

February 19, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Magy Helle, and I have been an advisory teacher at Mat-Su Central School for the last ten years and an educator in Alaska for the last 25 years. My current position at Mat-Su Central School is advising high school students; this includes helping students plan for life beyond high school. An important part of post high school planning with students is talking about the Alaska Performance Scholarship and encouraging students to pursue that opportunity. I am so grateful that students have access to this scholarship to help fund continuing education without competing against other students for that benefit. With the rising costs of education nationwide, this continues to be a valuable resource for students.

While the Alaska Performance Scholarship is an incredible tool for students, there have been challenges over the years that either keep students from qualifying or from using the scholarship. I am writing to identify some of these challenges and to urge you to make this scholarship more accessible to a wider range of students by making changes to this program. Now, more than ever, Alaska needs to work harder to support our students and to provide opportunities for them to finish their education, start careers, and raise their families in Alaska.

First, one of the biggest hurdles students face with qualifying for APS is the ACT/SAT test score requirement in order to use the award at a college or university. While the ACT and SAT assess important skills that students should learn in high school, the scope of skills measured is actually quite small. These tests are said to be a predictor of how well a student will perform in college, but in actuality, the SAT only measures about 18% of what is deemed necessary to succeed in college according to technical studies done by the Educational Testing Service and College Board. While it's understandable that the APS requires some measurement to predict future success, standardized tests may not be the best option. For example, many high school students who are already taking college classes with great success don't always score high enough on the SAT or ACT to qualify for APS. This year, I have 17 students on my caseload taking college courses and all have earned As and Bs in those courses, yet none of them are scoring high enough on the SAT or ACT to qualify for level 1 of APS. Many will receive level 3 scholarships, and some will not qualify at all even though they already have a proven track record of college success. Six of my seniors have earned more than 20 college credits, and one will earn her associate degree by high school graduation with a college GPAs above 3.5. The fact that the SAT failed to accurately predict these students' success leads me to believe that these are not isolated cases.

Additionally, current high school students lived through the COVID pandemic and have experienced learning loss; while this is probably more evident in elementary students, the learning loss in content areas like math are certainly noticeable at the high school level as well. Students are still catching up and are struggling, now more than ever, with testing that may not cover what they have actually learned in high school due to gaps caused by school closures, clunky online learning, and drastic changes to their educational routines and learning environments. Other barriers continue in Alaska this year such as the bus driver shortages and strikes which put disadvantaged students even further behind if parents are unable to adjust to the changing schedules and transportation challenges.

Another aspect to consider is the fact that the SAT and ACT are timed assessments; therefore, students aren't just assessed on their knowledge and skill levels but rather on their ability to answer questions

quickly. One of the biggest laments that I hear from students after they test is, “I was doing so well, but I only made it through half of the questions!” The timed nature of these tests rewards students who are fast processors. Students who are ELL, students who have other learning challenges like ADD, or students who are just slower processors don’t tend to perform well on timed assessments even though they may have mastered the assessed skills. Scoring high on a timed assessment is not an indication of a student’s ability to learn, work hard, persevere, and apply themselves to a variety of tasks that are required in college, trade school, or other endeavors. Many students who have proven themselves through added course rigor and GPA standards in high school are denied the scholarship because they fail to score high enough on a test that is a one-day event in their high school career.

Finally, the APS test score requirement is not in line with what is happening nationwide as “more than 1,800 four-year colleges have announced plans to go test-optional or test-blind for fall 2023” according to the National Center for Fair and Open Testing. The bottom line is that a three-hour test on a Saturday morning does not measure the most important aspects of what makes a student successful beyond high school. Let’s allow a student’s high school transcript and GPA speak to their academic accomplishments and drop the score requirements on the SAT and ACT tests to qualify for APS.

Second, once students qualify for APS, there are numerous challenges with using the award. For example, students who pursue programs through trade schools can only access one year of their APS award. In order for a trade school student to capture all of their APS award, they would need to complete three or four trade school programs which is unrealistic. Students can obtain certifications or licenses in welding, auto mechanics, cosmetology, private pilot, and so many other fields in under a year and enter their chosen career field highly trained. Like college, these programs are incredibly expensive, and the cost is prohibitive to most students without financial support. The financial cost of many trade school programs is equivalent to two years or more of college; therefore, students who receive APS for trade school should have access to more than one year of their award, if not all, to apply to their program of study.

Likewise, more college-bound students are interested in pursuing an Associates Degree or a certification program through the university system rather than a Bachelor’s Degree so that they can enter the work force sooner. Students overall are anxious about acquiring educational debt and being strapped financially when they are starting their careers and families. Allowing students to access their full APS award to meet their educational goals and expenses in less than four years will help Alaska students get the training they need to stay in Alaska and to fill labor shortages in the local job markets. Conversely, some students need a longer time-frame to complete their educational pursuits. Family commitments, jobs, and other life circumstances may hinder a student from attending a program full-time or even from meeting part-time requirements to use the award. Giving these students a longer time frame to use their award or lowering minimum credit requirements per year or semester will give them needed resources to continue their educational pursuits. Overall, allowing students to apply the full APS award they earned towards their certification or degree program at their own pace will keep more students in those programs and will likely increase completion rates.

Last, the goal of the APS is to retain Alaskan students, but some students have no choice but to pursue education outside of Alaska due to lack of opportunity in our state. For example, UAF and UAS are currently the only routes for Alaska students to pursue a degree in secondary education. Students who live in Anchorage or the valley typically view UAF like they would an out-of-state college since they would incur dorm costs. And, faced with the option of an even harsher winter than they are accustomed to or pursuing a program out of state, most choose the latter. Additionally, other programs of study may be limited or not offered at all in Alaska. This year, I have seniors who are pursuing cinematography

and mortuary science, both of which are not offered in Alaska. Additionally, many of my high school students who are taking college classes this year have seen cancelled classes due to lack of enrollment, so even courses and programs that are offered in state don't always remain viable. Furthermore, many students are weighing the idea of attending community colleges out of state which tend to be even cheaper than in-state tuition at local colleges in Alaska. One student is pursuing dental hygiene, and she found this to be more cost effective to pursue out of state. In all of these scenarios, students who have qualified for APS will leave their awards untouched if they pursue their education outside of Alaska. I have very few students this year who plan to remain outside of Alaska even if they complete their education elsewhere. Most plan to return to pursue careers and to raise their families here. Overall, if students qualify for APS, they should be allowed to use this award at any college or trade school that supports their educational goals.

In closing, APS is an incredible resource for students, but changing eligibility rules and usage parameters will allow more Alaskans to qualify and pursue higher education and training. I previously submitted an email that detailed stories about some of my graduating seniors this year which I will include again below. My hope is that you will see the complexities that many students face in seeking and funding post-high school education and consider adjusting the APS to support these very deserving students.

Thank you for considering the information presented,

Magy Helle, Advisory Teacher  
Mat-Su Central School, MSBSD

### **Student Examples:**

T. – T is on track for APS but will not finish the qualifications as her area of study is not offered in Alaska. She wants to pursue mortuary science, so she will have to do that out of state. She currently plans to attend a community college in Oregon.

M. – M. is on track for APS and meets qualifications. She might end up using the award, but she currently plans to pursue a degree in secondary education which is not currently offered at UAA. She is pursuing plans for a college out of state.

A. - She started taking college courses last year to pursue the Vet Assisting certification through Mat-Su College. She meets the course and GPA requirements for APS but did not score high enough on the SAT or ACT. The SAT or ACT are currently required in order to qualify and use APS for certification programs that are offered through the universities. English is her second language, so the timed tests are a challenge; she works incredibly hard, has a full-time job, and has been successful in her college classes last year and this year. We made the decision to have her return as a 5<sup>th</sup> year senior this year to complete the 20-credit Vet Assisting program. She has secured a job/internship with a local vet for her practicum which is the final step to earning her certification.

M. - She has been taking college courses since her sophomore year in high school and consistently earns As and Bs in these courses. She took a full load of college courses this year in an effort to get ahead and save money as she has not scored high enough on the SAT or ACT to secure the APS. She has high test anxiety and does not perform well under timed situations. She plans to pursue her bachelor's degree but will likely not qualify for APS even with her proven track record of being successful in college

already. She plans to pursue a degree in psychology, occupational therapy, or counseling; these are all areas that are in great demand in Alaska.

A. - She started taking college courses her junior year and has consistently earned As in these classes. She has high anxiety and has not scored high enough yet on the SAT or ACT. She will attempt the test one more time, but she is not confident that she will earn a high enough score to qualify for APS. She plans to pursue radiologic technology after fulfilling a year-long mission with Torchbearers overseas.

N. - On track for APS but decided not to take SAT or ACT as she plans to pursue a program for dental hygiene out of state. The program where she gained acceptance does not require these tests.

G. - He is on-track to qualify but decided not to take any of the tests as he plans to start his own business after graduation. The scholarship doesn't support endeavors outside of trade school or college.

I. - She is on-track to qualify but decided not to take any of the tests as she plans to pursue a real estate license after high school. The scholarship does not support her goals.

K. - She is on-track to qualify but may not score high enough on the spring SAT to use the scholarship for college. She has been a FIT (families in transition) kid since her freshman year. She has been on her own since she was 15, and she is now a 5<sup>th</sup> year senior. She works a full-time job as an administrative assistant for a large non-profit corporation and maintains high grades in her high school courses. We are hoping she will qualify for other scholarships and grant funds with her FIT designation.

L. - She is on-track to qualify but may not score high enough on the SAT to use the scholarship for college. English is a second language, and she takes longer to process information. She has successfully completed a college course and works a full-time job as an office manager. She plans to pursue a degree in the medical field and stay in Alaska.

S - She will earn her associate degree by high school graduation and has maintained a GPA above 3.5 in her college classes. She scored high enough on the SAT to qualify for Level 2. She is retesting to try to qualify for Level 1 but may not reach that before graduation. She plans to pursue her bachelor's degree in state.

**House Education Committee  
HB 31 Testimony of Support  
February 20, 2023**



Co-Chairs Ruffridge and Allard, members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Emily Ferry. I work for the Association of Alaska School Boards as the Collective Impact Coordinator and part of my job is working to improve access to postsecondary education opportunities. I'm joined this morning by my son Elias who is a freshman at Juneau Douglas High School.

The Association of Alaska School Boards is in support of **HB 148**. AASB's Delegate Assembly has two resolutions supporting this legislation. These are:

- **RESOLUTION #5.21 SUPPORTING THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**
- **RESOLUTION #5.22 SUPPORTING CTE CREDIT FOR THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**

The changes proposed in HB 148 would provide for several improvements that would make the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) more flexible, competitive, and effective in providing an opportunity for all Alaska students to be supported in their pursuit of postsecondary education.

The proposal to include CTE credits as a means to qualify for the APS has long been supported by the Association of Alaska School Boards members. We know that career and technical education courses can often make the direct connection between learning and applying academic subjects like language arts and mathematics to real job skills a reality. Incorporating and acknowledging the value and effectiveness of those credits increases the opportunity for a large demographic of students to access this valuable and needed support.

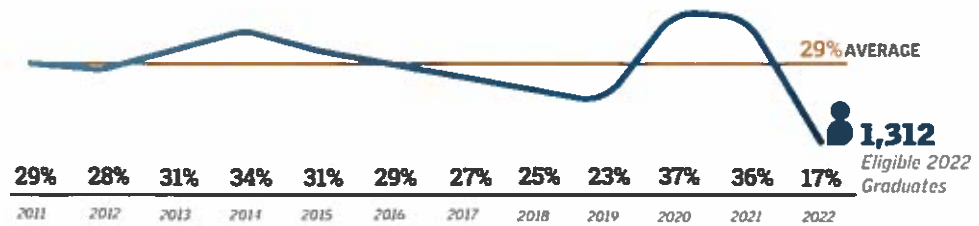
On a personal note, my son Elias has found the CTE courses he has taken in Intro to Construction, Computer Added Design, and Finance to be among his favorite high school courses. It can be hard for students to fit CTE credits in if they don't count toward the APS Scholarship. These changes increase flexibility and access to CTE courses.

H.B. 148 also helps meet Alaska's workforce needs. The Department of Labor has indicated that 65% of jobs in Alaska will require a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025. Right now, only about 55% of Alaskans have the necessary degrees and credentials. As indicated by recent reports on the Alaska Performance Scholarship commissioned by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, if we want more Alaskans to earn degrees and credentials then one of the most important things we can do is remove unnecessary barriers, like the ACT and SAT

testing requirement. Research indicates that a student's ability to take a standardized test is not an accurate indicator of rigor or readiness. H.B. 148 modernizes the APS.

### EXHIBIT 3

Percent of Public High School Graduates Eligible for APS by Graduating Class, 2011-2022



As indicated by this graph from the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education's 2022 APS Outcomes Report, removing the testing requirement over Covid resulted in a jump in eligibility. Adding in the testing requirement post-pandemic further depressed eligibility.

Alaska's postsecondary students are comprised of a large number of non-traditional students. Extending the period the scholarship is available to a student increases the likelihood of them completing their studies. Students that may come from low economic status, which may force them to alternate between school and earning and living, including supporting their education, will benefit greatly. Often students that originate from our most rural school districts may also face challenges when having to balance supporting their families and local communities with completing their education. As an example, providing a more extended opportunity for students pursuing a career in education, especially Alaska Native students working to be a teacher in their local schools, is critically important to our state in helping to solve our teacher recruitment and retention crisis. These students often face barriers our system rarely considers.

HB 148 proposes a modest increase in financial support to students. Like many other programs designed to help students, the financial support from APS has not kept up with inflation, tuition, or housing costs. AASB is adamant that our education system, from kindergarten through post-secondary education, needs to be as equitable and supportive of each student as it can be. For many Alaska students, the affordability of pursuing a postsecondary education that prepares them for our workforce is the real reason to increase the scholarship awards.

Research shows that most students access these types of scholarships - and earn degrees & credentials - when they have people dedicated to helping them. As a busy and engaged parent myself, I know that having support to help guide me and my student to postsecondary opportunities is critically important.

HB 148 is part of the solution to increasing participation in the Alaska Performance Scholarship. AASB knows that it also takes the support of adults such as career guides and counselors to help students navigate and successfully apply for opportunities that lead them to success in postsecondary education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

*Emily Ferry*

AASB Collective Impact Coordinator

eferry@aasb.org.

### **AASB Resolutions Supporting HB 31**

#### **5.21 SUPPORTING THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP (APS)**

AASB urges support for the Alaska Performance Scholarship for our high school students.

**Rationale:** APS has been successful in that more of our high school students are taking a rigorous course load in order to be eligible for the scholarship and after entering college take fewer remedial, or developmental, coursework, according to statistics compiled by the Alaska Postsecondary Commission. The recipients of APS also accumulated credits at a faster pace than non-recipients and were nearly twice as likely to continue their college attendance, the commission reported in 2016.

#### **5.22 SUPPORTING CTE CREDITS FOR THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**

AASB urges support to allow students to substitute up to two units of Career Technical Education (CTE) classes to count as requirements towards the two to four-year college awards levels for the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

**Rationale:** Career technical education classes are often not selected due to the fact that they do not count toward the APS award if planning to go to two to four-year colleges in our state. CTE classes only count towards our technical schools. CTE classes are desired by many students in exploring careers and options and are relevant and engaging in keeping students in high school.

**Braeden Garrett**

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**From:** Lisa Parker [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 9:10 AM  
**To:** Rep. Justin Ruffridge  
**Subject:** HB 148

As a former member of the University of Alaska Board of Regents I write to share my support for House Bill 148 which will increase the funding for the Alaska Performance Scholarship and remove the SAT requirements to receive the scholarship. Currently only University of Alaska Fairbanks requires SAT scores to be submitted as part of the admission process. By increasing the scholarship and removing the submission of SAT scores the enrollment will continue to increase throughout the University system.

Thank you for introducing this legislation and please feel free to share my thoughts with the other members of the House Education Committee.

[REDACTED]



**James Sexton**

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**From:** Liliana Walton [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 6:32 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB 148 testimony

Dear House Education Committee Members -

I am emailing to express my support of House Bill 148 to remove the SAT or ACT score requirement to earn the APS. I am a student with a disorder called dysphasia. I have always had to work very hard to achieve the best academically for myself. Students around me without any education issues have never had to work as hard as I do to earn my 3.8 GPA. This year I am a senior and I'm in a dual enrollment program, so I'm taking full-time classes at UAA right now. Last semester, I earned a 3.8 GPA. So if anyone was going to say that SAT or ACT test act as a predictor of how I, or anyone with a disability will do in college, then this just proves them wrong. It's not fair that these standardized tests are set up so that I do not receive accommodations per my IEP. I need time to process language and neither the SAT or the ACT will give that to me. But does that mean I am not going to do well in college; well, of course not! I want to go to college in Alaska. I want to earn a degree so I can become a teacher. Students like me that don't earn an APS have no incentive to stay in Alaska for education when we can go to the lower 48 for a scholarship to somewhere else. Please give me a reason to stay in Alaska by passing HB 148.

Thank you so much for your time.

Liliana Walton  
Anchorage, AK

**James Sexton**

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**From:** Robyn Taylor [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 5:36 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB 148

Respected House Education Committee Members,

I write in support of HB 148 and the immense value it adds to education opportunities for students at the post-secondary level. The increase in funding levels of support may serve as a "game changer" for students as they make post-secondary decisions. Additionally, by allowing 8 years for the use of funds and adding the CTE component many students will now have the ability to make better-informed decisions as to their next steps, rather than feeling rushed to then find their career direction was not the right fit.

I do have concerns with the requirement to notify of eligibility status 18 months in advance, so I wonder if I am not fully understanding the intent. My observation, at least in my building, is that those conversations are constantly occurring. I'm not sure I see the impact of notification 18 months in advance specifically as I have students' GAIN eligibility in the last 18 months and have also observed the opposite. My worry is that if we notify a student that they are eligible in the middle of their junior year they may infer that now the rest of the grades are not as important because they have already "got the APS".

Thank you again for all of the hard work each of you is doing down in Juneau day in and day out!

Kindest regards,  
Robyn Taylor

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**ROBYN TAYLOR M.ED., ED.L.**  
*Alaska Principal of the Year 2020*  
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Hutchison High School  
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Fairbanks, AK 99709  
907-479-2261 Ext. 35510

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## James Sexton

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**From:** Brint Walton <brintwalton@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 5:07 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB 148 bill support

Dear House Education Committee Members -

I am emailing to express my support of House Bill 148. My two oldest children both earned the Alaska Performance Scholarship, which they used by going to UAA, and they have both decided to stay in Alaska as a result.

However, my youngest daughter, who suffers from a language disorder, cannot earn a "passing" score on the ACT or the SAT due to her language disorder. This is wrong. She has a 3.8 GPA and works her butt off to keep that GPA. This year, as a senior in high school, she is taking full-time college classes at UAA to earn dual credit and she is still maintaining her 3.8 GPA. She has taken 4 years of science and math and proved that she can be successful in college, yet with the current requirements, she cannot earn the APS.

With my two oldest, I found that the draw of the APS kept them in Alaska as college students and now as a librarian and a teacher in Anchorage. But for my youngest, this likely won't be the case. My children have proven that Alaska-based scholarships push students to take tougher classes and push them to earn a higher GPA. The payoff is that they stay in Alaska.

Please pass HB 148 so we can get more scholarships to Alaskan students who deserve it, Alaska students who will likely stay in Alaska after earning their degree. Thank you for your support of this bill.

Brint Walton  
Anchorage, Alaska

## James Sexton

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**From:** Janel Walton [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 4:51 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Cc:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** House Bill 148

Dear House Education Committee Members -

I just learned about House Bill 148 put forth by Rep. Justin Ruffridge of the House Education Committee. In addition to increasing the value of the Alaska Performance Scholarship, which I wholeheartedly support due to rising education costs, the portion of the bill which really got my attention was the part about removing the SAT or ACT test score requirement. These standardized test scores are overly burdensome and unnecessary for our students who work the hardest and are the most discriminated against when it comes to taking a standardized test like the SAT: students working with disabilities and on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), students who are English Language Learners (ELL), and students off the main road system who have to jump through hoops to even find a testing location.

The use of standardized testing to predict college success has been antiquated for some time. As an educator, I can tell you that Alaska is leaving behind a huge population of future workers and future Alaskans who will never be able to achieve "passing" SAT/ACT scores in order to earn the APS, which has been shown time and again as a way to encourage students to stay in Alaska to study and also then encourages them to stay in Alaska to work. This is something we desperately need in a time of diminishing workforce in important areas like nursing, education, mental health, etc.

When I was a student at UAA, I would tutor students in writing. Often, these students were ELL or were working with language disorders like dyslexia, but they were some of the hardest-working people you will ever meet. I had a Ph.D. chemical engineering student from Korea who spent weeks working with me to fix his Ph.D. thesis to eliminate his English issues like verb tense and word choices. He was tireless in his efforts, yet, if he was a high school student today, due to his ELL issues, he would not be able to earn a high enough score on the APS to be able to get the scholarship. Alaska could have lost this brilliant student just because of his SAT or ACT score.

As an honors and Advanced Placement (AP) teacher of English at Bartlett High School in Anchorage, I had the most diverse group of students who worked hard to challenge themselves, earning A's in all their honors classes, yet, they could never pass the AP exam or the SAT/ACT because they spoke Hmong, Spanish, Tagalog, etc at home. This was the same issue for students working with Asperger's, ADHD, language disorders, etc. Though they worked hard and were willing to challenge themselves to prepare for college, they couldn't pass the standardized testing requirement. I had the honor of seeing so many of them go to UAA and UAF nonetheless to earn degrees in nursing, engineering, teaching, and mental health counseling, all jobs that Alaska desperately needs. Many of these students graduated *cum laude* or higher. These are students who learned a very long time ago that they would always have to work harder than their peers, and they were willing to do so to achieve their future dreams.

When I was an English teacher at Alaska Middle College School (AMCS), I had an opportunity to work with students who were in high school but going to college to earn dual credit. Despite being ELL or having an IEP, these students were earning well in excess of the required 3.5 GPA because they were hard workers, determined to fight for their success. They proved that standardized testing like SAT or ACT are not good determiners of college success. And, despite doing everything necessary, and even going so far as to take college classes as high school students, they still would never earn the Alaska Performance

Scholarship. Ironically, it was not unusual to see these students earn the UA Scholars Award for the top 10% of high school graduates, yet then not earn the APS.

It is not just the ELL students who are unfairly having to reach an unreachable bar. I had an AMCS student who was visually impaired and needed everything in 18-point font or higher yet she still needed to hold paper approximately 6" from her eyes to see it. She had a degenerative disease. When she was ready to take the SAT, College Board required her to take the test with no accommodations, even with a doctor's note, to prove that she couldn't pass the SAT without help. It should come as no surprise that she earned a 600 on the test. Even after proving that she was visually impaired, the SAT's only fix was to give her the SAT in Braille, which she didn't know because she had just begun to lose her sight 3 years prior. Sadly, she did not earn an APS despite having a 4.0 GPA as a high school student taking full-time college classes. I watched the same thing happen to a wheelchair-bound student with MS when College Board refused to extend her testing time. This is wrong and it doesn't create an environment to keep brilliant Alaskan students in Alaska.

SAT and ACT scores are keeping students from pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities in Alaska at a time when Alaska needs more workers, more nurses, educators, and mental health therapists. These high-stakes standardized testing are not a fair assessment of their capability and they act as a gate-keeper for the most underprivileged students in Alaska.

I strongly support the removal of the use of standardized testing to determine if students should earn the APS. Please pass HB 148.

Thank you so much for your consideration. And thank you for putting forth this bill.

Janel Walton  
Anchorage, Alaska



April 5, 2023

120 4th St,  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

We, the Coalition of Student Leaders from the University of Alaska, are writing to express our strong support for House Bill 148 on the Alaska Performance Scholarship. We believe that this legislation will have a positive impact on the lives of many students in Alaska.

The Alaska Performance Scholarship has been instrumental in providing financial assistance to students who demonstrate academic achievement and potential. However, the program has limited its effectiveness, making it more difficult for many students to access these crucial funds. HB 148 seeks to address these issues by making changes to the program that will ensure that more students are able to receive the support they need to pursue their educational goals.

As student leaders at the University of Alaska, we have seen firsthand the impact that the Alaska Performance Scholarship has had on our peers. Many of our fellow students have relied on this program to make their college education more affordable and accessible. Without this support, many of these students would not have been able to attend college at all.

We believe that HB 148 represents an important opportunity to strengthen the Alaska Performance Scholarship and ensure that it continues to provide critical support to students in Alaska. We urge you to support this legislation and help ensure that all students in Alaska have access to the financial resources they need to pursue their educational goals.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Coalition of Student Leaders  
University of Alaska

**James Sexton**

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**From:** Megan Murphy [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 6, 2023 3:32 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB 148

I am writing to you as a school counselor of a high school in the Central Peninsula. As I look through the amendments that are being proposed to the Alaska Performance Scholarship I am so thankful for the changes that you are proposing be made. I appreciate your efforts in trying to get more of our students to stay in our state. With that being said, I am concerned about the College Entrance Exam Requirement. With the majority of colleges going test optional these days and ACT/SAT testing not being required at high schools in our state this is really an obsolete requirement. Also, with so many of our schools being rural and not being able to pay for the ACT or SAT or gain access to testing sites, this isn't a requirement that is equitable for all students. As a high school counselor this requirement is the number one barrier to students not qualifying for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. Also, if our goal is to increase the number of students using this scholarship and staying in state then getting rid of this testing requirement would be a big push towards increasing numbers of students utilizing this wonderful opportunity. Next, if students are meeting GPA and curriculum requirements, why do they need to get certain scores on the SAT or ACT? We should trust our public educators and believe that they are doing their job preparing our students for life after high school. Thank you so much for your time with this very important issue and all the incredible changes that are being made within this important bill. I appreciate you taking the time to read this email, Megan Murphy.

**Megan Murphy, School Counselor, Last Names N-Z  
(she,her)**

**Although I am often in classrooms or in meetings, I will respond to your email or phone call within 24 business hours.**

***Join us on Instagram @sohicounselor***

**[Soldotna High School Counseling Program website](#)**

**Soldotna High School**  
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## James Sexton

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**From:** LaDawn Druce [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 9, 2023 12:28 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** House Bill 148

Hello members of the House Education Committee,

I would like to offer this written testimony in favor of proposed changes to the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

I was in the queue on Friday; but was not able to continuing holding after an hour, as I was at work.

Fortunately, Megan Murphy, my fellow colleague and lead counselor for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, was able to provide testimony.

Ironically, FaceBook reminded me it was also on April 7 of 2016 that Megan and I were testifying against SB208, that if passed would have eliminated the AK Performance scholarship program.

I support the proposed changes of increasing the amounts for the three levels, the extension of six years to eight years, and the inclusion of more career tech ed type courses and AK Native Languages to count toward the curriculum categories.

I also see on Page 2, Section 5 language which may suggest the college entrance exams (SAT/ACT) no longer would have specific "cut scores" but language suggesting "a minimum score" on said exams.

My proposal would be to eliminate all together the requirement for the college entrance exams. There are several reasons for this suggestion.

1. No college or university in Alaska requires a minimum score on the ACT or SAT for acceptance. The University of Alaska Fairbanks has in the past required one of tests be taken, however their website states this requirement has been waived through the summer of 2025.
2. There is the issue of equity. Some students may not meet the financial requirements to obtain a fee waiver. The tests are currently \$60 for each test, each time taken. Also, some students may not have access to the test in their areas. I was just in Nanwalek last week. A student needing this test would have to arrange air travel to and from Homer and overnight accommodations.

Without the standardized tests requirements, students would still need to take extra credits and specific courses and maintain a 2.5 GPA for the minimum level of award.

If we trust our public educators are doing their job and offering a rigorous curriculum and grading standards, then an "outside" test should not be necessary.

Sincerely,  
LaDawn Druce  
"Retired Counsleor" KPBSD  
[REDACTED]



Sterling, AK 99672  
HD 8

Sent from Outlook

## Michelle Kirkham

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**From:** Nola Kurber [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 17, 2023 3:54 PM  
**To:** Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story  
**Subject:** HB148

April 17, 2023

Dear Educational Committee Members:

Concerning HB 148 Alaska Performance Scholarship;

My name is Nola Kurber and I am a contact teacher with the IDEA homeschool program. I work with many high school students and have discussed the APS scholarship qualifications many times this year.

I applaud attempts like this HB 149 to make our system better. I would like to state my support to remove #5 and #6 from the requirements to qualify for the APS scholarship. Thank you!

Nola Kurber, [REDACTED] Fairbanks, AK 99712

**James Sexton**

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**From:** HeatherR [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 17, 2023 4:41 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Cc:** Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge  
**Subject:** HB148

To House Education Committee:

Hello, I would like to state a request for HB 148. In the event that it passes, may it be said that it is retroactive to include the 2022 high school graduates. We have a number of students that were not able to take the SAT due to Covid. Many were still taking online courses at home, and/or being home-schooled.

They were 2021-22 seniors. In 2020 & 2021, the requirement for testing was waived. I do not believe there was adequate knowledge of testing reinstated, nor time, as we were still dealing with Covid restrictions and rules. The testing days were limited and full.

They are finishing their first year in college. They will be in the middle of this legislation and Covid-19, and be left without representation. Going forward, at Alaska colleges, they need your support.

I appreciate your presentation of HB 148.

Please consider an amendment to include retroactive to 2022.

Thank you for your time,  
Heather Richardson  
[REDACTED]

## James Sexton

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**From:** Rep. Jamie Allard  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 18, 2023 9:41 AM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** FW: Regarding Bill HB 148 Alaska Performance Scholarship.

**From:** BeLinda Ebel [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 17, 2023 10:01 AM  
**To:** Rep. Jamie Allard <Rep.Jamie.Allard@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Regarding Bill HB 148 Alaska Performance Scholarship.

Dear Representative Jamie,

Regarding Bill HB 148 Alaska Performance Scholarship.

My name is BeLinda Ebel and I am a contact teacher with the IDEA homeschool program and 20-year homeschool mother.

My understanding of the Alaska Performance Scholarship is the state wants to support students, keeping them in our state education system. With this understanding, I am asking you to reconsider the minimum standards for the scholarship. I personally know numerous students who have taken a rigorous curriculum of courses and earned a solid GPA; however, they have struggled with scoring a SAT/ACT score high enough to qualify for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. All the students I am referring to have completed numerous college courses, most through the UA system, and have scored A's and B's. These students demonstrate a sincere desire to attend college and are capable of pursuing a college degree. Can you please consider changing the qualification for the APS scholarship to be GPA or SAT/ACT score? And, if you are concerned the suggested "GPA only student's" are capable of completing college courses without scoring a high enough SAT/ACT score because their parents assign their final grades, please consider adding an additional qualify line that states something along the lines of:

*"If students complete 9-15 credits of 100 level or above at an accredited college university and receive a GPA of 2.5 or higher they qualify for the Alaska Performance Scholarship."*

Following are two personal examples I would like to share.

A dear friend of mine completed a mixed education of homeschooling and brick and mortar schooling. During her junior and senior year of high school she diligently worked part-time while attending high school. She had a GPA qualifying her for APS; however, her SAT scores were too low to qualify. Yet, she successfully completed a few college courses. Today she has worked multiple jobs while attending college, receiving her associate degree from UAF. She would have benefited greatly from the additional support of the Alaska Performance Scholarship. She is one of many examples of Alaskan students in this same situation, including my own daughter who is in the process of completing her fifth semester of college courses while completing high school. She will graduate from high school with 32 credits of 100 level or higher college courses. She plans to attend college and has taken the SAT/ACT tests twice; however, she struggles with severe test anxiety and will not qualify for the APS scholarship with the current baseline SAT/ACT score. She is completely capable of earning a college degree and she will. The adjustment of the qualification baseline would provide her needed financial support.

Please consider adjusting the Alaska Performance Scholarship baseline to include out-lying, talented, high school students who have taken college courses by including a qualifying metric such as:

*"If students complete 9-15 credits of 100 level or above at an accredited college university and receives a GPA of 2.5 or higher they will qualify for the Alaska Performance Scholarship."*

Thank you,

**BeLinda Ebel**  
Contact Teacher K-12  
[REDACTED]  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] /IDEA families

