

From: [Jasmine Nickell](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Deeply concerned about our students
Date: Friday, April 07, 2023 11:00:58 AM

To Whom this May Concern-All Alaskans,

As a 7th year school counselor in the state of Alaska, I would like to write in support of funding our public schools and increasing the baseline funding. Since the pandemic, I have been one of the educators who have not left the field of public education.

However, I am fearful for where we are headed as I watch our education system in Alaska crumble before my eyes.

We all see it. Teachers-and Alaskan residents, are leaving, running and not looking back.

My family re-located in Fairbanks in 1981, yet gone are the days of extra money_for Alaska, but- has our heart and creativity left as well?

I understand not wanting to pay extra taxes, but I am here

to tell you that the sacrifice is we are losing portions of our kids. Mentally, academically and often physically.

What is wrong with us if we cannot fund supporting the youth, our future? Alaska has ALWAYS been about the people. The majority of our state's kids attend public school.

If you have the time and resources to do home school, wonderful, but I am advocating for the larger portion of kids sent to school to live their lives there. This is the place that myself and teachers, other staff, are practically raising the children and caring for them more hours of the day than they often

see their own parents/guardians.

Over these last few years in particular, we come together for meetings at school this time of year with fear, apprehension, and nausea-preparing for the cuts we have to plan for next...We are literally chasing people out of our state on top of this. The constant worry of losing positions, funding, this has quickly changed the educational realm from being a dream job helping kids, to pure trauma. Even with the funding we still have, we cannot fill our district's positions due to the negativity, low morale and exhaustion around educators. Again, the children suffer.

Without additional state funding, our classrooms are getting packed in, support staff cannot even check in with the increasing amount of mental health and suicidal ideation, due to our increased workloads. I have many days of my week that I cannot focus on academic support due to just trying to keep kids alive and trying to help their parents. We know that suicide moved from the 3rd leading cause of death to the 2nd over

the last year of pandemic (<https://www.nichd.nih.gov>).

I cannot even fathom the people in charge of this state trying to base our school funding on test scores!! Something is very wrong here.

Has anyone presented data to the fact of how many students got behind and did no school work during COVID?

This makes me so angry that schools could be penalized for this! It is not ethical basing anything off of assessments at this current time and climate. These students CANNOT focus on academics if they are barely hanging on due to increased stress at home, mental health challenges, increased addictions of family and students. These are only a few dynamics.

Students need to feel safe and supported before they will focus on their grades and test scores.

How many of you have spent time in a public school recently? Why are people making decisions based off

of “old school” ideas of what a school should be? This is not helpful.

I am hopeful to see some of the other testimonies from educators and students.

I also have 2 children in this same school system, and represent

the unique view of being a product of our state’s education, as well as a parent and educator here myself.

Please, can our state remain the wonderful, unique place it has always been and take care of our own people?

I am not sure what is happening, I am worried. We have become too rigid in our thinking.

Thank you for your time.

--

Jasmine Nickell ~ School Counselor

***Randy Smith Middle School**
(907) 458-7600 EXT. 42523

***Hutchison High School**
(907)-479-2261 EXT. 35504
jasmine.nickell@k12northstar.org

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.