



Craig City School District

P.O. Box 800, Craig, Alaska 99921
www.craigschools.com
Phone (907) 826.3274
FAX (907) 826.3322

Chris Reitan, Superintendent
David Harris, Elem./MS Principal
Betty Hall, HS Principal
Christina Woodward, PACE Principal

April 27, 2023

To: House Special Committee on Ways and Means Members
From: Chris Reitan, Craig City School District Superintendent

I'm providing written testimony to the House Special Committee on Ways and Means in opposition to HB 165.

HB 165 provides additional funding for school districts operating correspondence programs through the Base Student Allocation (150% of the Base Student Allocation). However, HB 165, as currently drafted, would potentially financially destroy all statewide correspondence programs. Outlined below are specific concerns with the bill that Craig City School District has identified.

- The “shall” provide an allotment will cause challenges with late enrollments (after the student count period) for all districts operating statewide correspondence programs. As public schools, students are eligible to enroll in our programs at any time during the school year. However, forcing districts to provide full allotments for students, regardless of when students enroll in our program, would potentially mean operating our program could become financially unviable because we would be providing specific allotment amounts to students without having received any state funding for them during the annual four-week student count period. Additionally, the “shall” provide an allotment eliminates local control from the CCSD School Board from developing an annual budget that serves all students enrolled within our district.
- Requiring 100% of funding, every single penny of the funding formula, to pass through the correspondence school as an annual student allotment would make all correspondence schools financially unviable. As HB 165 is currently drafted, none of the monies correspondence programs receive for each student through the Base Student Allocation could be used to support our instructional support responsibilities as outlined in AS 14.03.300 which states:
 - (a) A district or the department that provides a correspondence study program shall annually provide an individual learning plan for each student enrolled in the program developed in collaboration with the student, the parent or guardian of the student, a certificated teacher assigned to the student, and other individuals involved in the student's learning plan. An individual learning plan must
 - (1) be developed with the assistance and approval of the certificated teacher assigned to the student by the district;
 - (2) provide for a course of study for the appropriate grade level consistent with state and district standards;
 - (3) provide for an ongoing assessment plan that includes statewide assessments required for public schools under AS 14.03.123(f);
 - (4) include a provision for modification of the individual learning plan if the student is below proficient on a standardized assessment in a core subject;
 - (5) provide for a signed agreement between the certificated teacher assigned to the student and at least one parent or the guardian of each student that verifies compliance with an individual learning plan;

- (6) provide for monitoring of each student's work and progress by the certificated teacher assigned to the student.

CCSD opposes HB 165 and requests the House Special Committee on Ways and Means terminate HB 165. HB 165 does not support our Alaska school districts' efforts to develop the most effective instructional programs to meet the specific needs of our student body and our families that we are privileged to serve. HB 165 appears to be in direct opposition to our collective responsibilities across the state to develop the most robust public education options for all students and families.

CCSD prefers HB 139, as currently amended, that provides correspondence programs 90% of the BSA x 1.20 Special Needs funding factor. It makes more sense to utilize the existing levers within the foundation formula and to expand funding to a student population that has been previously excluded from this funding source.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [House Ways and Means](#)
Subject: HB 165
Date: Thursday, April 27, 2023 2:10:11 PM
Attachments: [HB 165 testimony.docx](#)

Dear Representative:

Attached is a document that outlines my concerns with HB 165. This bill would essentially eliminate correspondence programs in our state and create a central office in Juneau. I believe that education should be run and monitored at the community level. A state approach is counterproductive, as "one size fits all" does not work in this vast, diverse state.

Please make the recommended amendments to this bill before passing it on.

Thank you.

Barbara Tyndall
North Pole

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

I ask you to amend HB 165. It might be great for charter schools, but it fundamentally destroys correspondence education in this state.

Specifically, here are the problems with HB 165:

1) The “may/shall” language in the proposed section 2 (line 14 page 1) is detrimental to various credit recovery programs, such as IGRAD that are offered across the state through various programs. These students are typically part time, are operating independent of direct parent involvement, and should not receive a full allotment. Please keep the “may” language in current statute.

2) The proposed section 3 (page 2, lines 4 through 16) should be deleted.

First, dictating allotment amounts should be dropped. At the present time, competition between the correspondence programs. This competitive environment provides for the best service at the least cost. The language proposed here would effectively end all the correspondence programs and establish one big state monopoly program ran by the State School Board. It is unlikely that a central office in Juneau would be as responsive to parents and students as the current competitive model of service delivery, and it is unlikely that the state school board wants this responsibility.

Second, the Education formula for intensive needs students for the Brick-and-Mortar program is 13. This bill only provides a multiplier of 11 and creates a new category of student. Is an intensive needs student who is homeschooled worth less than one that is in brick and mortar?

House Bill 139 does a far better job of addressing these students in a correspondence environment and is a work product of the education committee and correspondence programs.

3) The bill is inconsistent. Lines 26 through 28 eliminate the AK DEED offering programs directly, but then somehow makes Correspondence programs a function of “the board.” Is this the State board of education or some other board? (see lines 9-11, page 8) It isn’t clear what is being accomplished.

While a multiplier of 150% is nice, given the fiscal climate of the state, it seems unwise to give such a large increase at the present time. Under this multiplier, the state would have to make very large Hold Harmless payments to districts in addition to the large increase in correspondence budgets.

HB 139 retains the 90% multiplier for correspondence students that addresses the needs of intensive needs students and is far more consistent with a conservative fiscal policy. It was worked on with both correspondence programs and education committee members. It would be better if the correspondence program aspects of this bill were deleted and focus on just Charter schools.



Denali Borough School District

P.O. Box 280 • Healy, Alaska 99743 • (907) 683-2278 • FAX (907) 683-2514

27 April 2023

Dear House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Dan Polta. I'm the superintendent of the Denali Borough School District and we operate a statewide correspondence program, Denali PEAK.

I appreciate your increase support for correspondence programs in our state. I do have some concerns about the language in HB165 and the negative consequences I feel it will have on the health environment we have in Alaska supporting parent choice in educating their children.

Correspondence programs exist in a very competitive market which exists along two main axis. One of those is financial (aka the size and use of the allotment) and the other is the service we provide our families. Each program provides a different balance of these factors. When we see one program offering a larger allotment, we will often have conversations with families who are considering moving to that other program. In the past, when one program is able to increase their allotment size, it causes other programs to consider following suit. Similarly, if we are able to better support our families with instructional guidance, tutoring services, student clubs/activities, etc. the families may elect our program over another, even if we provide a smaller financial allotment.

Placing requirements on the allotment size would reduce our ability to find the best way to support our families choosing Denali PEAK.

I also appreciate the proposal to increase the BSA multiplier for correspondence school students. I prefer the cleaner idea present in HB139 of applying the Special Education factor to correspondence students. There is an inherent logic of using the existing levers in the foundation formula and expanding that to a student population whose public schools were excluded from that funding source. Denali PEAK, like other public school correspondence programs, enrolls and welcomes students with special needs and helps their parents in educating those children. Receiving the special education factor would help us meet those needs and the needs of all our students.

Thank you for your consideration and for your efforts to support education in our State.

Sincerely,

Dan Polta

Dan Polta

Superintendent

Denali Borough School District

Mission Statement

Working together to nurture, empower, and inspire today's student to positively shape tomorrow's world