



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

February 12, 2024

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

We are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 24 Public Schools Mental Health Education, which requires districts across Alaska to provide mental health education for K-12 students. As leaders of the Anchorage School District, we believe this bill is crucial in providing students with essential knowledge and resources to support their social and emotional well-being.

In recent years, ASD has seen higher suspension rates, increased suicide risk assessments, increased behavioral issues, and a growing need for mental health services. In many cases, mental health issues go undetected and untreated, leading to long-term consequences for students and society as a whole.

We must address these issues early and honestly with students, and SB 24 as proposed offers positive solutions to begin tackling these problems. By integrating mental health education into our curriculum, a practice ASD is already doing, we can empower our students to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, understand the importance of seeking help, and access appropriate resources and treatment. Additionally, access to strong mental health supports has a direct impact on students' educational outcomes.

SB 24 aligns with our commitment to provide a comprehensive education that addresses the holistic needs of our students. Mental health education not only promotes emotional resilience and well-being, but also reduces stigma surrounding mental illness, fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Anchorage School Board Margo Bellamy, President

Carl Jacobs, Vice President

Dora Wilson, Clerk

Kelly Lessens, Treasurer

Dave Donley

Pat Higgins

Andy Holleman

Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt

We recognize that implementing mental health education may require additional resources and training for educators. However, the long-term benefits far outweigh the initial investment, though we would ask the State to support districts in this effort through an increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

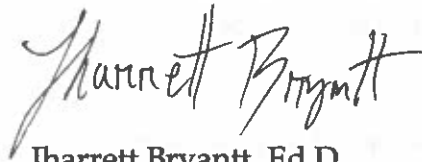
By prioritizing the mental health of our students, we are investing in their future and the well-being of our communities. We are excited to support SB 24, and are hopeful for its passage.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Margo Bellamy
School Board President



Jharrett Bryantt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Carl Jacobs
School Board President

Kelly Lessens
School Board Treasurer

Dora Wilson
School Board Clerk



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

February 12, 2024

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

On behalf of the Anchorage School District, we are writing to express our wholehearted support for Senate Bill 131, which requires school districts across Alaska to teach students about the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). As leaders of the largest and most diverse school district in Alaska, we firmly believe this bill is a crucial step towards promoting diversity, equity, and cultural understanding in our schools.

We are particularly grateful for your leadership and advocacy in championing this important cause. ASD currently serves roughly 43,000 students, over 17 percent of which are Asian American and Pacific Islanders. Nearly 7,400 students across our elementary, middle, and high schools are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. The impact and contributions of AAPI to Alaska and our city are profound and deserving of recognition through a formal program to educate students.

By supporting Senate Bill 131, we are not only honoring the rich heritage and contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, but also providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of our nation's history and the diverse tapestry of its enriching cultures.

The history and contributions of AAPI have often been overlooked or left out of traditional curriculum. By including this vital aspect of our shared history in school curricula, we can ensure that future generations of Alaskan students have a better understanding of the incredibly rich history and cultures of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Alaska.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Anchorage School Board Margo Bellamy, President

Carl Jacobs, Vice President

Dora Wilson, Clerk

Kelly Lessens, Treasurer

Dave Donley

Pat Higgins

Andy Holleman

Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt

This knowledge will not only foster representation of the experiences of AAPI individuals, but also empower students to become informed and engaged citizens in an increasingly interconnected world. Research shows that representation within the classroom not only increases feelings of belonging but also supports a positive school environment in which students feel more confident in their abilities and accelerates academic achievement.

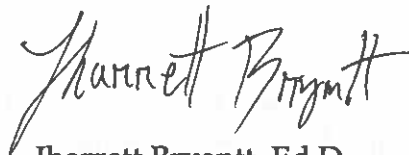
We urge the Legislature's support and passage of Senate Bill 131 this session. By working together to promote inclusive education, we can build a brighter future for all students in Alaska.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Margo Bellamy
School Board President



Jharrett Bryantt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Carl Jacobs
School Board President

Kelly Lessens
School Board Treasurer

Dora Wilson
School Board Clerk