



Senate Education Committee Support for SB110

**Lon Garrison, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards.**

April 13, 2023

Chair Tobin and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

I am here today to express the support of the Association of Alaska School Boards for the passage of SB 110- School/University Employee Health Insurance, an act relating to an option for group insurance coverage and self-insurance coverage for school districts and other public employees.

**AASB's Resolution #4.8 RELATING TO HEALTH CARE COSTS AND MEDICAL
INSURANCE supports Senate Bill 110:**

AASB calls upon the Governor, the Legislature, and Congress to assist school districts in addressing the cost of health care in Alaska in ways that are not detrimental to districts while providing district options.

Adopted 2005

Amended 2010, 201, 2013, 2018, 2021

(Sunsets 2023).

This bill supports one of AASB's three legislative priorities: improving teacher and staff retention and recruitment. Several school districts across the state have expressed incredible frustration with the ever-increasing cost of health care coverage, especially those districts that are not large enough to realize any benefit due to the limited enrollment.

Providing a voluntary option to join an insurance pool that should be able to negotiate better and less expensive coverage will allow for those retained funds to support student achievement while also serving school district employees more effectively.

AASB would like to thank Senator Hughes for sponsoring this bill as another way to support Alaska's public education system.

Most respectfully,

Lon Garrison,
Executive Director, AASB



KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH

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Office of the Borough Mayor

March 15, 2023

HB 21 Healthcare Consolidation

I am writing this letter in support of HB 21; Healthcare legislation to allow school districts and governmental units to participate in AlaskaCare. In the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, our School District is self insured and is required to budget for the annual cost of healthcare claims and administrative expenses for their employees. In recent years, this cost has risen dramatically and this fiscal year alone the district is experiencing a more than \$2 million dollar shortfall between what was budgeted for healthcare and actual expenses.

This rapidly increasing cost for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School district will result in the diversion of funds from instructional activities, redirected towards employee healthcare. HB 21 is a potential tool that could reduce healthcare expenses and mitigate future ones for our District. As this legislation is designed to be voluntary in nature, if it becomes law; there seems to be no downside to giving Alaskan communities the ability and choice to participate in AlaskaCare if beneficial to them.

I appreciate the efforts of the sponsor of this bill and encourage your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodney Dial", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rodney Dial

Mayor,

Ketchikan Gateway Borough rodneyd@kgbak.us / 907-220-6861



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

Clayton Holland, Superintendent

148 North Binkley Street Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7520

Phone (907) 714-8888

February 24, 2023

Representative Sarah Vance
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for HB 21-School/University Employee Health Insurance

Dear Representative Vance:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 21 relating to School and University Employee Health Insurance. It is well documented that health care costs in Alaska are the highest in the nation. Alaskans spend the most per resident, face the highest insurance premiums, and have seen overall spending increase much faster than the rest of the country. Alaskans have spent more out-of-pocket on health care costs than residents in any other state. These costs continue to progressively cut into the paychecks of our employees and the overall budget of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

Health Care costs have impacted recruitment and retention of school staff for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and school districts across Alaska. The ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel directly correlates to the opportunity to join a health care plan with a larger pool of employees and is crucial in this aspect to all districts in Alaska.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District supports HB 21. Listed among KPBSD's 2022-2023 legislative priorities include focus on retention and recruitment of high-quality educators by investing in defined benefits and exploring affordable health care for employees.

Thank you for sponsoring and bringing HB 21 forward. To have more health care options is a positive step for all school districts in Alaska.

Respectfully,

Clayton Holland
Superintendent



April 3, 2023

The Honorable Sarah Vance
Alaska House of Representatives

The Honorable Shelley Hughes
Alaska Senate

Support for HB 21 / SB 110

Dear Representative Vance and Senator Hughes,

On behalf of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, we write in support of House Bill 21/Senate Bill 110, an act relating to an option for group insurance coverage and self-insurance coverage for school district and other public employees.

To keep student learning at the forefront of our priorities and to control escalating costs, the Alaska Council of School Administrators appreciates and supports the concept of an option for a statewide insurance plan.

This bill supports one of our member priorities as stated in our Joint Position Statements: Providing health insurance to our employees is essential for retaining and recruiting high-quality staff who can maximize student achievement. We encourage solutions to the long-term escalating costs of healthcare and health insurance in the state. We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease health care costs. Controlling the cost of health care for our essential workers is critical and promises long-term benefits in recruiting and retaining effective educators and other school staff.

House Bill 21/Senate Bill 110 provides a path forward for our state to have options. On behalf of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, we thank you for sponsoring HB 21/SB 110 and for your overall commitment to education. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Respectfully,

Dr. Bridget Weiss
ACSA President

Dr. Lisa S. Parady
ACSA Executive Director

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

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Michael Robbins, Superintendent • Melissa Johnson, Deputy Superintendent • Daniel Schuler, Business Manager



March 24, 2023

Representative Sarah Vance
Senator Shelley Hughes
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for HB 21 and SB 110 - School/University Employee Health Insurance

Dear Representative Vance:

There is no denying that the health care costs in Alaska are the highest in the nation and the overall spending increase for Alaskans has risen more quickly than the rest of the country. Alaska residents have spent more out-of-pocket dollars on health care costs than residents across the nation. It is concerning to know these costs continue to take away from our employees compensation and the overall budget of Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District. These facts are the driving force behind this letter of support of House Bill 21 and Senate Bill 110 regarding School and University Employee Health Insurance.

School districts across Alaska are facing increasing costs of healthcare, reducing the number of quality candidates who apply for positions in the state. Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District has had trouble recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and staff for years and can only see the opportunity to offer improved services as a positive recruiting point.

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District supports HB 21 and SB 110. Health care costs are part of our budget concerns, making the opportunity to explore affordable options for employees more important than in recent years. Thank you for sponsoring HB 21 and SB 110 and raising awareness of this issue facing districts across the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Robbins".

Michael Robbins, Superintendent
Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
333 Schoenbar Road
Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-247-2109

Michael Mason

From: Gary Miller <gmiller.juneauak@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 6:04 PM
To: House Labor and Commerce; Senate Education
Subject: HB 21 & SB 110 School/University Employee Health Insurance

I just heard about HB 21 and SB 110 today, School/University Employee Health Insurance. Bringing in a larger pool of people into AlaskaCare should help lower the cost of insurance.

If I was the "God" of the legislature, I would push to bring jobs back to Alaska that are being farmed to insurance companies and not pay them a profit. The State of Alaska should set up their own processing of claims. This would give the State control so they could see when a provider is charging too much. It could also gather data on medical procedures being done. At the same time, I would remove the cap for maximum benefits paid for retirees. Health insurance is one of the guarantees for retirees but if a major catastrophe occurs, such as needing a heart transplant, the insurance could end.

Could you include as testimony to the committees hearing the bills?

Thank you.

Gary Miller
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