

Brian Walston P.O. Box 59009 St. Michael AK, 99659 5/10/2023
The Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

Subject: Importance of Increasing School Internet Speed to 100Mbps for Enhanced Educational Opportunities in Rural Alaska

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of Internet connectivity in our rural schools in Alaska, particularly in relation to the speed of the connection. I strongly urge you to consider the significance of increasing the school Internet speed from 25Mbps to 100Mbps, as it holds the potential to revolutionize educational opportunities for our students.

Access to high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity in today's interconnected world. It has become an integral part of our daily lives, impacting various sectors, including education. In the case of rural areas such as Alaska, where physical distance often limits access to educational resources, a reliable and faster Internet connection becomes even more critical.

By increasing the school Internet speed to 100Mbps, we can unlock a plethora of opportunities for students and educators alike. Let me emphasize some of the key benefits that can be realized by bridging the digital divide in our rural schools:

1. **Enriched Learning Experience:** A faster Internet connection would enable students to access online educational resources, digital libraries, and interactive learning platforms seamlessly. This would enhance their learning experience, facilitate research, and foster a culture of curiosity, critical thinking, and innovation.
2. **Expanded Curriculum:** With improved Internet speed, schools would be able to offer a wider range of educational programs and courses. Students in rural Alaska would have the same access to diverse subjects, including STEM, arts, and foreign languages, as their urban counterparts. This would help bridge the educational gap and promote equal opportunities for all students across the state.
3. **Collaborative Learning:** The increased Internet speed would facilitate real-time collaboration among students, teachers, and experts from around the world. Virtual classrooms, video conferences, and online discussion platforms would become more accessible, allowing students in rural Alaska to connect with peers and professionals from different backgrounds and cultures. This would promote cultural exchange, global awareness, and develop essential skills for the 21st-century workforce.
4. **Enhanced Professional Development:** High-speed Internet would enable teachers in rural areas to engage in online professional development programs, webinars, and workshops. They would have access to the latest teaching methodologies, educational research, and networking opportunities. This would empower

- educators to continually upgrade their skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting the students they serve.
5. Economic Empowerment: Improved Internet connectivity in rural Alaska would create new opportunities for economic growth. It would attract online businesses, telecommuting, and remote job opportunities. By equipping our students with the necessary digital skills, we can prepare them for the workforce of the future and contribute to the economic development of our state.

I urge you, esteemed committee members, to recognize the urgency of this matter and prioritize the allocation of funds to upgrade the school Internet speed to 100Mbps. The future of our students and the prosperity of our communities depend on providing them with equitable access to modern educational resources and opportunities. Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital issue. I trust that you will take the necessary steps to ensure that our students in rural Alaska are not left behind in the digital age.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Walston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Walston" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Walston
Assistant Principal
Anthony A. Andrews School
St. Michael AK