

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](mailto: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. 30<sup>th</sup> 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