

Doniece Gott

From: Natalie Troy <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2023 9:35 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Sen. Jesse Kiehl
Subject: Public testimony on SB 52 + Operating Budget

To the Honorable Senators Olson, Hoffman, Stedman, Bishop, Merrick, Kiehl, and Wilson,

Good morning. My name is Natalie Troy and I live and work in Juneau. I currently work for the Alaska Council of School Administrators, but I am testifying on my own behalf.

Thank you for taking up SB 52 and for making education funding a top priority of the Senate Majority Caucus this session.

Public schools represent both a public good and a business whose outcomes are tied to many different factors, reaped over the decades in the ability of Alaska's citizens to build meaningful lives and survive and thrive in the changing economy. The main revenue source for Alaska's schools is state funding. All businesses need revenue and investment to thrive. Schools are no different. When schools have to make cuts to keep up with rising costs, kids' learning environment gets worse, staff jobs get harder as they have to take on more and more responsibility, and when positions are cut, communities and the state lose good jobs. **This funding also needs to be inside the formula so districts can depend on it rather than tying ongoing costs like insurance and staff benefits to unpredictable one time funds. The forward funding aspects of SB 52 are also very helpful for this.** As a recent college graduate looking to get certified and teach, investing in education and allowing districts to improve working conditions is something likely to get people like me to stay here rather than leaving for comparable states like Washington who have done much more to support public education in recent years.

There has been a lot of discussion of fund balances this week. As Senator Stedman and other committee members questioning has helped unpack in committee meetings this week, just because those funds may still be available does not mean districts are rich with cash. Those numbers come from an uncontextualized chart and many of them have already been budgeted to expend. Or, if districts choose or are instructed by their school boards to keep money in their bank account, we need to remember that that is sound financial practice. As individuals, we try to keep money in the bank account in case of medical or other emergencies. School districts are maintaining buildings and running classes for up to thousands of students. Keeping a certain level of fund balance is prudent to deal with unexpected costs.

I also urge you to support funding for public libraries and services supporting childcare and services for disabled Alaskans. The state should prioritize public services and supporting the most vulnerable. A huge PFD should not be offered without a sound fiscal plan.

Thank you for considering my testimony. Please remember as well how much support public education has drawn in testimony before your committee as well as the House Education Committee this session. Investing in schools will make them better and will result in staff who are less stretched thin and able to achieve important goals, such as implementation of the Alaska Reads Act, better.

Best regards,
Natalie Troy

Doniece Gott

From: oneill_abby [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2023 9:40 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee; Senate Finance Committee
Subject: SB 52

My name is Abby O'Neill, and I am an administrator representing North Star Elementary in Anchorage School District.

I am writing in support of: SB 52

Stable, predictable funding is necessary to ensure districts can attract and retain high quality educators. The base student allocation (BSA) has only been increased by \$30 since 2016, and the impact of inflation during that time has created a significant loss of purchasing power for school districts.

In the Anchorage school district, we have seen the impact of insufficient funding and inflation. Personally, as an administrator of a Title I school, I find it already hard to hire and now with our lack of increase in BSA funding I have a hard time retaining people, drawing in new hires, or asking teachers and paras to do the job at hand knowing that we are paying less than Target and Walmart to our paraprofessionals. I have had new teachers not move to AK once they see the salary in relation to our cost of living. The other thing impacting our teachers is the lack of retirement in our state as well giving them no reason to stay invested in our state.

I work at a high needs school that houses a self-contained sped program as well as ages preschool to 6th grade. The lack of funding makes it hard to provide adequate training, professional development and the foundational skills needed to handle high level behaviors, academic needs, and the trauma-informed practices that are essential to student success.

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

With an increase to the BSA our district will use the additional funds to decrease pupil to teacher ratio, make much needed improvements to buildings, provide better resources and tools for classrooms, and provide a better work experience and livable wage for employees.

I invite anyone who is interested to come visit North Star. It is a beautifully diverse school that meets the needs of not only the students but of our families as well. We are a support to the community and work hard to provide a quality education for students. Raising the BSA is essential for our school because it will provide more funding for better training, higher more qualified staff, and making sure our school is a safe place for kids.

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.

Abby O'Neill

Principal
North Star Elementary
[REDACTED]

Doniece Gott

From: Damian Hill <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2023 11:07 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: In support of SB 52

Co-Chair Olson & Seate Finance Committee,

My name is Damian Hill and I live in Naknek, Alaska. I support a significant increase to the BSA, as well as inflation proofing the BSA.

Thank you,

Damian Hill

Doniece Gott

From: Heidi Ahlgren <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, April 21, 2023 1:54 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: SB 52

Dear Alaska Senators-

Please help Alaska's students and schools by supporting a significant and permanent increase to the BSA formula. Alaska has seen unprecedented inflation over the past year and schools are being impacted by this. My home school district of Sitka is hurting because of potential cuts to its schools. I have heard the potential number of 12-15 teaching positions cut if zero funding increases occur. CARES Act money is all but spent, which only \$110,000 remaining in Sitka's accounts. My son's middle school might lose an art teacher, technology teacher, and ELA teacher. Our district needs a permanent increase to the BSA of approximately \$900 to reach a point in which there would not be a budget deficit. I **completely support** a significantly decreased or non-existent PFD if that is what it takes to fully fund education for our children's future success. I encourage you to do so as well.

Thank you for your time and the work you do for our state.

Sincerely,

Heidi Lihou
Sitka, Alaska

Doniece Gott

From: b farris <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, April 22, 2023 9:45 AM
To: Finance
Subject: BSA

Good morning:

I am writing in support of raising the BSA in Alaska.

Currently, the school district in anchorage needs to close six schools due to the lack of adequate funding. This will negatively impact students, families, and communities who depend on neighborhood schools.

If we want to provide excellent education to our children, who are the future of Alaska, then we must be committed to supporting schools financially.

Therefore, it is essential that you approve a significant raise in the BSA.

Thank you.

Barbara Farris