

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I write in support of this bill or any other that tries to make up for lack of increase to the BSA since 2017. The cost of everything has gone up and it is unrealistic to think that schools can do more with decreased buying power. We aren't only looking here at the "things" that schools buy directly (food, gasoline, heating fuel, construction paper...) but at all the things that people need to live in our communities, since a large part of school budgets are personnel related. It takes people to run schools, from teachers to janitors, and it is not fair to these employees to make them bear the brunt of Alaska's financial woes.

I have been on the Valdez School Board for 15 years, through tight money times and when money was a little more available. I know things are tight now, but knowing what the BSA is going to be in advance will make belt tightening more strategic and efficient. These proposed values for the BSA will not result in wasteful spending and gold plating on schools but instead supply the resources for a solid education for every child in Alaska.

I personally (not speaking for my school board at this point) would opt to have income taxes and no permanent fund dividend to balance the budget (besides not giving money away to corporate giants), but whether you agree with me or not, public schools need to be adequately funded. Please commit to an increased BSA.

Kathleen Todd  
Valdez City Schools  
907-831-0787

**From:** [AMY EKELMANN](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** support BSA  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 16, 2022 8:54:46 AM

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My school prides itself in maximizing every penny of the annual budget to create the best learning opportunities for our students! We are proud of the fact that close to 92% of our budget is dedicated to instructional staff and safety. The remainder goes for custodians, utilities, and teaching supplies.

The school I work at has struggled to balance the budget while maintaining quality instruction. This is the result of no increase to the BSA for 7 years! Our budgets have become compressed, and we are hitting up against the glass ceiling. Stagnant funding does not provide for the important salary and benefit increases that keep our teachers and staff in our schools and in our state. The stagnant funding causes ALL schools to struggle to maintain status quo, but now, even the status quo can't be maintained! Your public schools cannot do the important job of educating Alaska's future leaders without an increase to the BSA! Please help! Advocate for Alaska's future!

Please, work together, and agree to an increase for the BSA. It is time. The need is critical. The time is NOW!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

With Warm Regards,

Amy Ekelmann  
Parent of 2 students in public school  
Special Education Teacher  
Palmer, Alaska 99645

**From:** [Nicole Stellon O'Donnell](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** support for raising the BSA  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 11:57:32 AM

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Dear House Education Committee:

As a parent and constituent in Fairbanks I am writing to support the passage of HB 272 and HB 273.

I strongly believe we need to increase financial support for Alaskan schools. The years of underfunding have damaged the quality of education and deepened the teacher shortage in our state. Please honor the commitment to education in Alaska's constitution and increase funding.

Thank you,

Nicole

Nicole Stellon O'Donnell  
697 Fordham Drive  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
907-799-7196

**From:** [Barb \(QasuGlana\) Amarak](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony  
**Date:** Monday, February 7, 2022 7:51:47 AM

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Having been a school board member for twelve years and worked for a school district for twenty years, I understand issues and needs related to ensuring success and achievement for and by our students.

I support HB 273 and HB 272 and their purpose to increase the base student allocation, and I request your support.

***Barb (QasuGlana) Amarak***

Director, UAF Northwest Campus  
907-434-1650

*We acknowledge the Indigenous peoples upon whose customary lands our campuses reside. In the Bering Strait region, the Northwest Campus is located on the customary lands of the Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, and Yup'ik peoples.*