

From: Chrya Sanderson
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz
3/21/23

HB65

As the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District president, I urge you to increase funding for Increase Base Student Allocation.

I've served in this district for 35 years and have been on the school board for four years. The board is tasked with making budget cuts or eliminating programs every year. These actions Harm our students and their pathways to academic success.

It disrupts education delivery and fatigue and frustrates our staff.

Tuesday, March 21, is our regular school board meeting, so I am sending you an email as my testimony.

Thank you for being so supportive of education funding.

Respectfully,

Chrya

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Chrya C Sanderson
Board of Education, President
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

"If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk,
If you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, keep moving forward."
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

From: Melissa Burnett

To: Rep. Dan Ortiz, Rep. Justin Ruffridge, House Education Committee

3/21/23

Testimony for the BSA

Hello Sirs,

My name is Melissa Burnett and I am a member of the Fairbanks NorthStar Borough Board of Education. I am also a mother of 3 terrific students here in the interior, as well as a dedicated coach and community volunteer.

I am writing in support of the increase in the BSA and hope that you will choose to move this to the House. The future of Alaska depends on a good education and while we understand money does not solve everything, we know that not properly funding education is also not the way to go.

We have amazing students and amazing programs that we are struggling to keep in our schools. We are struggling to provide the quality education that we promise to give. Teachers are leaving and class sizes are soaring. Our PTR is our biggest issue. You want to see test scores rise and grades improve? You want to see our children reading and writing and doing math? It starts with lower class sizes which we can achieve through an increase in the BSA.

We have maintenance issues and we struggle to afford the simple repairs to keep our school's heat turned on. Hutchinson High School has been struggling with cold classrooms all winter here in Fairbanks. Cold classrooms mean cold children. If our kids are concerned about being cold they're minds are not focused on learning. An increase to the BSA will help us fix our cold classrooms.

We are not alone in our struggles. The State of Alaska's schools are struggling at their cores. Help us fund our schools, push this to the House and help Alaska's schools.

I apologize for not being present tonight as we had a School Board Meeting. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and for your consideration on the BSA increase.

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Melissa Burnett

Board of Education

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" – Ghandi

From: Shannon Johnson

To: Rep. Dan Ortiz; Rep. Justin Ruffridge,
Education Committee

3/21/23

Good evening, my name is Shannon Johnson of Iliamna of the Lake and Peninsula School District. I grew up here, graduated from HS and raised my 4 children who all attended the Newhalen School. I am also a dedicated and huge advocate on the school board for LPSD. I support a significant increase in the BSA and I urge your House Education Committee to advance HB 65 forward.

Here is why:

*The proposed \$1250 increase to the BSA will bring us very close to making ends meet, we will be saving programs such as our preschools, lunch programs, sports and classified positions. Cutting these programs would be horrible for our rural schools, we are already closing schools due to low enrollments and even cutting days of the school year to meet our budget. The school

is the heart & soul of our villages, I am the voice for our students and we do need to provide an education to our most valuable resource, our children. Our students are happy to be in school, they are graduating, they are loving our CTE program, they excel in academics and athletics, they want to live in our communities and join the workforce.

*I would also like to see the BSA increase as a critical part of the eventual operating budget. This would alleviate the headache and heartache of trying to make decisions without any budget.

Thank you, Chair Ruffridge and Representative Ortiz and members of the Committee.

I appreciate your advocacy, support and time. Quyana chin'un. Thank You. Shannon Johnson

From: Helen Smeaton
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz; House Education Committee
3/21/23

Dear House Education Committee,

My name is Helen Smeaton, and I am the school board president representing the Dillingham City School District.

I am writing in support of: HB 65 Increase BSA

Stable, predictable funding is necessary to ensure districts can attract and retain high quality educators. The base student allocation (BSA) has not increased since 2017, and the impact of inflation during that time has created a significant loss of purchasing power for school districts. Current funding of \$5,930 has an FY12 value of \$4,776 when adjusted for inflation.

In the Dillingham City School District, we are faced with many challenges that are impossible to address without sufficient and reliable funding including;

- Teacher Recruitment and Retention
- Inflation and Cost of Living
- Doubling of heating fuel and increased fixed costs
- Unfunded State Mandates

I am mystified by state and local conversations that revolve around those and many other organizations claiming the need to increase salaries and budgets due to the effects of inflation and cost of living but somehow that same fact is not acceptable for school district arguments.

My own school district is doing everything in its power to seek alternative funding (grants) for providing all of the “extras” to students and staff including mental health services, vocational opportunities, facilities upkeep and rehab, staff development, etc. but even that is not enough or sustainable. We are doing our part, we don’t have “extra” schools to close or staff to lay off. Our staff went seven years without salary increases and the increase they final got did not nearly keep up with inflation. We also ask our students to get an education, return home, contribute but without the funding, we can’t compete with the offers they can get elsewhere. These are not threats or excuses, it is reality.

Reliable funding is key to improving student outcomes by stabilizing schools and reducing educator turnover.

Please consider increasing, as well as inflation proofing the BSA to ensure Alaska schools can continue to serve students with the quality education they deserve.

Thank you.

Helen Smeaton
Dillingham City School District
School Board and President

From: [Jim Wilson](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Thank you from Unalaska
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 1:11:53 PM

Good afternoon Representative Ortiz;

Thank you for your leadership and advocacy for public education through HB 65. It was a long night of testimony with passionate discussions on both sides and it was great to see it passed out of committee this morning. An increase to the BSA will be critical for UCSD to address rising costs with insurance, staffing recruitment and retention, energy costs and in supporting the Alaska Reads Act. Flat funding to the BSA has caused schools to reduce teaching and support positions in a time when we should be trying to figure out how to close the achievement gap and better support our very diverse student population. Unalaska is no different. This year alone we will cut two teaching positions, one paraprofessional and one maintenance position simply to balance the budget. This is in a time when we should be adding paraprofessionals and reading specialists to support the needs of the Alaska Reads Act. We will cut \$950,000 out of a roughly 8 million dollar budget. Your continued advocacy for an increased BSA will be essential to Unalaska and schools statewide being able to hopefully offset some of the cuts made as well as have a more stable fiscal future. Thank you again and please let me know if we can do anything out here in Unalaska to help in the cause.

Best regards,
Jim Wilson
Superintendent
Unalaska City School District

From: [Ann Froeschle](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: Support for HB 65 - SPED team
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:42:56 AM

Thank you for advocating for students' education and the future of our community by increasing BSA funding through HB 65. There could be no better investment or higher priority than preparing students to be changemakers and visionaries to face new challenges and creatively shape our future.

The following are some important additional points of support for your sponsorship of this essential bill.

- * The staff and teachers who are dedicated to giving students a relevant and inclusive education are continually being called on to do the impossible: provide more than ever before with less and less, and at a time when we are striving to recover from tremendous setbacks in learning.
- * Lower class sizes are the most direct guarantee for the best possible and most responsive and empowering education for students of all ages.
- * Schools are supporting more and more of the whole student and their needs, from meals, to mental health, to socialization, to curriculum standards, family support, open communication, extracurricular activities and so so so much more. The imbalance between lack of funding support and increasing responsibilities is unsustainable.
- * The district is suffering from a dangerous lack of support for Special Education services, Substitute teachers, and Classroom Teachers that results in loss of learning and failure for full and equal inclusion through lack of funding to fill positions with qualified educators invested in our district.
- * SPED is currently in a crisis to support inclusion of students in public education, in securing qualified staff, administrative support, program funding, tracking and testing students to ensure essential accommodations, and provide vital student support in all areas from academics to life skills to transition services.

Thank you again for fighting for our students through HB 65 at a critical time for public education.

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Ann Froeschle

Instructional Paraprofessional
Ketchikan High School
KGBSD School District

From: L.E
To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz
Subject: Testimony on HB65
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 9:51:51 AM

Dear Rep. Ortiz;

I was not able to stay on the phone yesterday long enough to give my testimony so I send it today:

"My name is Linda File. I have lived in Fairbanks for 53 years; attended high school here and went on to receive a degree from the University of Alaska. I raised three children, all Alaskans, to adulthood and am testifying on behalf of my grown children and my pre-school granddaughter who will start Kindergarten in 2024, also here in Alaska.

Alaska's Constitution has a strong, definitive statement on the priority we as Alaskans place on a viable system of public education:

"The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State... Schools so established shall be free from sectarian control."

Does the Legislature, do you as a legislator, sworn to uphold Alaska's Constitution and its laws, hold to your constitutional obligation (not your personal opinion) to carry out your obligation to the State system of public schools?

I recall that last fall the voters of Alaska upheld their commitment to our constitution, voting that it is sufficient, as written, for the needs of Alaska. We did not want a constitutional convention. The statement on public school holds.

The SBA is currently too low to maintain this system. The State is the entity that funds our public schools. This is your work, this is what those who testify here today are telling you is needed. This is a clarion call.

Please adopt HB 165 as written. Rep. McKay's amendment of a \$150 SBA is a debasement of the constitutional commitment to public schools. It is, in fact, a travesty. Your constituents and all Alaskans, especially its children, deserve better treatment. Our schools are the center of our communities. The buildings represent Alaska's investment in our future. The children inside each building represent a living commitment to Alaska's future.

And, in closing, regarding Rep. McKay's comments on the Education Committee:

The statement "my children are my property" and comments saying (he) "owns" (his) children are alarming and even ominous. This is the language of abusers. Those of us who are helping people through difficult childhoods know that many who were abused were told by an authoritarian parent, "I own you. You will do what I say. I am your father." This statement preceded egregious, violating abuse.

No one owns a child. We as parents are here to guide and to protect. The State is mandated to protect children.

Alaskans deserve compromise and discussion on this very vital aspect of the State's responsibility. Rigidity will get us nowhere.

Linda File

Fairbanks, Alaska

Alaska resident since 1965, voter since 1973

From: [Susan Bishop](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: Increasing base student allocation
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 7:59:59 AM

Dear legislators,

As a concerned citizen and a supporter of public education, I'm writing to express my support for House Bill 65, which increases the Base Student Allocation in Alaska. Funding for education has not kept pace with inflation, resulting in program cuts, increased class sizes, and difficulty in retaining teachers. My own (now adult) children received a quality education in the Fairbanks public schools, and the current generation of students deserve the same great start in life.

Please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at least \$1,250 per student.

Thank you,

Susan C. Bishop

From: [Dawn Rauwolf](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Support for HB 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 9:31:11 PM

I am emailing you to let you know that I support HB 65.

We need to have adequate funding to do the good work we need to do at school. We need to recognize that inflation has decreased the spending power of the current student allocation.

Please let your fellow legislators know about all of us teachers who are working hard, doing the best we can, educating our students - with diminishing resources. We need the BSA to be increased.

Sincerely,

Dawn Rauwolf
3rd & 4th grade teacher at Tongass School of Arts & Sciences
8 years as a teacher in Alaska

From: [Michael Bucy](#)
To: [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Rebecca Himschoot](#); [Rep. Andl Story](#); [Rep. CJ McCormick](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of HB65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 7:01:38 PM

To: House Education Committee
Re: Public Testimony in support of HB65

March 21, 2023

My name is Michael Bucy, I am a Juneau middle school teacher, and I support HB65.

There is a saying that education is expensive but ignorance is more so.

Education is expensive but it all depends on what kind of education you want. We had to leave Alaska for a year in 2016 and one of our children, through a scholarship, was able to attend a private school in Connecticut for her 7th grade year. Teacher ratio of 10;1; Arts, theatre, music, languages, sports, clubs, specialists, field trips, social activities....all part of providing an excellent education. The teachers, mostly Harvard, Princeton and Yale. The principal, a PhD from Harvard. The facilities, breathtaking. The cost? Expensive. The outcome, life changing. Why do I mention this rarefied experience?

Because you are choosing the experience our children will have for a major part of their lives.

In my school, I teach classes of up to 43 eleven year olds. I'm a good Music teacher, but nobody can pay attention to all the children's needs in that environment, let alone provide an excellent, personalized experience. One of my peers in my school teaches Math and Science to a class of 43 6th graders and 15 of those in his class are special education students.

Is this because of inept administration, hiding cash in their Cayman Island accounts? No.

It's because the governor and legislature have not funded schools adequately. Not extravagantly or adequately.

You know the crisis we're in. Districts can't hire teachers or settle contracts. People are moving out of the state.

Education is expensive. But what kind of schools do you propose for our children?

In my school, we have seen a 28% decrease in the number of teachers over the last 14 years.

- We used to have 2 Music teachers, now there's just me.
- We used to have 2 PE teachers, now we have one.
- We used to have Spanish, French and German. Now we don't.
- We used to have a Truancy officer. Now we don't and absenteeism is way up.

Education is expensive but not as expensive as last year's PFD payout. Or this year's proposed, mega handout.

We can afford this. You have a constitutional mandate to provide and maintain the schools and the schools are falling apart.

I congratulate the legislature on an overdue pay raise of 67%.

Now raise the BSA 20%.

Pass HB 65.

Thank you.

Michael Bucy

Juneau, AK 99801

From: [Deedie Sorensen](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: HB65 Increase BSA Funding
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 6:40:59 PM

March 21, 2023

Dear Representative Ortiz,

I was hoping to testify in person this evening, however that is now not a possibility. My name is Deedie Sorensen. I am the current president of the Juneau Board of Education. I am testifying in Support of HB65 to raise the BSA.

I have a very lengthy relationship with the Juneau School District as I started teaching in Juneau in 1981. While I have taught all elementary age students, for most of my career I taught primary age students in kindergarten through second grade. I mention this because I have watched as instructional material budgets and curricular supports have diminished over the last 20 years. Because I was teaching at a time when our schools were well resourced and had the benefit of outstanding professional development opportunities, as resources declined, I was able to fund raise for specific materials that I knew would be of significant benefit to beginning readers. I also had a robust understanding of how best to support students who were struggling for a wide variety of reasons in their successful acquisition of reading skills. Fact: there is no "one way" to teach all children to read. My husband was a successful professional, so I had the further ability to simply purchase the instructional materials that I needed as budgets continued to erode. Up until a few years before I retired, all elementary schools had full time reading specialists, this position required a Master's degree in reading. This skilled teacher worked with small groups of struggling readers.

All students should have the highly skilled teachers with access to effective instructional materials. Recruiting and retaining highly qualified and experienced teachers costs money. Excellent professional development independent of industrialized textbook adoption incentives costs money. Effective instructional materials for students with multiple educational needs costs money. Having specialized reading staff that are actually tasked with

teaching children, not data collection, costs money. Money for all these things has been slowly draining away for almost twenty years. It is not the responsibility of individual teachers to cover the state's economic dereliction. I would encourage you to calculate what the BSA would be today if schools were funded equal to their funding in 2000. You might also want to look at performance data particularly in urban districts at that time.

I also want to address the myth of bloated administration. Juneau has always had a rather lean administrative staff. For years we have prioritized classrooms and students as we dealt with the annual cuts due to underfunding. We are now at a place where we do not have sufficient district level operational staff. We have building administrators who are simultaneously the principals of multiple schools/programs. Our superintendent, in addition to that role, has also filled a director position this year because we could not find a qualified candidate. Every central office administrative position has two or three "extra duties" that used to be managed by non-certificated managerial staff. Asking anyone to fulfill the job requirements for multiple fulltime positions in addition to the job they were hired to do makes it very difficult to retain qualified employees. It is a recipe for having no administrative staff to keep the district financially, administratively and legally accountable to the state, the federal government, the city and the community. All of the unfunded mandates around accountability, the collection, aggregation and submission of data on dozens of programs to dozens of agencies are all administrative tasks and require staff at a district level to accomplish.

A significant upward adjustment in the BSA of at least \$1000 is necessary. Inflationary adjustments should also be a priority. We used federal pandemic funds to support student programs and reduce cuts for the last few years. Those monies are gone and there is nothing left to cut except educational programs and opportunities. For parents and families, it will be another reason to move to a state that values education and the future. Failure to adequately fund education encourage out migration from Alaska. Large PFD's are not keeping energetic forward looking people here because they don't translate into broad opportunities for their future opportunities or their family's best interests.

Sincerely,

Deedie Sorensen, Juneau, AK 99801

From: [Blossom Teal-Olsen](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [House Education](#)
Subject: Support HB65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 6:01:23 PM

Dear House Education Committee,

I am writing you in support of HB65.

My name is Blossom Teal-Olsen, I am currently the Sitka School Board President. The following statement is my own, and I do not speak/or represent any one body of people.

I am writing for the sake of the students, families, and educators within our district and through Alaska. We are in dire need of an increase of Base Student Allocation. Flat funding does a disservice to our children, it puts an undo financial burden on our educators and our school districts.

Without a BSA increase, the Sitka School District is facing a \$2,777,405 budget deficit which would force us to draw from our fund balance at a rate that puts our district in a precarious position if any emergency should happen.

Over the last six years, we have had to close libraries in our elementary, and middle schools. We have had to cut science programs, language classes and technology programs. We have had to cut our Assistant Superintendent position, putting a strain on our business office, and inhibiting our ability to seek for grant funding.

Our teachers wear many hats already. Without a BSA increase we will have to cut **15 teacher positions this year just to balance the FY 2024 budget. This does not include the program cuts due to teacher attrition.**

I implore the House Education Committee to hear these testimonies given across our state. Please hear my testimony, If we do not support HB65, we are jeopardizing our children's quality of life. We are taking advantage of our educators, and we are being careless with Alaska's future.

Please increase the BSA by \$1250.00.

Sincerely,

Blossom Teal-Olsen
Paniiraq
Sitka School Board President

From: [Aren Gunderson](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: support House Bill 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 5:14:08 PM

Dear Legislators,

I am a parent of 2 students enrolled in AK public schools. Please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at least **\$1,250 per student**. It is time to prioritize education in Alaska and invest in the future of our state. Our students and our state deserve nothing less.

Imagine you are in charge of a room full of 28 6 and 7 year olds....now teach them to read. That was my son's 1st grade class last year.

Our family would not stay in Alaska if we did not believe our kids could get a good education here. In the last few years we have seen music, art, teacher's aides, substitutes, librarians, and other school staff laid off due to budget cuts. Our kids now get the bare bones minimum of schooling in overcrowded classes. Fairbanks schools are considering a 4 day school week to save money, as has been done in other struggling schools in the lower 48 states. Are we going to follow the worst performing schools in other states? Please support House Bill 65.

Thanks,

Aren Gunderson, Fairbanks

From: [Robyn Burke](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [House Education](#)
Cc: lgarrison@aabs.org
Subject: Written Testimony, Support for HB65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 5:12:47 PM
Attachments: [NSBSD Booklet.pdf](#)

Uvlaalluataq (Good afternoon),

My name is Robyn Burke, I have the very privileged opportunity to serve as the President of the North Slope Borough School District Board of Education and I serve on the Association of Alaska School Boards Board of Directors. In the North Slope Borough School District we serve 2045 students in 11 schools in 8 communities, with Utqiagvik as the hub, across 89,000 square miles (320 miles north to south and 575 miles east to west).

I am writing today in support of HB65.

Alaska's BSA formula has not changed since 2017, despite raging inflation and new funding needs in the intervening six years. We request that this be remedied. An increase matching inflation is necessary to allow us to offer the same services we provided in 2017. The fact that the COVID years have severely affected our students' learning and achievement argues for an additional increase, as does the expanded and costly reliance on distance delivery methods that all schools face. Without an increase in the BSA, the student deficits we now experience will continue and worsen.

When School Districts lose ground financially, schools with growing class sizes receive fewer critical services. The disruption caused to the delivery of education by the pandemic has resulted in a greater need for support services and interventions in schools in order to recover lost academic progress and re-establish student wellbeing.

The statement, "Children are our most valuable natural resource," (Herbert Hoover, 31st U.S. President) has never been more pertinent to the discussion about current and future funding. While there is an opinion that increasing the BSA is the equivalent of "throwing money at a system that doesn't work," the recent introduction of the Reads Act establishes that the legislature sees the need for targeted interventions. But such initiatives cannot be integrated into schools unless the legislature acknowledges the ongoing cost of improving teacher/student ratios, professional development and required certifications for existing staff and facilities that can accommodate culturally responsive, differentiated classroom environments and appropriate interventions.

Failing to support much needed increases in base funding in favor of a single limited or targeted intervention only ignores the local solutions and resource needs of Alaska's unique communities and school districts that are rich in traditional knowledge and culture and must

be supported to deliver place-based education programs in adequate facilities.

Quyanaqpak (Thank you very much),

Robyn Burke

President, NSBSD Board of Education

From: [Jen Gunderson](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 4:57:23 PM

Dear Legislators,

As a concerned citizen, I would like you to please support House Bill 65 and increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) in Alaska. Our schools desperately need this funding to ensure that our students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

For too many years, we have seen flat funding for education and the impact of inflation eroding the value of the BSA. As a result, our schools are struggling to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. As a result, teachers are stretched thin, programs are being cut, and class sizes are increasing.

Recently, the Chief School Administrator of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District suggested to the school board that cutting P.E., general music, and library, shortening the school day, and then charging families a fee to let their kids stay at school longer could save our district money in the 2024-2025 school year. **Our students and families deserve better.**

By increasing the BSA, we can provide our schools with the necessary resources to invest in essential programs and services, including teacher training and technology upgrades. As a result, we can ensure that every student has access to a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in the rest of their careers and lives.

Moreover, increasing the BSA is not only the right thing to do for our students but also a wise investment in our state's future. Education is the key to economic growth and social mobility, and by investing in education, we can position ourselves for long-term success. In addition, a well-funded education system will help us to attract and retain businesses and families, which will benefit our state's economy in the long run.

Please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at least **\$1,250 per student**. It is time to prioritize education in Alaska and invest in the future of our state. Our students and our state deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Jen Gunderson
Fairbanks

From: [Kuba Grzeda](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: Support for HB 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 4:57:22 PM

Dear Legislators,

As a concerned citizen and advocate for education, I urge you to support House Bill 65 and increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) in Alaska. Our schools desperately need this funding to ensure that our students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

For too many years, we have seen flat funding for education and the impact of inflation eroding the value of the BSA. As a result, our schools are struggling to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. Teachers are stretched thin, programs are being cut, and class sizes are increasing. Our students deserve better.

By increasing the BSA, we can provide our schools with the resources they need to invest in important programs and services, including teacher training and technology upgrades. We can ensure that every student has access to a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in the rest of their careers and lives.

Moreover, increasing the BSA is not only the right thing to do for our students, but it is also a wise investment in our state's future. Education is the key to economic growth and social mobility, and by investing in education, we can position ourselves for long-term success. A well-funded education system will help us to attract and retain businesses and families, which will benefit our state's economy in the long run.

I ask that you please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at least \$1,250 per student. It is time to prioritize education in Alaska and invest in the future of our state. Our students and our state deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kuba Grzeda

Fairbanks, Alaska

From: [Erin Morotti](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [House Education](#)
Subject: In Support of HB 65 (Raising the BSA)
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 4:46:12 PM

Good Afternoon Representative Ortiz and House Education Committee Members,

My name is Erin Morotti, and I am a resident of Fairbanks, Alaska. I am writing to you today as an individual and not on behalf of any organization that I am affiliated with. My daughter attended the public schools here in Fairbanks, and we have had many family members that also attended and worked in the district. I am also a current member of the Fairbanks North Star Borough board of education. I am also a prior service member that; after serving in the US Coast Guard in Kodiak, Alaska, I chose to raise my daughter in Alaska because I love this state and its public education system. When I made that decision, the public education system was full of arts, innovation, and enrichment for students to grow and become well-rounded adults. Our districts in Alaska were competitive and attractive to educators from Alaska as well as from the lower 48. We had a quality retirement system, good pay and benefits, and fully supported school environments where educators thrived.

Unfortunately, that has changed over the last few years. Without adequate funding from the state of Alaska, our school districts have had to make deep cuts in order to balance their budgets by closing schools, pink-slipping educators during a nationwide educator shortage, eliminating enrichment programs, as well as many other cuts that have directly impacted the quality of education that the state of Alaska is constitutionally required to provide to our students. That being said, I am incredibly grateful to this Legislature for focusing energies and efforts on increasing public education funding through an increase to the BSA in order to adequately fund our school districts and get us back on track to putting kids and their education first.

Please vote to pass HB 65, and thank you again for your time and service.

-Erin Morotti

From: [Frieda Nageak](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [House Education](#)
Subject: HB 65 Increase Base Student Allocation
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 4:20:29 PM

Uvlulluataq (afternoon),

Frieda Nageak, North Slope Borough School District, I am in support of \$1250 increase per student BSA.

The base student allocation needs to be increased to make up for the impact after 6 years of flat funding. (2017 to present)

Our district covers **89,000 Square Miles** Northernmost School District in the United States 11 Schools in 8 Villages Serving K3-12th Grades 2027 students. There is no road system between villages or in and out of our hub Barrow, Alaska. All of our freight/bypass is flown into our district. First day of school our teacher vacancies was 50+. The gas prices in Barrow are a set \$7.70 a gallon. Outlying villages use This will help our district financially with operational cost, cost to get necessary school supplies/food into our district.

Please think of the remote districts that have to fly and barge in freight and where cost of living is double and/or triple urban areas.

Quyanaqpaq!

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [Bridget Smith](#)
To: [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. CJ McCormick](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Rebecca Hirsch](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Rep. Bryce Edmon](#); [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Delena Johnson](#); [Rep. Julie Coulombe](#); [Rep. Mike Cronk](#); [Rep. Will Stapp](#); [Rep. Frank Tomaszewski](#); [Rep. Alyse Galvin](#); [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Increase the SBA
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 3:46:42 PM

Dear Alaska House members,

Both of my children, now adults in their forties, attended Juneau Public Schools. They had teachers who cared about them, curriculum that worked, and extra curricular activities that nourished them. Since that time, costs have risen and the SBA has remained the same for 7 years. It is incomprehensible to me that we are handing out huge PFDs while our schools, teachers, and students struggle.

I believe that we could have a public education system in Alaska with reading and math proficiencies that we could all be proud of, not the low numbers of proficiency that we currently have. (The percentage of students achieving [math proficiency](#) in Alaska is 33%. The percentage of students achieving [reading proficiency](#) is 40%. Public School Review)

We have the ability to fund public education not just adequately, but well. But we need the political will that puts the needs of children first.

Sincerely yours,

Bridget Smith

A black rectangular redaction mark covering the signature area.

From: [McCumby, Scott](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: HB65 Support Testimony
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 3:20:25 PM

Hello Rep. Ortiz,

I am writing in support of HB65 for a BSA increase for the coming year as I am unable to call in at the time of the hearing this evening. As you are well aware, the BSA in Alaska has seen no significant increases since 2017. Meanwhile inflation has spiraled out of control and the cost to provide educational services for each district is no exception. The increased financial burden for many communities and boards throughout our state is causing a reduction in services and ability to deliver quality education to all students. I understand there are differing proposals for the BSA increase in both the House and the Senate. I think that the actual need is a compromise between both extremes and I would like to see that happen. Another year without a significant increase in BSA will only compound issues for our educational system throughout our state. Please pass my testimony along to the rest of the committee as I urge you to move this bill forward and into the Finance Committee.

Respectfully,

Scott McCumby

School Board Member-Valdez City Schools

Cell: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

From: [Michelle Sloper](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz: House Education](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Cc: [Roy Getchell](#)
Subject: Written Testimony on HB65 from HBSD in Haines, Alaska
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 2:11:32 PM
Attachments: [HBSD Legislative Priorities 2023 FINAL.pdf](#)

Good afternoon, Representative Ortiz, Representative Ruffridge, and members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Haines Borough School District (HBSD) to convey my steadfast support for HB65 to increase the Base Student Allocation from \$5,960 to \$7,210.

This increase in the BSA is incredibly important in our district because it will allow us to meet the obligations for our district set by our community and state -- educating and supporting our children and youth. Given the Legislature's history of flat funding with a single, trivial increase to the BSA (\$30) since 2016, adequate and predictable funding is more critical now than ever. Inflation and rising operational costs (e.g., costs of fuel, commodities, school supplies, travel, and so on) continue to limit our purchasing power year after year. More information about the specifics in our district are in the attached legislative priorities flyer.

At the Haines School, we pride ourselves in offering excellence to our students and pushing them to their own versions of excellence -- we would implore the Alaska Legislature to demonstrate excellence by providing the financial support Alaska schools desperately need. The Base Student Allocation (BSA) must be increased to keep up with inflation to provide our students with the quality educational opportunities that they deserve. Receiving appropriated funding in a timely fashion promotes teacher/staff retention and allows for a responsible and well-planned budgeting process that supports the best interests of our students. As a developmental psychologist in my day job, I am intimately aware of the critical opportunities for positive development that take place in our school.

We are counting on your support to offer the meaningful learning opportunities that we know are consistent with excellence in education. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Please reach out if you need more information.

Best,
Shelly Sloper
HBSD School Board Chair

--

Michelle (Shelly) Sloper, Ph.D.

Phone:

Email:

From: [Bob French](#)
To: [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Rep. Jennie Armstrong](#); [Rep. Ben Carpenter](#); [Rep. Ashley Carrick](#); [Rep. Julie Coulombe](#); [Rep. Mike Cronk](#); [Rep. Maxine Dibert](#); [Rep. David Eastman](#); [Rep. Bryce Edmon](#); [Rep. Zack Fields](#); [Rep. Neal Foster](#); [Rep. Alyse Galvin](#); [Rep. Andrew Gray](#); [Rep. Cliff Groh](#); [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [Rep. Rebecca Himschoot](#); [Rep. Craig Johnson](#); [Rep. DeLena Johnson](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Rep. Kevin McCabe](#); [Rep. CJ McCormick](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Donna Mears](#); [Rep. Genevieve Mina](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Josiah Patkotak](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. George Rauscher](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Dan Saddler](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Laddie Shaw](#); [Rep. Will Stapp](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#); [Rep. Louise Stutes](#); [Rep. Jesse Sumner](#); [Rep. Cathv Tilton](#); [Rep. Frank Tomaszewski](#); [Rep. Sarah Vance](#); [Rep. Stanley Wright](#)
Subject: Please vote yes on HB 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 12:30:52 PM

I will not be able to provide public testimony on HB 65 to the House Education Committee tonight, but wanted to urge all of the house members to vote yes and increase the BSA.

When I moved to Alaska in 1982, there were yearly job fairs just for teachers that were attended by thousands of prospective teachers from everywhere in the USA. Severe salary cuts, and especially dropping defined benefits mean that Alaska now faces teacher shortages.

The BSA has not been increased since 2016. Merely increasing the BSA to keep up with inflation ignores the huge increases in medical and energy costs that especially effect rural schools. School districts should not have to choose between paying teachers, feeding kids, and keeping the schools warm and the lights on.

Lastly, Alaska has some of the highest classroom sizes of any State. It simply is not possible to teach, when teachers spend most of their days trying to wrangle 30 or more students.

Because we want to grow Alaska's population instead of watching our best and brightest continue to leave the state in droves, providing ample support to our public schools - as required by the Alaska Constitution - should be high on the priority list of every legislator this year.

Funding for the University of Alaska is another key need, but not the point of HB 65, or of this letter.

Thanks for listening.

Bob French,


From: [Alyssa Kleissler](#)
To: [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: HB 65 support
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 12:00:48 PM

Dear House Education Committee,

I am writing this email to express my support of HB 65 for a \$1250 increase per student to the Base Student Allocation. For 6 years, there has been no increase (of significance), yet, as we all are experiencing directly in our daily lives, prices across the board have all gone up exponentially.

I am a dual credit Spanish teacher with Prince William Sound College (PWSC), Cordova Extension, and have held this position at the Cordova Jr/Sr High School for over 20 years. I recently became the Coordinator of the PWSC, Cordova Extension. I also have owned and managed my own dance and yoga studio for over 25 years in Cordova. I am passionate about education at all levels of development across all subject areas.

I see on a daily basis the overwhelm staff experiences due to cutting corners and shrinking budgets. Teachers are taking on various roles to cover for otherwise employed positions. Students are learning from antiquated texts and special needs students are being babysat rather than receiving the necessary, qualified care and expertise they deserve. Living in rural Alaska forces households to pay exorbitant prices for basic needs such as fuel, milk, eggs, internet, and much more. It is vital for our youth to participate in athletic programs, leadership programs, and career path programs. These all come at higher costs for our school district due to the necessity to travel outside by boat or plane (there are no roads in or out of Cordova).

I firmly believe it is a fundamental human right to receive a high quality education housed in a safe and nurturing environment. What are we as a nation if we are not funding our future - all of our future and not just a select margin of the population? Who are we if we are denying the impacts of flat funding while the rest of the world keeps up with the changing economic landscape? I dare not consider the negative impacts of denying our future generations their basic right to a stable and robust education.

I sincerely request that you consider supporting this bill and securing a brighter future for us all.

With much respect,

Alyssa Kleissler
Mother, Teacher, Coordinator, Small Business Owner
Cordova AK

From: [Diane Gubatayao](#)
To: [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [House Education](#); [House Finance](#)
Subject: Testimony regarding HB65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:38:44 AM
Attachments: [Res 2982AS BSA Increase \(1\).pdf](#)

Good day, Rep. Ruffridge and honorable members of the House Education Committee. My name is Diane Gubatayao, and I have served as a School Board member for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough SD for seven years. Thus, I have a long vision of the impact of flat BSA funding. Districts have scraped along this far partially due to special Covid funds, but we can no more.

Attached please find a copy of the joint resolution passed unanimously by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly and the KGSD. It highlights with historical and current data the dire situation facing our district budget. The number one duty of the State and the legislature is to adequately fund and support education. There truly is no more important responsibility.

Bottom line: all school districts NEED a significant increase in the BSA. One time special funds do not compensate, and restrict our ability to strategically plan for the future. The band aid approach is no longer sustainable. We are in survival mode, and that is severely harming our students' education. I urge you to support HB65 and a substantial BSA increase.

Thank you for your time, service and dedication to Alaska and our youth.

Respectfully, Diane Gubatayao
KGBSD School Board member



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From: [Debbe Lancaster](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: HB 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:34:22 AM

Good morning Representatives Ortiz and Ruffridge,

I am writing on behalf of the Yukon Flats School District. As you know, we are a small district in a remote part of the state and are expressing support for passing HB 65 to increase the BSA. I am not asking for this because we need to increase teacher pay. We have improved our retention rate this year and our teachers understand we can support them in different ways other than salary increases.


I base this request on two areas of need.

We need to increase the hours of our classified staff from part time to full time. In doing this, which helps our local economies and student support in the summer months, we would need to provide full benefits. Our paraprofessionals are currently training on basic reading skills to help students learn in the summer months when our teachers visit their families during their summer break. Employing paraprofessionals, who are very important members of our communities, full time and year round can provide a continuity of learning and student engagement in the schools. This is not only a good idea academically, but can maintain stronger social emotional ties to the school through the staff they have grown up with. This is a huge benefit to our students.

The second issue is the cost of fuel. 1/9th of our annual budget needs are fuel related. It is very expensive to purchase and ship fuel to our villages. And, unlike many districts in the southern part of the state, we have very harsh winters. Fortunately, we have trees to help supplement our heating demands, but they are only a supplement. We cannot do without the fuel.

If we were able to get an increase in the BSA, we could add to our local economies, empower some community members, and maintain positive learning experiences year round for our students. Teachers and administrators will come and go; I want to focus on a sustainable system of support for our students and schools....and...we will continue to stay warm.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours and mahsi',
Dr. Debbe Lancaster
Superintendent YFSD




Leadership is found in becoming the servant of all. Richard J. Foster

From: [Aaron Kusano](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Support of HB65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:20:52 AM

Hello Representative Ortiz,

I would like to write to you in support of HB 65. I will not be able to attend tonight's in person testimony but wanted to share that it is important that we continue to support Alaska students by increasing the Base Student Allocation by the proposed \$1250.

I am a born and raised Alaskan, proudly returning to work here in my home because of the educational opportunities I had as a product of the Anchorage School District. The impact of inflation cannot be ignored in the face of 6 years of flat funding.

I strongly support investing in Tomorrow's Alaska.

Thank you,

Aaron

From: [Eugene Wilkerson](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Rural schools need HB 65
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 10:53:46 AM

Good morning,

The increased funding in house HB 65 is absolutely vital to the continued education of Alaska's children, particularly those in rural school districts. I have three children in the NWABSD, and I work for the district as well. Over the last three years, the district has faced ballooning costs in almost every field and has been forced to make progressively more painful cuts. These cuts have resulted in reduced student meal quality, eliminated activities, fewer teachers, larger class sizes, reduced special education support for special needs kids, and heavier workloads for district staff as we constantly try to do more with less.

Without the immediate increase in funding from HB 65 the prospects for the 23-24 school year are looking grim. Our district will be forced to cut even more jobs, class sizes will increase again, and our kids will pay the price. We cannot forfeit the future of Alaska by crippling the education of our children.

--
Eugene Wilkerson
Administrative Assistant & Public Relations
Northwest Arctic Borough School District

[REDACTED]
Kotzebue, AK 99752
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Katie McClellan](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: Please support House Bill 65!
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 9:27:31 AM

Dear Legislators,

I'm writing to ask that you support House Bill 65 and take action to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) and improve recruitment and retention of staff in Alaska's public schools. Since the BSA is the primary funding mechanism for K-12 education in our state, it has incredibly significant impacts on the resources and quality of education available to our students.

We must increase the BSA to improve the quality of education in AK. The current level hasn't been raised since 2017 and is insufficient for providing students with the classroom resources they need. Cut programs, ballooning classroom sizes, and teachers with too many students and responsibilities to keep track of has led to lower quality of education, fewer support programs for students, and exhausted teachers. Increasing the BSA to account for inflation and rising district costs would go a long way to improving school life for students. Increasing the BSA would allow schools to address needed upgrades and expansions to programs, technology, and support for students, as well as provide more teacher training.

Additionally, it's critical to develop systems to improve the recruitment and retention of educators. Our schools are struggling to find and keep qualified and enthusiastic educators and staff which is contributing to negative outcomes for students. I believe this requires better retirement and benefits plans that teachers and staff can count on to support them during and after their careers in the schools. Better benefits will attract better qualified teachers and staff; other states have improved their benefits and retirement plans and have found success in attracting more educators to support their students. Alaska must follow suite if we are to provide brighter futures for our students. Caring for our teachers better means they can care for our students better.

Through these two measures, increasing the BSA and improving teacher and staff benefits, Alaska's schools can have the resources and support they need to provide students with a higher quality education that will lead to more achievement. Investing in our education system is never a wasted effort, and supporting our schools and students is a first step in securing a brighter future for the state. An educated population is key for economic growth and social mobility; by investing in our schools, we are investing in the long term growth and prosperity of our state.

Please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at LEAST \$1,250 to account for inflation. We absolutely must prioritize education in Alaska. Our students and teachers deserve it, and a promising future as a state requires it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,
Katie McClellan
Fairbanks, AK

From: [Mike Grunst](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: Support for increasing the BSA and a state tax
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 8:35:39 AM

Dear Representative Ortiz,

My comments are my own and do not represent the Department of Defense, the US Army, or the National Guard. I am a special interest. I am a resident of the state of Alaska; I have two children enrolled in the Anchorage School District; and I own a small business. I have lived in Alaska since the early 80s. I graduated, despite my worst efforts, from the Anchorage School District and am proud that my children are attending public school here; 3rd grade at Scenic Park elementary and 6th grade at Begich Middle School.

It is time for us, as Alaskans, to step up and take responsibility for the direction we want our state to go. Individually, we are the lowest taxed state in the nation. We, as individuals, pay nothing for the services we receive from the state and it is the time for us to take charge. (1) (2) I understand that it is scary to touch the third rail of politics and talk taxes, but that is what we elected you for. To make the hard decisions.

We can no longer continue to cut state services and reasonably expect to have a livable state. We are seeing a net migration of people fleeing the state, critically, the 18-64 year old age group, while our over 65 population increases. Alaska ranks 49th for education in the nation, 49th in the nation for crime, and we are the most dangerous state for women and children for the seventh year in a row. (3) (4) (5) Alaska needs a comprehensive fiscal plan to address these issues. It is time for Alaskans to either put up, or shut up. Whether that means a statewide income tax, a sales tax, Permanent Fund earnings, or a combination of these items; Alaska needs a future. We need you to help us get to that future.

We need to coordinate the school districts and the University system so that they can mutually support one another. When our kids graduate HS they need to know they can attend and graduate from a great institution; whether that is a college or trade school. UAA needs to work on getting its teacher accreditation back so that we can grow our own educators. We need to forward fund education so that administrators can plan for, and best execute our oil companies precious tax dollars. We need to stop about the future of our state, which is our children. Your children. Your children's children.

As a reminder, we paid a 2-billion-dollar bribe to the residents of Alaska last year via the Permanent fund. Approximately \$400 million of that \$2 billion bribe immediately left our state and went to the federal government. (6) That \$400 million would solve almost every education dilemma in the state.

Alaska is a community of 750,000 with eighty billion dollars in the bank. We can solve almost all of our problems, we just have to have intestinal fortitude to do so.

Sincerely,

X

Michael Grunst

Anchorage, AK 99504

- 1) 2023 State Business Tax Climate Index. (2023, March 1). Tax Foundation.
<https://taxfoundation.org/2023-state-business-tax-climate-index/>
- 2) Alaska | State Business Tax Climate Index - Tax Foundation. (n.d.). Alaska | State Business Tax Climate Index - Tax Foundation.
https://statetaxindex.org/state/alaska/?__hssc=254296215.b49e3fce817e38a8d3d9fdc8dee604a4.1678215256971.1678215256971.1678215256971.1&__hssc=254296215.2.1678215256971&__hsfp=113664363
- 3) DOLWD Press Release. (n.d.). <https://labor.alaska.gov/news/2023/news23-1.htm>
- 4) Schnell, L. (2019, December 15). Missing or murdered? In America's deadliest state, one family is still searching for answers. <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2019/06/25/deadliest-state-women-alaska-rape-and-murder-too-common-domestic-violence-rape-murder-me-too-men/1500893001/>
- 5) Violence Policy Center. (2022). When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2020 Homicide Data. In vpc.org. Retrieved March 7, 2023, from <https://vpc.org/when-men-murder-women/>
- 6) Alaska Income Tax Calculator - SmartAsset. (n.d.). SmartAsset.
<https://smartasset.com/taxes/alaska-tax-calculator#OAePXlubng>



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From: [carey fristoe](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: HB 65 support
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 6:40:27 AM

Dear Legislators,

As a concerned citizen and advocate for education, I urge you to support House Bill 65 and increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) in Alaska. Our schools desperately need this funding to ensure that our students receive the high-quality education they deserve.

For too many years, we have seen flat funding for education and the impact of inflation eroding the value of the BSA. As a result, our schools are struggling to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. Teachers are stretched thin, programs are being cut, and class sizes are increasing. Our students deserve better.

By increasing the BSA, we can provide our schools with the resources they need to invest in important programs and services, including teacher training and technology upgrades. We can ensure that every student has access to a well-rounded education that prepares them for success in the rest of their careers and lives.

Moreover, increasing the BSA is not only the right thing to do for our students, but it is also a wise investment in our state's future. Education is the key to economic growth and social mobility, and by investing in education, we can position ourselves for long-term success. A well-funded education system will help us to attract and retain businesses and families, which will benefit our state's economy in the long run.

I ask that you please support House Bill 65 and increase the BSA by at least \$1,250 per student. It is time to prioritize education in Alaska and invest in the future of our state. Our students and our state deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

--
Carey

From: [Kaye Peters](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#)
Subject: School ceiling in disrepair
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 11:07:39 PM

Dear Sir,

I am the librarian at Glacier Valley School in Juneau, Alaska. We have had a major leak in our ceiling since last spring. Although our maintenance people have tried to repair it, it remains a huge issue. We have had an extremely large hole in the ceiling for months! I feel it is unsafe and exposes our children and myself to daily mold. I have been told over and over again that it cannot be fixed because we do not have the funds. I am very concerned for both the safety issues that arise from it, and the obvious damage it is causing and could cause in the future. We (educators) continue to work in these type of conditions to provide the best education that we can for our students. We just went through an epic few years of doing above and beyond work during Covid to make sure we held onto the connections with our students and families during the crisis. We remain devoted to giving our students an education and experiences that will change their lives for the better.

Currently, we (Juneau School District employees) are working without a contract. I cannot express the hurt, the frustration, or the hit on our morale knowing and feeling as if we are not important enough to give a reasonable and liveable income.

Please help us by raising the student allocation. This will provide the stability for teachers, provide money to fix our falling apart schools, and above all; provide money needed to educate our children. Let's give them the schools and education that they deserve!

Kaye Peters

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)



From: [Ann Rappoport](#)
To: [Rep. Jamie Allard](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#); [Rep. Mike Prax](#); [Rep. CJ McCormick](#); [Rep. Thomas McKay](#); [Rep. Rebecca Himschoot](#); [Rep. Andi Story](#)
Cc: [Rep. Genevieve Mina](#); [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Zack Fields](#); [Rep. Ashley Carrick](#); [Rep. Calvin Schrage](#); [Rep. Andy Josephson](#); [Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson](#); [Rep. Sara Hannan](#); [GalvinRepresentative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov](#); [Rep. Maxine Doherty](#); [Representative.Jennie.Armstrong@akleg.govarmstrong](#); [Rep. Laddie Shaw](#)
Subject: I urge you to support HB 65 - a long-past due healthy and sensible increase in the Base Student Allocation!!
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 6:15:05 PM

Dear Legislators -

I urge you to swiftly pass HB 65 which will raise the Base Student Allocation \$1250, from \$5,960 to \$7,210/student. This increase is long overdue - you've seen the statistics - this allocation has increased only a few percent in the last two decades while inflation and increasing costs have increased in many double digits. My children were fortunate to have graduated from the Anchorage School District over 12 years ago when class sizes were reasonable, we had retention of dedicated, excellent teachers, and schools had resources and both enrichment and remedial programs to inspire and appropriately educate all our students. Now we've seen tremendous cuts in educational offerings, teachers departing, vacancies in all educational and support positions, and increasing class sizes. No wonder our students are testing lower and lower.

We are not going to improve our students' educational outcomes until we dedicate more funding to our educational systems. This is also critical to reverse the trend where people are pulling their kids out of public schools to educate them at home. Most parents do not have the specialized experience and skills to appropriately challenge and stimulate their children as students; there is no guarantee they are presenting the full curriculums students need, nor that they will recognize and accommodate any special needs their children may have.

I know people complain about rising education costs, but they seem to ignore the fact that the vast majority of education spending increases have gone to uncontrollables like increasing health insurance costs, needs to increase security at our schools due to too many loonies with loose guns, etc. It's time to add the funding to what is spent on each student!

Thank you for your attention to my concerns - please pass HB 65 as proposed, a \$1250 annual increase in the Base Student Allocation.

Sincerely,
Ann Rappoport


Anchorage, AK

From: [Tracey Schaeffer](#)
To: [Rep. Daniel Ortiz](#); [Rep. Justin Ruffridge](#)
Subject: SB 65
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 9:17:00 AM

I work with the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. The cost of living and doing business here has increased exponentially. We need to increase the SBA \$1250 to continue to keep up with costs and provide effective education for our students. "Flat Funding" in this economy is not keeping up with the needs of our students.

Thank you

--

Tracey Schaeffer, OTR/L
Trauma Informed Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Want to be trauma aware? Connect before you correct and get curious, not furious!

Caroline Hamp

From: Jen LaRoe <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, March 19, 2023 7:25 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Julie Coulombe; Rep. Mike Cronk; Rep. Will Stapp; Rep. Frank Tomaszewski; Rep. Alyse Galvin; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Daniel Ortiz
Cc: House Education
Subject: Support HB 65

Categories: Bill Support - HB65

Hello Representatives and House Education Committee,

My name is Jen LaRoe and I have lived in Juneau for 30 years, making my life here and raising my family. My daughter just turned 20 on Saturday and my son is finishing his Junior year at Juneau Douglas High School. I have been a parent advocate for 15 years, as well as a dedicated parent volunteer for the public schools in Juneau, serving on site councils, volunteering to fill a vacancy on the school board, and most importantly, weekly classroom hours as a volunteer helping to support emerging and struggling readers in 3rd grade, spearheading a school garden project funded with grant money.

I have now stepped into the role of certified teacher for a pre-K classroom. I am very fortunate to have a cap of 20 to the number of students in my classroom. I bring this up because in all my years advocating for and participating in classrooms, I know that the pupil to teacher ratio or PTR is of paramount importance to the success of students and the retaining of quality teachers. Overcrowded classes serve no one well.

The single most important factor in student achievement is access to a quality teacher. The higher the pupil/qualified teacher ratio, **the lower the relative access of pupils to qualified teachers.**

As class sizes increase, and pay and benefit packages are squeezed, and the number of adults in any given school decline, quality teachers are leaving the profession.

When you fail to keep the funding up to date, as the BSA has been flat funded for several years now, you will loose more and more staff.

This is my first year as a school district certified teacher. I am not sure I can stay given the lack of support from legislators for funding an education system that supports students and teachers.

Please increase the BSA.

On February 28, 2023 the Legislative Finance Division Director stated to the House Finance Committee that "today, the base student allocation is the lowest it's been in 20 years, adjusted for inflation"

From 2011 to 2022, the Base Student Allocation has increased by less than 5%, while Alaska's urban consumer price index has risen by 24.6%. (Source ADN 1/26/23)

The BSA would need to increase by **\$1,348** to match the buying power of peak year 2015. (Source January 30, 2023 memo from the Legislative Finance Division)

Sincerely,
Jen LaRoe

[REDACTED]
Juneau, AK 99801

From: Greg Higdon
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz
3/11/2023

BSA

Representative Ortiz,

I read your letter in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner today .

I could not agree with you more. The fact that we spend double on PFD's in relation to student spending is appalling .

I've heard that 75% of prisoners cannot read above a third grade level. And that 25% of our nations homeless are illiterate. If we would spend time and money to increase the literacy rates of our school kids, we may go a long way to helping solve other social issues.

Thank you
Greg Higdon
Fairbanks

From: Sonja Benson
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz
3/11/23

Thank you!

Dear Representative Ortiz,

Thank you for your letter to the editor in today's Fairbanks Daily News Miner. And thank you for sponsoring HB 65. I wholeheartedly support increasing the BSA.

I also support repealing SB 21.

Whether we see new areas of oil development or not, but perhaps especially if we do, it's critical that the oil companies raking in huge profits pay their fair share for our nonrenewable oil resource. SB21 is the single largest contributor to our revenue and budget problems and we need to talk about it.

Moreover, a state income tax, with or without changing SB 21, needs to be under consideration as well.

A graduated state income tax would allow out of state workers, who don't buy so much as a candy bar at the airport, to support a state that provides them with a good living. And it would allow those who do very well living here to give back a little to our beloved Alaska.

Thanks again, keep up the good fight!

Sonja Benson
Fairbanks

From: Paula Davis

To: Rep. Dan Ortiz

Citizen Concerns

March 7, 2023

Dear Representative Ortiz,

Thanks for your hard work in Juneau! I am heartened to see you work together for Alaska!

Without going into a lot of details, here's the most pressing issues that I hope that you will address in this legislative session:

Base Student Allotment (BSA) As a retired teacher who volunteers in the classrooms I can see that school funding is not keeping up with costs. We're now ranked around last in the nation for education and we used to be near the top. After hearing about schools having to lose a teacher and raise class sizes yet again, young parents talk about moving to other states.

Teachers: I just heard tonight that there is a suggestion to pay bonuses to teachers. This is just another bribe that will not last. Please give them retirement, or they will take the bonus but leave after a few years. I have already seen so many really great teachers move to other states and feel very discouraged by it.

Retirement: Really great teachers come to Alaska and love living here but find that the lack of retirement makes it financially unpalatable to try to stay. The same is true for other state workers who do not have retirement.

No huge PFD: Offering a \$4000 PFD while not funding education properly is so short-sighted! Please don't agree to this wasteful spending with which the governor tries to bribe voters!!! That money could go so much farther if it was put to good use on the problems of Alaska.

Alternative energy: We are looking at an end to the natural gas supply as we know it in the Anchorage area by 2027, 4 years away. Why isn't the legislature talking about this?? It will be an emergency when citizens can't stay warm in the winter!

Restrictions on medical providers: Please allow medical providers to use their well-trained judgement on the needs of their patients rather than trying to legislate procedures. Abortions should be between a doctor and patient, not legislated, and the attorney general should not bully Walgreens into withholding medications people may need.

Future: All of the above issues affect the future of Alaska. I came here on the 3 year plan in 1982 and still love Alaska after 40+ years. I am disappointed to see the decline of so much that is great about Alaska and its wonderful people. I am discouraged at the outmigration of young people who love being here, too, but who need to think of their futures. Please think of Alaska's future, too, and consider acting on my comments.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paula Davis

Anchorage, AK

From: Doug Greg
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz
3/8/23

HB65

Dan,

I watched the Education committee hearing this week for HB 65.

Thanks for you efforts!

I did some admin sub work at the start of the 23-24 school year for KGBSD.

Ketchikan had nearly 20% of positions open - paras, office personnel, teachers, and administration. My discussion with AKDOE confirmed that this was similar across Alaska. Even with all these vacancies significant cuts will be needed in addition to leaving these positions vacant without additional funding. You are correct in emphasizing the dire situation statewide. Perhaps there is data showing the number of vacancies in education statewide and the additional position cuts that are being discussed?

I also hope the Legislature will endorse a return to a Defined Benefit system.

Doug Gregg

From: Peter Hoepfner
To: Rep. Dan Ortiz
3/6/23

Testimony for BSA and AK Reads Act

Hi Rep Ortiz,

I REALLY appreciate your presentation today on increasing BSA, and speaking about unfunded mandates.

It is ALWAYS interesting to see how the state writes bills, and add administrative and teachers time, developing IEP's for every student?? And how much time??

I have said many times that teachers need RESOURCES, and not "one more thing to do".

I was scratching my head when the AK Reads Act came out, and another seeming "stick" over teachers and admin. Then, commis Johnson and DEED came out with the "Reading Symposium", and actual resources for teachers!!!

Here in cordova the teachers are FULLY engaged in LTERS, and using Hegerrity and UNFLI.... It is AMAZING!!

AND, then teachers are stunned with the growth in reading. I visited the kindergarten class and was amazed with students progress, as well as the amount of time that teachers spent outside of the classroom to learn this approach. RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS!! YEAH!! And GROWTH!!

The teachers even stated that the reads symposium makes them a better teacher!!!

And does this growth come from the Ak Reads Act??? Unfortunately no...

And THEN, speaking with a friend in anchorage, and how their kindergarten classes are 28-30 students.. Can you imagine a class of that size??

It seems like the state is not interested in helping teachers or students in learning when one sees class sizes that will not work... as kindergarten class, there can be behavioral issues with classes that large that disrupt the learning process.

And with all the cuts over the years (I have been on the Cdv SB for 18 years now), we have NO reading specialists, no librarians, no nurses, limited aides.. we couldn't find another SPED teacher, we couldn't find a 6th grade teacher or school counselor, but got lucky to have two retired teachers pick up last two positions..

I really appreciate your voice in the legislature, and your knowledge of education in the state of alaska!!

Thanks for your work!!

Pete Hoepfner

From: Eva Gardner

To: Rep. Dan Ortiz

3/6/23

HB 65 / Raise the BSA

Hello, I'm writing to support HB 65 and urge you to raise the BSA.

We're parents in the Denali Montessori Elementary School community--an ASD school that draws 80% of its students from all across Anchorage via the lottery--and we just learned that we are losing a teacher next year. The Anchorage School Board has increased its student:teacher ratios because of lack of funding from the Legislature and we are seeing the disastrous effects of this in the real world.

Our principal's current assessment is that this will cause the school to lose an entire kindergarten class, which will--within a few years--shrink the school to 2/3 of its current size. It's the second-most diverse alternative program in Anchorage, with 62% of the students qualifying for free or reduced meals and multiple options for need-based before and after school care that allows parents to work full workdays. It's a school that should be grown because it provides a high-quality, education accessible to all, not shrunk because of budget issues.

Adjusted for inflation, the BSA is *the lowest it has been in 20 years*. The Legislature should be investing in its students--not telling them they don't matter.

I guarantee that if you keep sending this message--that Alaska is a state that does not prioritize children--parents will leave. My husband and I choose to live here, far from our out-of-state family, because we love Alaska and it's an incredible place to raise a family--for now. But we can't afford to send our three kids to private school, so if the public school system continues to be underfunded, we will seriously consider leaving for a state that actually cares about its children.

Raise the BSA. Show students that they matter. Keep Alaska's families in Alaska.

Eva Gardner

Anchorage

From: Michael Bucy

To: Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

3/6/23

Important Consideration Re: BSA/ADM Formula

Dear House Education Committee Members:

For your consideration, the current formula used to determine actual district funding of the Base Student Allocation (ADM), was last overhauled in the 1997-98, 20th Legislative Session.

Introduced as SB38, it was debated for the full, two year session, intensely and thoroughly.

It was not a last minute "trojan horse" of some kind.

Also, the 20th Legislature was comprised of 39 Republicans and 21 Democrats.

I say this to counter the comment that the BSA formula is a "black box" that ought to be revisited in depth. My perspective is, that would be a distraction from the urgent need to pass HB65.

Please pass HB65 out of committee today.

Correction: the bill introduced in 1997 was SB36 (not SB38) introduced by Sen. Randy Philips (R.-Eagle River)

Thank you,

Michael Bucy

Juneau, AK 99801

From: Cheyenne Cuellar

To: Rep. Dan Ortiz

3/5/23

Support HB65

I am writing to express my support for HB 65, increasing the BSA \$1250. As a middle school teacher, I am experiencing on a daily basis what flat funding is doing to our schools and the quality of the education being offered. I want to provide a world class education to my students.

I want my students to be in a class where they are 1 of 25 students rather than 1 of 30 students. I want my students with learning disabilities to have the support they need by having paraprofessionals in my classroom who can support them. Instead, I have two classes that are supposed to have a paraprofessional in them but don't due to unfilled positions that do not offer competitive wages. I want the students who do not show up to school 3 or even 4 days a week to come to school. Unfortunately in an effort to keep funding in the classroom, the truancy officer position in our District was cut a few years ago.

These are just some of the impacts I experience every day that could be mitigated through an increase to the BSA.

Cheyenne Cuellar

Juneau Middle School teacher

In Support of SB 52
Increase Base Student Allocation

Danika Smalley- IEA Director @ Wrangell Public School District
3/13/2023

Dear State Representative Dan Ortiz,

My name is Danika Smaley, and I live in Wrangell. I am the parent of a few students at Wrangell Public School District. I am writing to you today in Support of Bill SB52 Increase Base Student Allocation.

SB 52 will help our students, our educators, and our district. As a parent, I have watched our district over the last few years with budget struggles, these struggles are felt within the district as a whole.

Every district struggles somehow, I feel this now as I work for the school and can see the inner workings of the day to day struggles which are hugely impacted by the budget. As our buildings are old and as maintenance is needed, budget cuts are happening, keeping a full time staff is difficult. SB 52 will allow for the district to position itself to maintain and help get our schools back on track. As of right now, without a special grant, we can't afford a principal. Our students are qualifying for traveling for sports and yet we have to get special funding in order to send our students on a trip.

With SB 52- increase base student allocation, the Wrangell school district will be able to afford and maintain our schools. Not only will this help the district, but it will also help with the community's involvement with the school district. If passed, I know Wrangell's students will thrive with the additional funds.

I strongly support SB 52 and the positive impact it will have on our school/district/community if passed. Thank you for your time and effort in support of Alaska's students.

Danika Smalley

danikarae_smalley@yahoo.com

February 13, 2023

Representative Ortiz,

Our students and public schools are in crisis. Schools are closing, Alaska students are losing educational opportunities, and our state is no longer competitive in the national educator job market. I urge you to take bold and immediate action to provide relief to school districts through a Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase and develop long-term education funding solutions.

Since 2017, inflation has risen by 15% which has steadily diminished school districts' buying power. Meanwhile, the BSA has only increased by 0.5% over that same period. Some estimates have suggested that in order to keep up with inflation, the BSA should be \$1,300 more than it is right now. Regardless of how we calculate inflation or the right amount for the BSA, one thing is clear: our public schools need help now.

I urge you to do everything in your power to set aside political differences and focus on providing relief to our public schools. Governor Dunleavy and legislators of all political persuasions have indicated their openness to increasing the BSA. I hope I can count on you to join them in finding common ground to pass a meaningful budget increase.

You can be a hero for Alaska's public schools this legislative session. Please don't let us down.

Sincerely,



Katrina Monta

Point Higgins Elementary School, 2nd Grade Teacher 2022-2023

Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Sunday March 19, 2023

Dear Representative Ortiz, co-sponsors of HB 65, and members of the House Education Committee,

As individual members of the Anchorage School Board, **we are writing in support of HB 65** and wanted to underscore that both the Anchorage School Board and Anchorage Assembly recently filed [a joint statement of support](#) for this bill following a prior, unanimous [Assembly resolution](#) to this effect.

However, writing today as individual members, we strongly urge the House Education Committee to **amend HB 65, prior to passage from the Committee, so as to include language that would adjust the Base Student Allocation to also account for inflation in future years.** Taking action in this way will enable the 33rd Legislature to fulfill the intentions expressed by the framers of the Alaska Constitution: that education should be *maintained* by the legislature.

Much has been made of the word “maintain” in recent weeks, as it forms a critical component of Article VII, Section 1 in the Alaska Constitution. Out of awareness of the importance of that word – “maintain”— and out of curiosity about how this language came into being, we recently took some time to examine digitized holdings from the Constitutional Convention. From those documents, we pieced together the following story about our founders’ commitment to public education, and we hope you will take their words to heart:

With less than a week until the Territory of Alaska was to mark the winter solstice, the Fairbanks daylight would have been fleeting on December 15, 1955. But inside the newly built [University of Alaska Student Union Building](#), members of the Constitutional Convention Committee on Preamble and Bill of Rights were working hard to establish a beacon of light for the future.

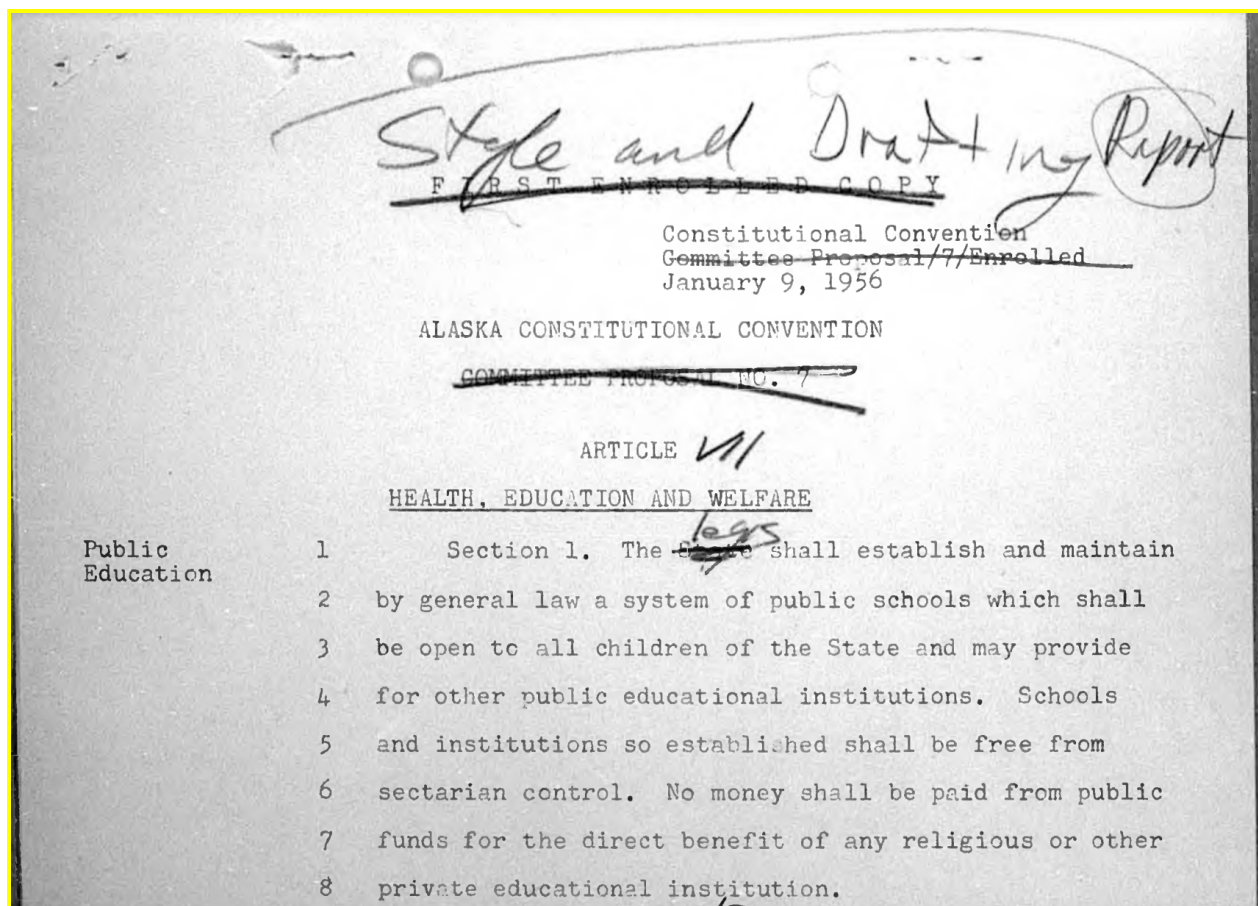
[On that day](#), Committee “Chairman” Dorothy Awes—who under her married name [Haaland](#) later became the first woman admitted to the Alaska Bar Association, served as Alaska’s Attorney General, and was inducted into the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame—recommended to Convention President William A. Egan that delegates should adopt the following article governing public education for a future State of Alaska: “The State shall establish and maintain by general law a system of public schools which shall be open to all children of the State and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private institution.”

Ms. Awes and her fellow delegates knew that the Territory of Alaska had long supported dual systems for Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools, on one hand, and territorially-funded schools, on the other. The federal government first began funding Alaska’s public schools with passage of the Organic Act of 1884. Two decades later, the 1904 Nelson Act established territorial schools “for white children and children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life.”

Public education for Alaska Native children remained federally funded for the next five and a half decades. Localities never contributed the majority of funds for public education in Alaska prior to statehood.

But roughly a decade after the passage of Alaska's Equal Rights Act of 1945 and with statehood at hand, members of the Convention envisioned something better for Alaska's 100 federally-funded and 88 territorially-funded schools: a single, unified, and well-maintained system of public education for all of Alaska's students. For these children, and for those that would come thereafter, the new state government would provide the majority of funding for public education.

Shortly after the New Year, members of the Constitutional Committee on Style and Drafting—a group that included Victor Fischer, Alaska's last surviving delegate—reconvened to review the proposed education article. In boldly striking through the word “State” and replacing it with “legs” (short for legislature), the Committee on Style and Drafting conveyed its explicit intention that “The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State.”



Fischer's committee forwarded their revision to Egan for final consideration, and on February 5, 1956, this language—enshrining a legislative mandate to provide for Alaska's

future—was adopted by the Constitutional Convention. Voters, in turn, soon followed suit. Twelve years later, when the Supreme Court of Alaska heard its first case on public education, [*Macaulay v Hildebrand*](#), the Court established that Article VII’s language—“[t]he legislature shall”—mandates that it funds education; that the legislature is required to “maintain” the education system; and that the obligation to provide public schooling is given solely to the legislature. For more than 50 years, therefore, Alaskans have relied on Constitutional and legal precedent that the legislature is responsible for *maintaining* public education across Alaska.

The foresight of Ms. Awes Haaland, Mr. Fischer, and their peers rings especially true today. “Maintenance” matters. The “Base Student Allocation” (BSA), or the per-student funding allotment which acts as the engine of Alaska’s Foundation Formula and, in turn, directs the majority of State spending on public schools, is not irreparably broken, but is in dire need of a tune-up. As has been [widely reported](#), the 54 school districts serving families across Alaska are struggling under the burden of unchecked inflation eating away at spending power, persistent [staffing shortages](#) and a [growing youth mental health crisis](#).

The Anchorage School District, although hamstrung by \$80 million less in purchasing power than it maintained during the 2016-2017 school year, has long sought to honor the will of parents and educators by maintaining class sizes to support student academic achievement and encourage teacher retention, even as state funds have remained static. **ASD’s judicious [uses of federal aid](#) over the past four budget cycles allocated more than \$100 million toward maintaining pupil-to-teacher ratios** and have allowed the district to continue to offer many of the educational options that families value, including language immersion programs, gifted education, and extracurricular opportunities. These programs will remain safe for the 2023-2024 year.

Unfortunately, absent passage of [pending legislation such as House Bill 65 or Senate Bill 52](#), which would increase the BSA to account for inflation for the first time since August 2016, ASD-like school boards across Alaska—will be able to offer little certainty to families in FY25 and beyond.

As we look ahead, we see **four pathways** for Anchorage, and by extension, for districts across the state. The first would reflect ongoing legislative reliance on the misnomer that the state is still “fully funding education.” This plan would continue to fund students at an amount designed to address the costs of personnel and supplies on the first day of school in August 2016, while forcing districts to grapple with 2023-2024 prices. Continuing down this path will force ASD to confront an \$85 million deficit in less than a year, which is when our Board must approve a balanced FY25 budget. ASD’s responses for this scenario would likely include additional pupil-to-teacher ratio increases, school closures, and significant reductions in nurses, counselors, security, paraprofessionals, special education supports, front office personnel, administration, custodial services and maintenance support. Programs like immersion, sports, and music, as well as critical support for gifted students and English-language learners could be eliminated.

The second scenario would see ASD, and districts across the state, receiving one-time funds in FY24. For ASD, any receipt of one-time funds allocated for FY24 would allow ASD to offset the projected FY25 deficit and/or use them for some FY24 costs. This would push the decisions mentioned above a year or two down the road, but then Board members, administrators, and the community would return to the same structural deficit.

A third pathway might involve a one time BSA increase like that proposed by HB 65 in its current form. Although a \$1250 BSA increase would alleviate many FY25 staff reductions, the magnitude of ASD's deficit (if unaddressed) is projected to increase to \$91-105 million for the 2025-2026 school year. This amount exceeds the additional revenue that ASD would receive from a \$1250 increase to the BSA. Such a gap would rear its head again in the 2026-2027 school year. Indeed, if nothing changes by time ASD budgets for the 2026-2027 school year, stagnant funding would see its deficit balloon to \$104-125 million and could mean the loss of 1,200 positions. So while a one time adjustment to the BSA would be helpful in the short term, eventually inflation will take its toll.

None of these austere futures would align with what Nenana Public Schools Student Body President Gloria Fredericks envisioned [when she spoke to the Constitutional Convention](#) on January 13, 1956 and praised the vision spelled out by Ms. Awes, Mr. Fischer, and their colleagues: "your work here provide[s]" the "basis for our hopes of the future," she observed. "The future will judge your work here, and we are part of that future."

Ms. Fredericks saw the possibilities that the new Constitution entailed, and she saw Alaska's young people at the center of the state's future. In that spirit, we urge you to honor the work of our entire Constitutional Delegation **by pursuing a fourth option: adequately maintaining public education in Alaska by passing a bold BSA increase, effective FY24, and thereafter adjusting the BSA to account for inflation.** Depending on its degree of vision and commitment, an amended version of HB 65 could allow ASD to finally make the [staffing investments](#) that our [evidence-based model](#) has long shown ASD would need for students to demonstrate the growth and outcomes that our community expects.

With half of the first session of the 33rd Alaska Legislature already recent history, much work remains to be done, and time is of the essence. **You must rise above partisan attempts to delay, deflect, or deny this effort**, which will only hinder our state's ability to attract the families who will be central to long term economic stability and support the children who are poised to become our state's future workforce.

Sincerely, and with appreciation for your service,

Carl Jacobs
Anchorage School Board Vice President

Kelly Lessens
Anchorage School Board Treasurer

Dora Wilson
Anchorage School Board Clerk

From: Ashley Dewey

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/17/2023 9:46 AM

Good morning, Sir,

I am a Health Aide (School Nurse) in Ketchikan, Alaska. I know you are a busy man. I have so much data and information I could share, but I will keep this brief and stick to the most important topics.

The Superintendent mentioned students have not been given more money in 8 years. With inflation, this is jarring.

Teachers and Staff in Ketchikan Schools are about to lose their jobs. We can barely cover day to day responsibilities as it is. And they plan to eliminate all Health Aide/School Nurse job starting next 2023 school year. I have 30+ kids in my office daily to receive their medications, throwing up, needing bandages, ice packs. Cutting this position and giving someone else (the school secretaries have been mentioned) these responsibilities as a collateral duty will have horrible impacts on the school climate and the well being of students and staff. This will cause attendance issues, safety issues, policy issues, efficiency issues...

We have got to get more money into these schools. We have to save these jobs. Children will suffer without more funding...I have pleaded to our Superintendent and School Board. I am pleading to you. If there is anything else I can do, please let me know. As I want to advocate as best I can.

--

Ashley Dewey

Fawn Mountain Elementary - Health Aide

Gunalcheesh, to the first people of this land. We pay respect to those, past and present, who have stewarded Tlingit Aanii since time immemorial. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional first people of this land, the Saanya Kwaan and Taanta Kwaan.

From: Elizabeth Hayes

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/17/2023 4:17 PM

Hello Representative Ortiz,

Clayton Holland, KPBSD Superintendent asked me to share some information about our need for a BSA increase, and what it means to us if we don't get an increase.

I will be in the office Monday at 8am if you have any questions or would like to discuss this information.

General Fund Budget

FY24 projected enrollment is 8450 which include 200 Intensive needs students and approximately 1,710 special education students.

In FY24, we are facing a deficit of 10..8M to 13M depending on funding from the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The remaining ESSER III funds will help offset the deficit for one year, resulting in a deficit of 4.4M to 6.5M. With no increase to the BSA, we will be cutting our budget. Approximately 81% of our General Fund budget in salaries and benefits, we will have to cut staff to balance our budget.

Increases in insurance, property and liability, workers comp insurance, utilities and supplies will also have an affect on our budget causing further pressure on budgets and on our classrooms.

To close an 4.4 million dollar shortfall it would be equivalent to approximately 33 FTE certified teachers and 6.5M would be 49 FTE certified teachers. To accomplish that, we would have to raise the PTR +3 for the 4.4M gap and +5 PTR for the 6.5M gap.

Pupil Transportation

The last increase to the pupil transportation was in FY16, KPBSD was increased to \$1011 per ADM from \$995. We are currently running a deficit in transportation. In FY22 we transferred \$550,000 our General Fund budget to our Transportation fund, and we are scheduled to transferr that same amount or more (depending on expenditures) for FY23 and FY24. Our busses travel 3,330.7 miles throughout the district every day.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Hayes

Director of Finance

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

From: Devin Finch

To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge

Cc: Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education

Sat 2/18/2023 12:31 AM

Dear Representative Justin Ruffridge,

I write today to express my concern with education funding. I am concerned and frustrated by flat state funding and would like to see the legislature inflation-proof the Base Student Allocation.

The Alaska Constitution (Article VII, Section 1) requires that the legislature establish and maintain a system of public schools, and Alaska school districts rely heavily on state funding to support their budgets. You already know the importance of a strong public school system in Alaska, and yet, year after year, education funding is in jeopardy, class sizes grow, and school districts issue teacher layoff notices.

As you know, the State of Alaska funds the majority of education through a foundation formula, which is set forth in AS 14.17. This formula provides for over half of the state's funding for education—and state funding of education is over 60 percent of the funding that Alaska public schools receive. Despite the name, “Basic Need” does not refer to a funding level that provides a particular level of educational adequacy. The BSA and its multipliers were established through legislation that took effect in Fiscal Year 1999 and have been modified repeatedly since then. The BSA can be changed only by passing legislation that modifies the statute. At a time when inflation impacts every community, it is critical that the BSA finally increase in order to keep up with rising costs of providing education. The past five years of flat funding, unforeseen costs and retention issues due to the pandemic, and a population that is leaving Alaska year after year have left our school districts on unstable footing financially.

This past legislative session, Representative Andi Story introduced legislation to strengthen our public school system. House Bill 272 and House Bill 273 proposed increasing the base student allocation for K-12 public education in Alaska. HB 272 proposed increasing this number to \$6,153 in FY23 and then to \$6,208 in FY24. The legislative session ended, and the full House did not consider HB 272 or HB 273. We understand that these proposed changes, while an improvement, are even still not enough to get education in Alaska fully funded.

Alaska students continue to score near the bottom in the nation for math and reading competency. Universal early education is shown to improve school readiness, reading levels, and long-term economic performance. Long-term studies, such as the Perry Preschool project, suggest that students with access to high-quality early education are less likely to be incarcerated and less likely to receive government assistance as adults. Adequately funding education is a critical investment in Alaska's future.

I ask that you commit to passing legislation that strengthens our public school system, including inflation-proofing the BSA and expanding access to early childhood education, because public education is our best investment in Alaska's future.

Sincerely,

Devin Finch

From: Linda Shore

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 5:56 AM

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to express my support for these bills. We need to adequately fund our schools and allowing the BSA to wither for several years is not the way to do it.

Please enact this increase post haste.

Linda Shore

Anchorage

From: Mardell Kiesel

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 6:16 AM

I have recently read in the ADN that Alaska is increasingly failing to attract our most talented and motivated students to stay in-state for their higher education degrees. We are proposing to "lower the bar" and raise the scholarship dollars. I'm all for raising the scholarship amounts, but lowering the expectations signals a systemic failure. This brain-drain to the lower 48 has obvious cumulative and devastating long-term effects for Alaska. Increasing the BSA is also an obvious and cumulative step to address the multiple issues related to a weakening system.

The BSA is one vital component of a strong and stable education starting with pre-school. Our students need and deserve the highest quality components for pre-K-12 education. Fund the foundations and build toward a more promising in-state experience for all students.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Mardell Kiesel

Mardell Kiesel

From: Beth E.

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 7:34 AM

I am writing today to ask you to support increasing the BSA for our schools. Our schools have had to cut programs, teachers, and staff due significant shortfalls in funding. It is time to prioritize education and significantly increase the BSA.

As a mother with three kids attending school in the Anchorage School District and as a substitute teacher I have seen first hand the impacts to our children and teachers from underfunding. Please help make Alaska a place families want to live by funding our schools.

Thank you for your time.

Beth Elliott.

From: Susan Ritter

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 7:48 AM

Dear Representatives Allard and Ruffridge,

I am a teacher of special education in the Anchorage school district. I have worked with children with disabilities for over 20 years.

I am writing to ask that you and the committee support HB 65, increasing the BSA to a minimum of \$1,250.00. For too many years, the State of Alaska has chosen not to fully fund the educational needs of all Alaskan students. There are many who claim that teachers are not doing enough to support their students in the classroom and therefore students are not getting the education they need or deserve. The state government refuses to support its most precious resource, their children, this needs to stop.

HB 65 is a starting point.

Thank you for your time,

Susan Ritter

Anchorage, AK

From: Sharon Davies

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:04 AM

Please vote in support of this bill.

Public education is one of the most important functions of government, not just for the individual children, but for the benefit to all our lives of an educated population.

Not having children or grandchildren in school, I had not been paying close attention.

I was dismayed to read recently that the state support for schools had not been adjusted for inflation for so many years.

Again, Please support House Bill 65

Sincerely,

Sharon Davies

From: Sally Dybdahl

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:12 AM

As a citizen, voter, parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, former educator, school supporter & volunteer, I implore you to pass the \$1250 increase to the BSA. We can't afford not to do so! Hoonah's and all Alaska's children are our greatest treasure.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Dybdahl

From: Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:19 AM

I support HB 65 increasing the BSA by \$1250. Alaskan school districts are in economic crisis, affecting everything from the high number of students in classes to the lack of hot lunches in some schools. HB 65 will make a huge difference in making the districts whole again. Then they can spend their energy on refining their curriculum and teaching methods to reach students and increase their reading, writing, and arithmetic skills.

Please vote for HB 65. It goes a long way to fixing our educational problems.

Cheryl Lovegreen

From: Catherine Walker

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:27 AM

Good morning,

Please accept this email in support of raising the Base Student Allocation for Alaska students to match inflation. As a longtime Alaska resident and parent of two students in the Anchorage public school district, I strongly urge you to raise the BSA to where it would have been if it had been taking inflation into account.

Thank you,
Catherine Walker, 99507

From: Paula L Davis

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:37 AM

Dear Representatives,

Thanks you for your hard work in Juneau.

I would like to go on record in support of an increase in the Base Student allocation bills, both Senate 52 and house 65.

I am a retired teacher who volunteers in elementary classrooms. I can see what is happening in the schools over time. It is not pretty. Students are behind due to the interruption of covid, and some are socially struggling to know how to behave in a classroom, even now, even with good teachers helping them. The school district has cut back on the the school counselors who could be of help to these students. The school I work in, Denali Montessori, used to have a full time counselor, then it had a half-time counselor. Now it has none. This is a school that suffered a shooting at the entrance a few years back. I would love to see this reversed and have a full time counselor again.

It is the future of Alaska that is at stake when education of children is not a priority.

Please vote in favor of increasing the BSA, Senate 52 and House 65.

Thanks, and keep up the good work!

Paula Davis

From: Brenda Taylor

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:42 AM

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to add my voice to the many urging you to pass HB65, raising the BSA \$1250.

My two children graduated from Juneau Douglas High School: [Yadaa.at](https://www.yadaa.at) Kale 4 and 8 years ago. For all of the years they were in high school, I attended the district-wide Site Council budget meetings where the community was invited to have a say in creating the budget. For all but the first few years, we were asked only to generate ideas for where we would make cuts without harming the quality of the students' education. It was laughably predictable, disheartening and, absolutely, preposterous. There was nothing left to cut; the only way to make a budget that would create the educational environments that students deserved (and that my daughter had had when she first started high school) was to increase revenue, not slash it. I have watched in horror as the funding situation has gotten worse and worse. I am awed by the teachers, staff and administrators who continue year after year. And this is in Juneau, where our municipal government funds to the cap. I read about the smaller, rural school districts where they have no money to fix the waterline leaks and, literally, have no drinking water and am aghast, but not surprised.

Please, please pass HB65 out of the Education Committee with your full support and work to get it through the House and Senate. Alaskans, now and in the future, desperately need the BSA to return to pre-inflation levels. As always, my request for increased funding is accompanied by a willingness to be personally taxed at the state level and to have a smaller PFD.

Sincerely,

Brenda Taylor

995 Mendenhall Peninsula Road

Juneau, AK 998901

From: Madisen Lundamo

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 9:58 AM

Dear Madam and Mister Chair and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am Madisen Lundamo from Ketchikan and a senior at Ketchikan High School. Today I am writing to represent myself as a student in Alaska and a child of an educator. I am in full support of House Bill 65 because education is the very foundation of our communities and society. My mother has taught for 23 years in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District as an elementary teacher, and now is the Dean of Students at Houghtaling Elementary. Through her, I have witnessed the dedication every great teacher gives to every unique student in their school.

In the case of my mother especially, school is much more than a building full of classrooms, but rather a second home. Her classroom is bursting with flairs of her personality and embellished with seasonal decorations. Every seat is different and offers unique comforts. She has a large tank with two red-ear slider turtles swimming about. The overhead lights are never used as the room is illuminated with holiday twinkle lights and lamps. There's an essential oils diffuser going off every so often, filling the air with calming scents. For some time she even had a reading loft in a corner of her room! What an amazing environment to learn in, right?

Every single one of these items was paid for out of pocket by my mom because her stipend barely covered the extra comforts of an excellent classroom. This is the case with every single beyond-typical classroom in that elementary school. My mom's colleagues have used their own personal funds to improve the educational environment of their students for years.

Every single classroom in Alaska could be as comfortable and prosperous as those in the elementary school I grew up in with sufficient funding.

In my high school, students' education is taking a drastic hit due to underfunding. Teachers are in and out. Programs have uncertain futures. While my generation has been labelled as "resilient," we are seeing more and more struggles to bounce back after each hit. There is a stark shortage of substitute teachers which leads to classes being held in the library, overburdening our librarians. I have sat in the library with at least four other classes and it is not a civil picture. The environment is headachingly loud, the librarians are stretched so thin that administrators are in and out checking on the students, and there certainly is no learning happening. Programs such as Advanced Placement or AP classes are at risk to be cut due to a lack of qualified teachers. Our language classes are subpar at best due to poor quality teachers. I, a passionate and dedicated student, have found myself dreading the eight hours a day I spend at school.

There is a butterfly effect caused by a lack of funding in our education system. The school district is doing as much as they can with the little money they have, teachers are unable to provide opportunities to students, the students dread school, their education takes a hit, and in the years to come we will be made fully aware of the negative impacts.

Students and teachers thrive in fully funded schools, causing our society itself to thrive. We cannot fight nor prevent great tragedies and societal illnesses such as violence, mental health crises, bullying, racial and cultural injustices, suicide, abuse, addiction, and more without prosperous schools.

Thus I urge you to remain in support of HB 65, an act to increase the BSA, and consequently an act to ensure the future of our education system and Alaska as a whole.

Thank you and Sincerely,

Madisen Lundamo

Ketchikan, AK 99901

From: Cassandra Mirosh

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 11:10 AM

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to strongly urge you to pass a meaningful increase to the Base Student Allocation this year. I have been a public school teacher in Alaska for the past 24 years and I have seen first hand the devastating results flat funding has had on the education of our children. We are constantly being asked to do more with less and this means our children fall further behind. Meaningful programs like art, music, CTE are all threatened. Teachers are leaving the profession due to stress and lack of adequate compensation. In our small district, 2 of our brick and mortar schools are in danger of being shut down which would hurt those communities and eliminate the possibility for students to attend schools closer than an hour's drive from their homes.

Passing Senate Bill 52 and House Bill 65 would send a strong message that you value education for Alaska and would help support our schools to provide the very best for our children.

Please prioritize education in our state! We are a land of many natural resources and none of those resources are more important than our children.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Kassandra Mirosh

Alaska Public School Teacher

Jacy Turner

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 11:16 AM

Dear Representatives,

Please help in funding our children's education. Without dedicated teachers and staff and support our kids will not be able to thrive and receive the additional help that they need.

I have already personally experienced the issues with the BSA not being adequately funded to keep up with inflation. Each year my kid's elementary school gets trimmed. Programs and teachers that used to be there when my daughter started Kindergarten are no longer there now in 4th grade. Teachers are trying to do more with less.

How do we assist those kids who need additional help in reading? The reading specialist at the elementary school no longer exists. She was able to help my daughter with her phonics and get her reading correctly. However, my son doesn't have access to this resource.

Schools are doing the best they can with the resources they have. We have taken away vital services that kids need to succeed and have put more burden on teachers who are already doing a full-time job.

Please increase the BSA allotment so that our kids can go back to thriving and having access to the resources that they need to be successful not only now but as members of our community. In just a few short years these kids will be in the community contributing and we want to give them the best chance at being able to develop and contribute in a meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Jacy Petersen

R J Potter

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 12:14 PM

Dear Alaska State Representatives and House Education Committee,

Please support for HB 65. I am writing to let you know that I enthusiastically support an increase to the Base Student Allocation. Right now, any addition to the BSA is nothing more than adjusting the BSA to a level where it should be had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually.

One-time funds are not a solution to the problem of under-funded schools; we urgently need a BSA increase to consistently and equitably support the daily education of all of Alaska's students.

Despite significant inflation and the skyrocketing cost of operations, our school districts have been asked to provide better learning outcomes while cutting staff and programs across the board. *Alaska is a wealthy state*, and we need to prioritize our kids' education in order to attract and retain families, produce skilled and creative citizens, and ensure long-term prosperity.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Potter

Tam Agosti-Gisler

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 12:15 PM

Dear Senate Education Committee Representatives:

It's time.... it's time for HB 65 to pass.

At a dinner party last night with Alaskan friends of varied political persuasion, we could all agree that our schools are in trouble financially.

Let's play catch up on adjusting the BSA for inflation and add \$1250 per student to the BSA.

It's that simple.

Sincerely,

Tam Agosti-Gisler
Anchorage, AK 99508

Joclyn Reilly

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 1:05 PM

I am writing to support HB 65. I have three kids in Anchorage public schools, and the schools are doing the best they can with limited resources. Because of inflation, education funding has gone down every year. We are a rich state, let's put money into our children! Every dollar spent on public education is less money spent in the future on prison, etc.

Thanks

Joclyn Reilly

Anchorage, AK 99516

From: Kris Benson

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 1:33 PM

Dear Co-Chairs Allard and Ruffridge and members of the House Education Committee:

Please fully support HB 65. Our schools have suffered the lack of sufficient funding for so long that the legislature can no longer put off raising the Base Student Allocation. When I was a substitute teacher at our high school, in one class I had about five students who not only had to sit on the floor due to the lack of sufficient desks, but also do without books. As you might imagine, it was difficult to keep the entire class focused on learning in that type of over-crowded classroom. The lack of adequate state funding of schools has the direct consequence of class sizes that are too large to allow for learning. HB 65 does nothing more than catch up school funding to make up for severe cuts that over the years have been due to inflation combined with no change in the BSA amount.

Sincerely,

Kris Benson

Juneau, AK. 99801

Julie Zundel

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 3:09 PM

Hello Representatives,

I am a parent (with two children in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District), I am a science teacher in the FNSBSD and I am a lifelong Alaskan. I am testifying to you today to ask you to increase BSA to match inflation. Public education has been flat-funded since 2017 while inflation has increased by 15% (or more).

I am on the front lines - and I can tell you we are in crisis - just a few quick examples:

1. No one wants to work in the FNSBSD. The school I work at - West Valley High School - is losing teachers faster than we can replace them. I was hired in 2007, left in 2013 when I had my second child and then returned in 2018. When I was hired in 2007, it was very competitive - but when I was hired in 2018 there were very few people who were certified to teach chemistry

Since I returned in 2018, we have lost two chemistry teachers, four biology teachers and we will lose our physics teacher in May. Teachers are either retiring as soon as they can or leaving Alaska to work in states that fully fund education. It is becoming challenging to find replacements - this year we started off short-staffed. Admin tried to hire teachers from the Philippines, but that did not work out. Finally, they hired a UAF professor to teach 9th grade biology. The professor is trying, but she has no experience with teenagers, no teaching license, and it has not been a smooth year.

2. Class sizes are huge. I have never had as many students as I do this year with most of my classes pushing 30. Some science teachers had 36 students at the start of the year. The National Science Teacher Association says for safety purposes science classrooms should not have more than 24 students with most lab accidents occurring when classes are larger than 24. The increased workload (grading, managing behaviors, buying extra supplies out of pocket) has caused massive burnout. I don't know if I am going to return next year.

(sources: <https://static.nsta.org/pdfs/overcrowdingintheinstructionalspace.pdf>)

3. I teach Alaska Zoology, Chemistry and AP Biology. The budget we have to work with cannot possibly cover everything I need. I spend over \$1000 of my own money each year on pencils, tape, dry lab ingredients, kleenex, glue, and notebooks for my at-risk students. I save my science budget money to buy the materials I need to ensure my AP Biology, Alaska Zoology and chemistry kids get the lab equipment they need to have a decent lab-based science experience.

4. Cost of living has gone up, but my wages have not. Between spending money to supply my classroom and the increased costs of fuel and food, I am worried I will have to find another job to keep up with inflation.

5. Our roof in our hallway is falling apart and leaking (we have a lot of building issues, but this one is very close to my room). There are buckets and pipes to try to fix it, but as soon as the snow melts it will be another disaster. I have been waiting for almost two years for it to be fixed. There isn't money to do so.

6. Students returned to the classroom needing extra support after COVID school. This job is harder than it was, and we are having to do more with less. This isn't the time to have giant classes and less support - students need more support than ever.

Thank you for listening, I love teaching and I want to keep working in Alaska. Please adjust BSA to reflect inflation.

Julie Zundel

Parent, Science teacher, and lifelong Alaskan

Jeanne Larsen

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 5:02 PM

Dear Legislators,

I am counting on you all to lead the charge to bring the Base Student Allocation up to modern standards, and inflation proof it as we lean into our future together.

As a parent of grown children educated in Alaskan public schools, I can see that we are falling behind, and our schools need your help.

We need to adjust the BSA to adequately fund our schools not just to survive, but to thrive and gain our rightful spot as one of the best and highest performing states in the country. Why not Alaska?!?

This will also help us attract and retain excellent educators. Please do the right (and hard!) thing, and lead the change we all know needs to happen. You can be an education hero. We need you to lead the charge! I'm right with you, just here in the classroom at school

Thank you for your service and I wish you strength and wisdom while you work.

Very Respectfully Yours,

Jeanne Larsen

Anchorage, AK

Lisa Paesani

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 6:12 PM

Dear Alaska State House Representatives,

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA for our schools. I am wanting you to listen and abide by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee to raise the BSA by at least 1000.

If Alaska does not insure our schools are properly funded, in order to acquire and keep good teachers and have smaller class room sizes, our population will continue to decline, especially those in educated fields. Already we have a worker crisis in Alaska. People will not move here or stay here if they see their children can not get a good education here. This issue applies to all Alaskans. Please find our schools by increasing our BSA by at least 1000.

Thank you,

M Lisa Paesani, MSW

Shannon Spalding

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 11:45 PM

I am an Anchorage resident and have been living in the city for 12 years. My husband grew up in Seward and we moved to Alaska after meeting in dental school. We decided to have a family and raise our children in Alaska. However, the SBA has not been adjusted in many years concurrent with inflation and due to this ASD has been faced with many cuts. Please adjust the BSA to a level where it should be, had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually. Please understand all the families that live in Alaska will have to consider relocating if HB 65 is not passed. I grew up in Washington where the schools are not failing their students. You cannot recruit teacher or keep residents if you don't support the family unit.

Please don't disappoint all young families that have the ability to maintain the health of the Alaska economy in the years to come.

Thank you,

Shannon Spalding

From: [imel](#)

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 1:58 AM

It could just be me. My career in education spans nearly 30 years. As an aide in the classroom and a classroom middle school teacher. Can you believe that for 30 years, every year, my budget was reduced and my new colleagues made less money under less favorable contract provisions and educational outcomes were not improved? Am I missing something here? I worked hard, and so did my colleagues, but I can say what our school can offer students has been reduced to bare bones, from when I began. No foreign languages, reduced art music and PE. No drama program, diminished vocational education, diminished home economics also called life skills. Educational outcomes have not improved.

So I guess my question is what is your plan here? 30 years is a long time...scores haven't improved...30 more years? Your plan isn't working. Time for a new plan.

SB 52 and HB 65 look good.

These students deserve better.

Odile Meister

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 10:42 AM

Dear Representatives,

I have been teaching in the Wrangell Public School District for the last seven years. I have seen how the quality of our schools has continued to decline due to reduced budgets each year. It is vital for the future of Alaska that our schools receive the full addition of \$1,250 to the BSA.

Please support our students and public schools and vote for House Bill 65!

Thank you,

Odile Meister,

Spanish Teacher and more, Wrangell Public Schools.

Idamarie Piccard

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 11:12 AM

The House Bill 65 is for the increase of the BSA by \$1250. The schools of ALaska need this increase to cover ever increasing costs due inflation, rising fuel prices, increasing wages, and operational cost increases over the last 10 years. It is my hope, should this bill pass, most of the added money will be used in the classroom, directly for the students. Yes there should be accountability and yes there should be diligent use of the increase but the education of students in Alaskan schools should be a priority. They are the hope of our future and we need to keep them here. Thank you

Idamarie Piccard

Anchorage

99508

Mari Jo Parks

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 11:42 AM

Dear Representatives,

Please support House Bill 65 to increase the BSA increase for education. It is critical that we fully support education. This would be a good start in helping schools deal with inflation and other demands on education.

Sincerely, Mari Jo Parks

Mari Jo Parks

Palmer, AK 99645

Michele Elfers

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 11:53 AM

Good afternoon,

Please vote to support raising the BSA a minimum of \$1000 per student. We need more funding than this for our students.

I have a daughter in middle school and one in elementary school. Their class sizes are 28-35 students per class with one teacher. I hear stories from my middle schooler of kids jumping on tables and breaking them, balls being thrown, basically chaos in class because the teacher cannot control the class with so many kids. She is not being challenged because the teachers are not able to address all the varied needs and learning levels in such large classes. She sits in the gym on many days because teachers are out and there are no substitute teachers

Next year, she goes to high school and the highschool closest to us has a part time art teacher and kids can't get into art classes. She wants to be a designer - engineer/architect, so she is looking for math and art classes. In this same school, they are struggling to keep their CAD program.

Our schools are in crisis and there is nothing I can do for my kids, we don't have any other options. Please provide more funding now.

Michele Elfers

Glenn Cravez

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 3:22 PM

I am writing in support of HB 65, increasing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1250. Education funding hasn't even kept pace with inflation, and if we're serious about being pro-growth for Alaska, we need to invest in education. We can afford to invest in our long term prosperity. Thank you. Glenn Cravez, Anchorage 99502.

Rebecca Gaguine

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 5:02 PM

Hello,

As a Juneau educator and parent of two children in the Alaskan school system I am begging you to help pass SB 52 and HB 65. Our schools are struggling. We are losing more staff and children are being underserved by large class sizes and lack of support due to lack of staffing.

Raising the BSA will help to retain staff (as well as the bill to adjust the retirement system!). Alaska needs to prioritize its education now or who knows what the future may hold.

Thank you for your time,

Rebecca Gaguine, Mother to Lilah and Benji and a Juneau School District teacher.

Alice Knapp

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 7:40 PM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I am a retired Elementary Teacher, Reading Specialist, and School Librarian. I continue to be involved in our schools subbing. I grew up in Anchorage, attended Elementary, Jr. High, and High School in Anchorage and have since retirement visited rural communities (Pt. Lay, Kotzebue, Hughes, Selawik, and Buckland) working with school age kids.

As you meet to discuss the Student Base Allocation please consider the importance of raising the amount per student. Things to keep in mind when deciding the necessity of increasing the student base allocation is that the demographics of Anchorage and the State as a whole has changed dramatically. With those changes are challenges. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accomodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. When I was a student during the 1970s, Anchorage was not very diverse, we had a school tax that helped provide funding for schools, and there were few educational options available to students such as Advanced Placement courses, special needs classes, and charter schools. The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates (many unfunded) , think special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. In my experience, schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you for your efforts on this important issue.

Alice Tower Knapp

Anchorage, AK 99508

Ken Zafren

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 8:43 PM

Dear legislators,

We have underfunded Alaska schools long enough. Our schools are our future. We need to fund them adequately so that our children can get an education that will prepare them for life and for careers. The minimum increase should be at least \$1250 per student.

Respectfully,

Ken and Chris Zafren

Anchorage, AK 99507

Jessica Cochran

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:42 AM

Legistators -

I support HB65 and raising the BSA to cover inflation. Strong public schools are the backbone of our society, and schools cannot be expected to work with what amounts to fewer dollars each year and continue serving the needs of all students in Alaska.

Thank you,

Jessica Cochran

Anchorage, AK

Sarah Fineman

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:10 AM

Dear Representatives,

Our children and their education is vital to the future of our state. Even with inflation and costs going through the roof, our schools are being asked to improve education with insufficient funds. Teachers are being cut, class size is crazy. My son's Algebra class doesn't have enough seats for the 31+ students. This is unacceptable. The BSA should be substantially increased to provide for our children's education and the future of Alaska. Please support House Bill 65 and Senate Bill 52.

Thank you,

Sarah Fineman

Elizabeth Knapp

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:41 AM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I teach K-6 classroom music at Bowman Elementary School. I grew up in Anchorage, attending elementary, middle, and high school through ASD.

Please support increasing the base student allocation. Costs have gone up across the board and without an increase to the student allocation schools will be forced to close across the state and other programs will have to be cancelled. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accomodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. Schools are understaffed and unable to accommodate all the high needs students. At Bowman our Structured Learning Classes used to be full with 8 students and 2-3 paraprofessionals per classroom. Our SLC classrooms now are over capacity with 10+ students and 3 paraprofessionals, with many students who need one on one support. As a teacher I struggle meeting the needs of all my students when there is not the support in place for those high needs students. Paraprofessionals often have to leave the room to support one student and I am left in a classroom by myself or with just one other adult and the nine other high needs students.

The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates (many unfunded) , think special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. Schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Knapp

sally.schlichting

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 9:35 AM

Dear Representatives,

Our schools across this state are stagnating and students are suffering from the chronic underfunding over the past five years. This has deep ramifications for students, as well as teachers, who are over-worked trying to educate more students than they can possibly reach in any given class. But what's more, the lack of increased education funding is having a profoundly negative impact on our communities.

We can't attract workers and fill jobs when families choose not to move to our Alaskan communities because of a poor quality education system. Parents want the very best educational experience for their children, and if they don't see it here in Alaska, they will go elsewhere. If we can't attract a young workforce, we can't grow our communities, and our population will start to age out. Our industries and small businesses will languish, and the arts and culture in our communities will also decline. We already see this happening here in Juneau and I am sure that it is happening elsewhere in the state.

Quality education is the rich soil upon which all good things grow. It's what makes our communities liveable. According to ISER, in 2019, our per-pupil spending was 7% below the national average. The cost to deliver education in Alaska is understandably much higher for a host of reasons you all know well. Please make a robust increase to our base student allocation and help make Alaska a desirable destination for new workers and their families.

Thank you,

Sally Schlichting

Juneau

victory lavalle

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 10:07 AM

Dear Alaska senate,

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

I support the Jan. 30th 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

As a parent of a special needs twice exceptional child; I have seen many angles of this lacking budget.

My daughter went from the highly gifted classroom to a general education program. Her class increased from 13-28!

My daughter became the "bad kid" that no one could deal with. The classroom toxic for all students, teachers, aids.

That all changed when she was moved into the SBBS program. She now loves school, she is thriving, succeeding, winning awards. Teachers and staff have the opportunity to meet her needs and it is beautiful. We actually now have a hope that she may go further than high school in life.

Our family is safe, healthy, and hopeful due to the amazing coaching and staff at Kasuun elementary. It's only been one year but our daughter is thriving!!!! I fear that with her moving into 6th grade the reinforcements and supports will be taken away if all middle school starts at 6th grade. If there is no increase in funding there will be more need for SRO (SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS).

Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive and is akin to expecting better morale and performance in a workplace while treating one's employees with disrespect while simultaneously demanding that your employees work more hours for the same pay.

The BSA hasn't been meaningfully raised since 2012. This is known as flat funding. When inflation goes up but your paycheck doesn't, you have less money to spend. This is why flat funding is really a budget cut.

Please increase the BSA, keep our children safe and healthy.

Victory Cheney

Anchorage AK 99508

Caitlin Marine

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 10:10 AM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I teach Physical Education at Bartlett High School and I have worked in several elementary, middle and high schools in my years with ASD. I urge you to please support increasing the base student allocation. Costs have gone up across the board and without an increase to the student allocation schools will be forced to close across the state and other programs will have to be cancelled. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accomodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. Schools are understaffed and unable to accommodate all the high needs students.

The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates regarding special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches without any additional funding. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. Schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you,

Caitlin Marine

Deedie Sorensen

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 11:03 AM

Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Deedie Sorensen. I moved to Juneau in 1981. I did so as a strategic move in my career as a teacher. I had two bachelor degrees, a master's degree, and a graduate level endorsement in special education when I arrived. My first year of teaching I almost doubled my salary. I traded in my opportunity to collect my earned Social Security benefits for a quality defined benefit retirement program and put down roots. Most of the teachers that I taught with eventually retired after 20-30 years of service. My role has changed since I moved to Juneau. I am in my fourth year on our school board and am currently the president. Because of my 40 plus years in close association with the schools, I am profoundly aware of how much we have lost over a considerable number of years. In the '80's and '90's Alaska was a great place to teach. Alaska attracted highly qualified teachers from all over the country. We had outstanding resource staffing. Teacher training was dynamic and cutting edge. The first major cut to education quality wasn't directly about the BSA. The RIP's (early retirement options) in the 90's, while economically positive on a spread sheet were a brain and talent drain. Highly trained and experienced teachers left the state by the hundreds, reducing education quality and taking the hundreds of thousands of dollars the state had invested in their training to new districts out of state. In addition, it shredded the normal attrition rate leaving districts without their most experienced staff to mentor new teachers. The next blow came when Governor Murkowski blew up the defined benefit retirement system, leaving Alaska the least attractive state to contemplate a long term career in education. One thing that survives from the last century, is the myth that teachers in Alaska continue to be highly compensated. That ship sailed in the '80's, docked in the '90's and sank with the change in the retirement system and decades of failure to prioritize education as part of a healthy economy.

The Juneau School District Mission Statement is: In Juneau, we partner to provide each student with meaningful relevant and rigorous learning experiences in order to graduate diverse, engaged citizens ready for a changing world.

If our school district is successful in accomplishing this task, then none of our students who go on to earn a teaching degree either in state or out of state would realistically ever consider staying in/returning to Alaska to teach as a long term career choice if they weigh the economic cost/benefit equation. A young teacher coming to or staying in Alaska encounters the high cost of living, housing shortages that drive rents beyond the recommended budget threshold for housing, a stagnant state economy, strikingly under resourced classrooms and a salary schedule that is not even competitive with communities in many western states. There is the tourist appeal of Alaska which brings in some new teachers, however there is no incentive to stay. There is no defined retirement benefit in Alaska and no Social Security. Alaska alone has

a "make it and take it" retirement plan. That is what young teachers do. They take their Alaska school district's investment in their professional training and experience, their Alaskan experience, and their defined contribution and move to a state with a positive economic forecast that values education, competitive wages combined with a lower cost of living, and for those who stay in education, a defined benefit retirement and maybe even Social Security. Unfortunately for many of our most challenged students, educators with advanced and specialized degrees don't come here at all.

Alaska school districts have been cutting educational options, opportunities and supports for decades. There is nothing left to cut. The State of Alaska contributes approximately one third of Juneau's school budget. The constitution says that the state should fund education, but the reality is, the State's failure to adequately fund the BSA not only drives, but by law, insures the skeletonizing of our students' education opportunities. The BSA needs to be increased by at least \$800-\$1000. Schools have patched together our budgets with federal pandemic monies. The monies are gone but the needs remain. To be clear, Alaska's schools were publicly asked to "do more with less" by the Commissioner of Education in the '90's. It has been the same refrain every year since. Schools have been cutting for 20+ years. I have watched the erosion of programs, support services, staff and instructional resources at every level and in every department. By 2010 I was spending more than \$3,000 of my own money to purchase instructional materials so that my students could have the same high level learning opportunities that my students had a decade before. Today, schools do as much as they can with fewer staff and educational resources every year. The model is not sustainable.

Sincerely,

Deedie Sorensen

Juneau Board of Education

Lee Henrikson

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 6:54 PM

Dear Representatives,

I am now retire and never had children. However, I am a strong supporter of schools and education. Therefore, I urge you to raise the BSA. The proposed increase of \$1250 per student is BSA is just keeping up with inflation. We've lost ground in support our children and our future. Let's make up that ground

Thank you,

Lee Maria Henrikson

Palmer, Alaska

Ashley Hutton

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:32 PM

I am a teacher of 10 years in Alaska and both of my parents were as well. Please add to the base student allocation, we are seeing schools closing and programs being cut. Please add the full \$1,250.

Thank you,
Ashley Hutton

Jeanne Anderson

To: Rep. Jamie Allard

Cc: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:38 PM

- > To whom it may concern,
- > I just read an article that indicates the per student allocation has not been raised since 2016. Our students deserve better. They are growing in a rapidly changing world in the time of a pandemic and classroom teachers are worried about trying to share boxes of crayons. Our teachers need to be able to buy supplies and support their classrooms in order to focus on giving kids the care and attention they need while we address the residual effects of schooling during COVID. PLEASE increase the per student allocation. PLEASE.
- >
- > Thanks for the consideration,
- > Jeanne Anderson (occupational therapist in a KPBSD school)

Michal

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:58 PM

Dear legislators:

I'm writing to you to please increase funding for our public schools. As a parent of two elementary school kids, public education is a priority for me. Our kids are our future. It is distressing that Alaska schools perform so poorly on standardized tests. Please give our schools more resources. Our schools should be held accountable, so I also encourage you to consider other ways to foster improvement. Let's study what other poorly performing states have done that has worked. And then let's implement it. Create a non-partisan commission to do this. We should be ashamed that our kids score last in the nation on standardized tests. While such tests are not everything, they are an objective measure that our schools are failing. This needs to change. Everything in Alaska costs more than in other states, and so our schools also need to be funded more heavily than in other states.

Thank you for your time.

Michal Stryszak

Anchorage

Anita Green

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 9:54 AM

Good Morning,

How does one legitimize not funding education? We are allocating mountains of dollars to homelessness, violence, and mental illness... which are just symptoms of those who can't cope with life. Doesn't it make more sense to focus on the root of the problem? If children were to be the priority, and we better prepare them for success in life (and education is a great part of that), their future would change, along with the future of Alaska.

I'm all for raising the BSA but let's make sure that it is used wisely. The priority should be to employ and sustain great teachers, lower the class sizes, and make the buildings safe.

It is important also, to return sports and arts. Sports teach team building and provide real socialization instead of virtual, not to mention physical fitness. The Arts allow for self expression and have been **proven** to increase learning.

Our predecessors were thinking of our future when they instituted the permanent fund. It is selfishness that drives Alaskans to feel entitled to draw from that fund, without ensuring the future of the next generation.

Anita Green

Anchorage, AK 99507

Colleen Ford

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 10:03 AM

Please vote to increase the BSA for Alaskan students. Alaskan education faces many unique challenges that need to be handled through the Alaskan Public School Systems. Please continue to support public education, we cannot give away these funds to private entities. No School chose as well. Thank you

Michael Wald

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 4:10 PM

Thank you for making education funding a priority at the start of the legislative session. This is a critically important issue not only for students but for our entire state. We desperately need to increase the BSA by a minimum of \$1250.

Education funding has not increased for years and the cost of nearly everything has increased dramatically. The state has slowly defunded our schools and many are now at a breaking point. Districts that have been solvent and responsible for decades are unable to pay utility bills. Our urban schools are moth-balling buildings. We have hundreds of unfilled job vacancies for teaching positions across the state. Our school districts need more money from the state. The funding is over-due and a \$1250 increase will barely keep up with the accumulated inflation since the last increase to the BSA.

I urge you to increase the BSA by at least \$1250. What is more important for the future of Alaska than our youth.

Thank you for serving the people of Alaska.

Michael

Bruce Parham

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 4:15 PM

Dear Representative Ortiz,

I strongly urge you and your colleagues on the House Education Committee to pass House Bill 65, to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA), with an addition of \$1,250 to the BSA.

I am in favor of boosting the BSA to help Alaska's 55 urban and rural school districts catch up with years of inflation and having to make large program and services cuts.

Coming from a family of educators (both of my parents were elementary school teachers), I am especially concerned about continuing along the present path of large class sizes and trying to provide a stable learning environment for K-12, developmentally and intellectually challenged students, etc.

I am a retired federal government employee. I live in the Sand Lake area of South Anchorage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Parham

Anchorage, AK 99502-1957

Megan Martz

Tue 2/21/2023 9:22 PM

Dear Legislator,

My name is Megan Martz. I am a resident of Cantwell, in the Denali Borough, where my husband and I recently purchased land and built a home. I am a former educator, and the parent of an 11-month-old baby girl.

I am writing in support of HB 65, proposing to increase the BSA by \$1,250 to \$7,210. In lieu of an ability to increase education funding that significantly, I would strongly advise passing SB 52, which proposes to increase the BSA by \$1,000 to \$6,960, as a minimum allocation for the 23/24 school year.

Education should be our state and nation's number one priority. Children are our future, and there can be no greater investment than to support them and encourage them to grow and become educated, contributing members of our society. I was disappointed to learn that the Denali Borough School District was considering closing the Cantwell school, located in our local community for next school year, as a direct result of funding that has not kept up with inflation or supported increased school costs in recent years. **Such a school closure would be devastating for the entire community of Cantwell.**

A community that is already struggling economically, Cantwell continues to have a draw for new residents such as myself because the vistas are amazing, the outdoor recreation opportunities are unmatched, the community is a supportive and interesting place, and land/home purchasing opportunities are few and far between in the borough as a whole. If the school were to close, real estate prices in Cantwell would drop further, children would need to be bussed more than a one hour drive each way to Healy for school (10 hours/week!), and there would be less incentive and draw for others to come and revitalize our area.

At a recent school board meeting I saw so much hope. There are several new parents in the area; there is young, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial blood in the room, but even we - who have a significant investment in the area, having just built our own home here, will think about moving on if there is not a local school option as our daughter gets to be school aged. The school is the heart of this community. There are real and present impacts to not funding education at a rate that will maintain spending levels, and I'm writing to beseech you to please not only increase funding, but increase it significantly to help revitalize the schools that have been making cuts and making do since the last raise in 2017.

Residents and former attendees of the Cantwell School detailed what staffing levels used to be like when they were in school - they told of a school with several teachers, with extracurriculars,

with newly painted and cared for facilities and updated playground equipment. Now we are staring at a school that will have only one teacher for K-12 next school year, and no other teachers, principals, or adults with whom to interact in that giant, quiet school. We have a chicken and egg situation here where if we can bring back staffing and show a vibrant school with resources, energy, and opportunities for direct interaction in a small setting, I feel sure the community could attract more residents and attendees. But as the resources at the school dwindle, so too do the prospects of attracting new attendees who will bring increased funding. The fate of this entire community truly rests in the legislatures' hands and decision to fund (or not fund) education in the years ahead.

Please buy into our children and support HB 65 to increase the BSA significantly and show our priorities are in the right place. I recognize there are challenges with ensuring the state's financial future remains stable, but this is one fiscal responsibility that cannot bear compromise.

Thank you for taking the time to review my thoughts and many thanks to you for serving your community and state in the legislature. I know only a small piece of the pressures and challenges you must face in that seat and appreciate that you're up to the task of keeping these many plates spinning.

Sincerely,

Megan Martz

Kimm Schwartz

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Wed 2/22/2023 8:39 AM

Dear Mr. Ortiz,

I support your proposal to increase state and federal funding for Ketchikan and the state of Alaska schools.

The past few school board meetings have indicated that the Ketchikan Gateway School District is struggling financially due to a lack of state aid, federal impact assistance, and other factors.

These past two years, educator, para, and health aide positions that have existed since my children were students in the KGBSD were moved to COVID funding as a creative way to support these positions since money was short. COVID funding has now disappeared, and this monetary shortfall threatens these critical positions, including the frontline School Health Aide (HA) position.

As the District School Nurse, hearing this is greatly disturbing. I see the importance of all these positions, especially the Health Aide's role in keeping our kids healthy and safe, especially in schools with highly intensive students.

Many medically fragile children would not have come to my attention without our health aides contacting me and sharing their concerns. Many children in our school district struggle with chronic diseases and emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues that need constant monitoring. A child visiting the Health Aides' offices sometimes receives much-needed comfort and mental health support.

Children often come into the office complaining of a tummy ache when they really need a hug, reassurance that they are ok, someone to talk to about situations at home, or a few minutes of rest. They are comforted, and they return to class. Parents rely on Health Aides for information, support, and watching over their children when they are hurt or sick.

What is the plan for overseeing these children if these positions are eliminated? The schools are already taxed with staffing shortages. Some staff members are presently juggling more than one position. Are they now expected to fill another role as a health Aide? There are very few schools that, when I visit, do not have five or six children coming into the HA office. Their offices have a revolving door.

From a nurse's perspective, there is much-needed work to be done in our school district. There are many gaps in information sharing and processes, and policies. Our KGBSD staff need and deserve training and opportunities to help address these concerns and bring us together to fill these gaps. More staffing is required, not less.

Our Children need and deserve to feel safe and attended to while in school; they need a place to go when hurt or unsure. We need the "right" people in place to listen to them and care for them. The health aides are some of these "right" people. They help identify areas where we can do better. They are the frontline.

Thank you so much for your attention and participation.

Sincerely;

Kimm Schwartz BSN, RN

Ketchikan Gateway Borough

School District Nurse

- *“Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, ‘It can’t be done.’”* Eleanor Roosevelt

Marie Husa

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Wed 2/22/2023 8:50 PM

I support this bill. Please pass it. As a member of the Filipino community, our community is severely impacted when education is underfunded. Increasing the BSA will have effects that will be wide-reaching. It will have a positive effect in our state and our economy.

Thank you!

Marie Husa

Anchorage, AK 99515

Franklin Dekker

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Thu 2/23/2023 7:58 AM

Dear Alaska House Education Committee Co-Chairs & Committee Members,

I would like to voice my support for House Bill 65 "Increase Base Student Allocation." Failure to tie the base student allocation (BSA) to inflation has resulted in annual budget cuts to our children's education since 2017. The status quo is unsustainable for our students, teachers and state. Please act, and pass HB 65.

Sincerely,

Franklin Dekker
Anchorage, AK 99508

Kim Erickson

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Thu 2/23/2023 10:31 AM

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 65 proposing a \$1,250 addition to the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

It is my strong belief that for the long-term success of our state and residents, we MUST increase our funding for education in Alaska. Years of flat funding have created a crisis in our schools. This addition is nothing more than adjusting the BSA to a level where it should be had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually.

I would also like to note that I am in favor of limiting the annual PFD payout to \$1,000 to pay for increased spending on education and other critical items in our state.

Sincerely,

Kimberly W. Erickson

Willow, AK 99688-0826

Leigh Woodward

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/24/2023 4:31 PM

Dear Representative Dan Ortiz,

Please urge your fellow lawmakers to increase the BSA!!!

Also, since I have your attention, I would like for the legislature in Alaska to consider looking to Mississippi to see how they were able to increase their reading skills for demographics such as African American, and Hispanic/Latino. They are doing a LOT of things right there and the education community is impressed!

I looked over our NAEP scores (don't ask me what that stands for right now but it's the tests that all American students take in 4th and 8th grade) and I noticed that 83 % of our Alaska Native students are far below a basic level of reading in the 4th grade. That number is just unacceptable. Comparatively, caucasian students were NOT reading to the tune of 30%. The same is true for math.

We need government systems to teach teachers how to teach reading because it's NOT happening and it's NOT the teacher's fault. It's a failure of the system. I would LOVE to talk more about this.

Thank you for your consideration and service to our great state.

Sincerely,

Leigh Woodward

Ketchikan, AK 99901-6158