

James Sexton

From: Therese Lewandowski [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2023 12:54 PM
To: House Education
Subject: HB 65

Members of the House Education Committee,

I urge you to support HB 65, An Act relating to education; increasing the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date.

There seems to be state-wide agreement the BSA need to be increased to better serve our public schools. It won't fix everything but it will directly positively affect our students!

The other need is to address teacher salaries and pension packages. The many wonderful teachers of the previous 2 decades have retired and took with them marvelous pensions. They would not have served as public school teachers as long as they did without that pension.

It is imperative that Alaska attract and hold onto public school teachers who would have that same long term commitment. But they cannot afford to raise families or live long term in this state without better pay and a future retirement commitment.

Please confirm HB 65 and start to work on bills to adequately compensate public school teachers.

Thank you so much,
Therese Lewandowski

James Sexton

From: Jeanne Fredrickson [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2023 10:30 AM
To: House Education
Subject: BSA Increase

Dear Legislators,
This is to urge your support for a long overdue increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA). Specifically, we would like you to vote in favor of HB 65 and/or support SB 52. Both bills show a determination by our state legislature to support public education, which we strongly support. Thank you.

James & Jeanne Fredrickson
Seward

Sent from my iPhone

James Sexton

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 8:22 AM
To: House Education
Subject: I oppose HB 65

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to voice my opposition to HB 65, raising the BSA by \$1000. I have followed the trend in per pupil spending and proficiency rankings for several years now and find it appalling that there is a lack of accountability in the State education system. Alaska routinely ranks in the top seven states in the amount of money spent per student. However, it ranks in the bottom 5 states in proficiency rankings

(<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=2&sub=RED&sj=AL&sfi=NP&st=MN&year=2022R3>).

With such a discrepancy noted by the Federal Government, I cannot help but question where all of the money is currently going in the State's school systems. Having worked in the local school district, I know a lot is spent on administration, yet teachers sometimes have to go without essential supplies. This crisis needs to be addressed before any additional funding is granted to school districts. Each district must be held accountable and audited to make sure that the vast majority of funding goes toward a student's education, rather than lavish benefits for administrative staff.

Sincerely,

Aaron Stierle

[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Louis Imbriani [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2023 2:10 PM
To: House Education
Subject: HB 65 and the increase in the BSA

Co-Chairs Allard and Ruffridge,

Your committee has a preliminary hearing calendared for HB 65 on 2/20/23. A similar bill SB 52 is being heard in the Senate. While I generally agree with an increase in the BSA there are a few requests that I have.

1. Existing funding and new funding needs to have an accountability measure built in. The measure needs to be based on learning outcomes.

So how do we accomplish this? In clear language it is stated that this increase goes directly to class rooms and in classroom support. Then we speak with educators on finding a metric to track classroom outcomes that are not standardized tests.

2. New and existing funds go to the classrooms and not to administrations. Please tighten the ratio that is already in state statutes for the classroom vs admin.

Our immediate focus needs to be on students grades 4-12. These kids are going to be going out into the world very soon and have already been underserved in our public schools at no fault of their own or the teachers. We need to give these students the skills they need to succeed in the real world.

We need to take a balanced approach to the k-4 graders. These students in the near future will need more help. Many of these kids were robbed of critical developmental growth during the pandemic and will more than likely need more support to get through school.

The Alaska Reads Act is a good start for these younger kids but balance needs to be achieved. There is no balance and no accountability in the way schools spend money. This has created not only a bad return on investment for tax payers but has handicapped Alaskan children. We need to do better. We need to do better for our children and better for our state.

Thank you

Louis Imbriani

From: Ashley Dewey

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/17/2023 9:46 AM

Good morning, Sir,

I am a Health Aide (School Nurse) in Ketchikan, Alaska. I know you are a busy man. I have so much data and information I could share, but I will keep this brief and stick to the most important topics.

The Superintendent mentioned students have not been given more money in 8 years. With inflation, this is jarring.

Teachers and Staff in Ketchikan Schools are about to lose their jobs. We can barely cover day to day responsibilities as it is. And they plan to eliminate all Health Aide/School Nurse job starting next 2023 school year. I have 30+ kids in my office daily to receive their medications, throwing up, needing bandages, ice packs. Cutting this position and giving someone else (the school secretaries have been mentioned) these responsibilities as a collateral duty will have horrible impacts on the school climate and the well being of students and staff. This will cause attendance issues, safety issues, policy issues, efficiency issues...

We have got to get more money into these schools. We have to save these jobs. Children will suffer without more funding...I have pleaded to our Superintendent and School Board. I am pleading to you. If there is anything else I can do, please let me know. As I want to advocate as best I can.

--

Ashley Dewey

Fawn Mountain Elementary - Health Aide

Gunalcheesh, to the first people of this land. We pay respect to those, past and present, who have stewarded Tlingit Aanii since time immemorial. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional first people of this land, the Saanya Kwaan and Taanta Kwaan.

From: Elizabeth Hayes

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/17/2023 4:17 PM

Hello Representative Ortiz,

Clayton Holland, KPBSD Superintendent asked me to share some information about our need for a BSA increase, and what it means to us if we don't get an increase.

I will be in the office Monday at 8am if you have any questions or would like to discuss this information.

General Fund Budget

FY24 projected enrollment is 8450 which include 200 Intensive needs students and approximately 1,710 special education students.

In FY24, we are facing a deficit of 10.8M to 13M depending on funding from the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The remaining ESSER III funds will help offset the deficit for one year, resulting in a deficit of 4.4M to 6.5M. With no increase to the BSA, we will be cutting our budget. Approximately 81% of our General Fund budget in salaries and benefits, we will have to cut staff to balance our budget.

Increases in insurance, property and liability, workers comp insurance, utilities and supplies will also have an affect on our budget causing further pressure on budgets and on our classrooms.

To close an 4.4 million dollar shortfall it would be equivalent to approximately 33 FTE certified teachers and 6.5M would be 49 FTE certified teachers. To accomplish that, we would have to raise the PTR +3 for the 4.4M gap and +5 PTR for the 6.5M gap.

Pupil Transportation

The last increase to the pupil transportation was in FY16, KPBSD was increased to \$1011 per ADM from \$995. We are currently running a deficit in transportation. In FY22 we transferred \$550,000 our General Fund budget to our Transportation fund, and we are scheduled to transferr that same amount or more (depending on expenditures) for FY23 and FY24. Our busses travel 3,330.7 miles throughout the district every day.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Hayes

Director of Finance

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

James Sexton

From: Emily Kane [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 11:50 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; representative.CJ.McCormick@akleg.gov
Subject: HB 65

Let's raise smart kids in Alaska so our great state reaches its high potential.
Please pass this bill. Paying teachers adequately is crucial to cementing their commitment to future generations.

Sincerely
Dr Emily Kane
Juneau

[REDACTED]

On Big Island until mid February and may respond more slowly than usual. For refills try [REDACTED]

Be good to yourself :)

James Sexton

From: Sandy Blomfield [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 2:21 PM
To: House Education
Cc: Senate Education
Subject: SB52/HB65 BSA FUNDING

Legislators,

I would strongly encourage you to strengthen educational opportunities in Alaska for all students.

You have been tasked to change the BSA amount per student during this legislative session. Be courageous! Take this opportunity to tie student funding to the student rather than the school district.

The time has come, post Covid, to digest what has taken place for our students over the past few years. The local public school may not be the most prudent educational system for some students. This was certainly apparent in the standardized testing results where Alaskan kids are falling far short of reading and mathematics; at some public schools students don't even register on the chart for competency and literacy.

So many opportunities are now available for parents and students to choose the educational method that works best for them along with promoting their own family value systems.

By you directing the money to the STUDENT every student will be at the same level for education opportunities. This creates equity in education!

Where there is competition, the best programs will strive and survive. We all want our children to have the best educational opportunities available to them.

I strongly encourage you to take the step, as many other states have already done, and increase BSA funding and allotments tied directly to the Students in the great state of Alaska.

I await your email responses and will be available for further discussion.

Sincerely,
Sandy Blomfield

James Sexton

From: Sandi Trumbower [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 3:12 PM
To: House Education
Subject: Fwd: HB 65

From: Sandi Trumbower [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2023 12:25 PM
To: house.education@akleg.com <house.education@akleg.com>
Subject: HB 65

Committee Members,

I am writing asking for your full support for House Bill 65 which proposes to raise Base Student Allotments by \$1,250.

Student Allotments have not been since 2016. Inflation has increased, cumulatively, 24.65% since that last increase. It is astounding to me that even if the full \$1,250 is passed it still will not meet the level of inflation since the previous increase. Our students are our future. Invest in them!

Thank you for your attention.

Sandra Lee Trumbower
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Devin Finch [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 12:32 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: House Bill 65

February 18, 2023

Dear Representative Justin Ruffridge,

I write today to express my concern with education funding. I am concerned and frustrated by flat state funding and would like to see the legislature inflation-proof the Base Student Allocation.

The Alaska Constitution (Article VII, Section 1) requires that the legislature establish and maintain a system of public schools, and Alaska school districts rely heavily on state funding to support their budgets. You already know the importance of a strong public school system in Alaska, and yet, year after year, education funding is in jeopardy, class sizes grow, and school districts issue teacher layoff notices.

As you know, the State of Alaska funds the majority of education through a foundation formula, which is set forth in AS 14.17. This formula provides for over half of the state's funding for education—and state funding of education is over 60 percent of the funding that Alaska public schools receive. Despite the name, "Basic Need" does not refer to a funding level that provides a particular level of educational adequacy. The BSA and its multipliers were established through legislation that took effect in Fiscal Year 1999 and have been modified repeatedly since then. The BSA can be changed only by passing legislation that modifies the statute. At a time when inflation impacts every community, it is critical that the BSA finally increase in order to keep up with rising costs of providing education. The past five years of flat funding, unforeseen costs and retention issues due to the pandemic, and a population that is leaving Alaska year after year have left our school districts on unstable footing financially.

This past legislative session, Representative Andi Story introduced legislation to strengthen our public school system. House Bill 272 and House Bill 273 proposed increasing the base student allocation for K-12 public education in Alaska. HB 272 proposed increasing this number to \$6,153 in FY23 and then to \$6,208 in FY24. The legislative session ended, and the full House did not consider HB 272 or HB 273. We understand that these proposed changes, while an improvement, are even still not enough to get education in Alaska fully funded.

Alaska students continue to score near the bottom in the nation for math and reading competency. Universal early education is shown to improve school readiness, reading levels, and long-term

economic performance. Long-term studies, such as the Perry Preschool project, suggest that students with access to high-quality early education are less likely to be incarcerated and less likely to receive government assistance as adults. Adequately funding education is a critical investment in Alaska's future.

I ask that you commit to passing legislation that strengthens our public school system, including inflation-proofing the BSA and expanding access to early childhood education, because public education is our best investment in Alaska's future.

Sincerely,
Devin Finch

Sent from my iPhone

James Sexton

From: Callie Conerton [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 3:30 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; House Education; Rep. Sara Hannan
Subject: Support of HB 65 from a return of Alaska's past investment.

Hi, my name is Callie Conerton. I have been teaching at Montessori Borealis public school for six years. Since my senior year at Juneau-Douglas High School in 2011, the BSA has only been raised \$250 and that's including the mere \$30 since 2017. It is vital to Alaska today and for the future that HB 65 is supported by the legislature. We all know that the flat funding of the BSA is actually a decrease for our students and schools.

As legislators, I know how important a return on investment is to you. I am a product of the past investments legislators made in the Alaska education system during the time when Public Education was well funded, and educators fought to come to Alaska for teaching positions. I grew up here in Juneau, graduated from Juneau -Douglas high school, have my BA in Elementary Ed from UAS as well as my Masters in Teaching and learning from UAA. I, along with many others, am the return on the investment, working not only in the Alaska workforce but also as an educator. However, that support was before the current inflation, the increased cost of living, and not during flat funding. Many of my born and raised-Alaskan friends who became educators have sought out teaching in other states or moved to different careers that did not stretch them thin.

As I stated previously, I have a Master's degree, six years of classroom experience, and a specialized Montessori certificate. Every year for the next 20 years of my career - it will be harder and harder to justify teaching in Alaska versus somewhere else with the current level of funding for education in Alaska. It looks pretty darn great in other states for teachers, as **every other** state has a defined pension plan for its teachers. I would have fewer students in my classroom, more resources to support my educational delivery to the students, and more fulfilled professional experiences. If you are not aware of it already, every teacher that leaves the school districts in Alaska costs Alaska tenfold to hire their replacement.

I'm in Alaska because I love Alaska. I love my students and school community, but that is not enough. I don't understand why educators are

having to choose between staying in the communities we love or having a secure and stable future. The BSA needs to be fully funded by supporting HB 65. Alaskan families should not have to worry about continuous education support for their children. Education and children must be a top priority, or teachers like myself, will move out of state or choose to leave education. Put yourself in our shoes. I cannot imagine you would not be thinking the same thing.

Thank you. Callie Conerton

James Sexton

From: Linda Shore [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 5:56 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: SB 52, HB 65

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to express my support for these bills. We need to adequately fund our schools and allowing the BSA to wither for several years is not the way to do it.

Please enact this increase post haste.

Linda Shore
Anchorage

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There's nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse....Lord Palmerston

From: Mardell Kiesel

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 6:16 AM

I have recently read in the ADN that Alaska is increasingly failing to attract our most talented and motivated students to stay in-state for their higher education degrees. We are proposing to "lower the bar" and raise the scholarship dollars. I'm all for raising the scholarship amounts, but lowering the expectations signals a systemic failure. This brain-drain to the lower 48 has obvious cumulative and devastating long-term effects for Alaska. Increasing the BSA is also an obvious and cumulative step to address the multiple issues related to a weakening system.

The BSA is one vital component of a strong and stable education starting with pre-school. Our students need and deserve the highest quality components for pre-K-12 education. Fund the foundations and build toward a more promising in-state experience for all students.

Thank you for your time and attention,
Mardell Kiesel

Mardell Kiesel

James Sexton

From: Mark Miller [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 6:29 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: Support House Bill 65

Dear Representative Ruffridge:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 65. We must attract and retain good teachers and support our schools to the best of our ability as an obligation to the next generation and the future of Alaska. I would gladly trade my entire PFD to make Alaska's schools the best they can be.

Thank you for your consideration.....Mark Miller

From: Beth E.

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 7:34 AM

I am writing today to ask you to support increasing the BSA for our schools. Our schools have had to cut programs, teachers, and staff due significant shortfalls in funding. It is time to prioritize education and significantly increase the BSA.

As a mother with three kids attending school in the Anchorage School District and as a substitute teacher I have seen first hand the impacts to our children and teachers from underfunding. Please help make Alaska a place families want to live by funding our schools.

Thank you for your time.

Beth Elliott.

James Sexton

From: Susan Ritter [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 7:49 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education

Dear Representatives Allard and Ruffridge,

I am a teacher of special education in the Anchorage school district. I have worked with children with disabilities for over 20 years.

I am writing to ask that you and the committee support HB 65, increasing the BSA to a minimum of \$1,250.00. For too many years, the State of Alaska has chosen not to fully fund the educational needs of all Alaskan students. There are many who claim that teachers are not doing enough to support their students in the classroom and therefore students are not getting the education they need or deserve. The state government refuses to support its most precious resource, their children, this needs to stop.

HB 65 is a starting point.

Thank you for your time,

Susan Ritter
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Sharon Davies [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:05 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: House bill 65 YES

Please vote in support of this bill.

Public education is one of the most important functions of government, not just for the individual children, but for the benefit to all our lives of an educated population.

Not having children or grandchildren in school, I had not been paying close attention. I was dismayed to read recently that the state support for schools had not been adjusted for inflation for so many years.

Again, Please support House Bill 65

Sincerely,
Sharon Davies

James Sexton

From: Sally Dybdahl [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:12 AM
To: House Education
Subject: HB 65

As a citizen, voter, parent, grandparent, great-grandparent, former educator, school supporter & volunteer, I implore you to pass the \$1250 increase to the BSA. We can't afford not to do so! Hoonah's and all Alaska's children are our greatest treasure.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Dybdahl

Sent from my iPhone

James Sexton

From: Cheryl & Mark Lovegreen [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:20 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: HB 65

I support HB 65 increasing the BSA by \$1250. Alaskan school districts are in economic crisis, affecting everything from the high number of students in classes to the lack of hot lunches in some schools. HB 65 will make a huge difference in making the districts whole again. Then they can spend their energy on refining their curriculum and teaching methods to reach students and increase their reading, writing, and arithmetic skills.

Please vote for HB 65. It goes a long way to fixing our educational problems.

Cheryl Lovegreen

James Sexton

From: Paul Rioux [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:23 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: support for HB 65

Good morning,

I'll be brief, Alaska is rich in resources... but from a government perspective, it's greatest resource is its people.

Education spending is an INVESTMENT in the future of Alaska.

The stagnant BSA has hamstrung school districts for nearly a decade as they drown in inflation.

The research is crystal clear; dollars spent on youth save the state exponentially in social service later.

Please don't kick the can any longer.

Paul Rioux, Sitka

James Sexton

From: Catherine Walker [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:27 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Support of increasing the BSA Bill 65

Good morning,

Please accept this email in support of raising the Base Student Allocation for Alaska students to match inflation. As a longtime Alaska resident and parent of two students in the Anchorage public school district, I strongly urge you to raise the BSA to where it would have been if it had been taking inflation into account.

Thank you,
Catherine Walker, [REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Paula L Davis [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:38 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Base Student Allocation bills

Dear Representatives,

Thanks you for your hard work in Juneau.

I would like to go on record in support of an increase in the Base Student allocation bills, both Senate 52 and house 65.

I am a retired teacher who volunteers in elementary classrooms. I can see what is happening in the schools over time. It is not pretty. Students are behind due to the interruption of covid, and some are socially struggling to know how to behave in a classroom, even now, even with good teachers helping them. The school district has cut back on the the school counselors who could be of help to these students. The school I work in, Denali Montessori, used to have a full time counselor, then it had a half-time counselor. Now it has none. This is a school that suffered a shooting at the entrance a few years back. I would love to see this reversed and have a full time counselor again.

It is the future of Alaska that is at stake when education of children is not a priority.

Please vote in favor of increasing the BSA, Senate 52 and House 65.

Thanks, and keep up the good work!

Paula Davis
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Brenda Taylor [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:42 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Education Funding

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to add my voice to the many urging you to pass HB65, raising the BSA \$1250.

My two children graduated from Juneau Douglas High School: [Yadaa.at](#) Kale 4 and 8 years ago. For all of the years they were in high school, I attended the district-wide Site Council budget meetings where the community was invited to have a say in creating the budget. For all but the first few years, we were asked only to generate ideas for where we would make cuts without harming the quality of the students' education. It was laughably predictable, disheartening and, absolutely, preposterous. There was nothing left to cut; the only way to make a budget that would create the educational environments that students deserved (and that my daughter had had when she first started high school) was to increase revenue, not slash it. I have watched in horror as the funding situation has gotten worse and worse. I am awed by the teachers, staff and administrators who continue year after year. And this is in Juneau, where our municipal government funds to the cap. I read about the smaller, rural school districts where they have no money to fix the waterline leaks and, literally, have no drinking water and am aghast, but not surprised.

Please, please pass HB65 out of the Education Committee with your full support and work to get it through the House and Senate. Alaskans, now and in the future, desperately need the BSA to return to pre-inflation levels. As always, my request for increased funding is accompanied by a willingness to be personally taxed at the state level and to have a smaller PFD.

Sincerely,

Brenda Taylor
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Madisen Lundamo [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:58 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: HB 65 Written Testimony

Dear Madam and Mister Chair and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am Madisen Lundamo from Ketchikan and a senior at Ketchikan High School. Today I am writing to represent myself as a student in Alaska and a child of an educator. I am in full support of House Bill 65 because education is the very foundation of our communities and society. My mother has taught for 23 years in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District as an elementary teacher, and now is the Dean of Students at Houghtaling Elementary. Through her, I have witnessed the dedication every great teacher gives to every unique student in their school.

In the case of my mother especially, school is much more than a building full of classrooms, but rather a second home. Her classroom is bursting with flairs of her personality and embellished with seasonal decorations. Every seat is different and offers unique comforts. She has a large tank with two red-ear slider turtles swimming about. The overhead lights are never used as the room is illuminated with holiday twinkle lights and lamps. There's an essential oils diffuser going off every so often, filling the air with calming scents. For some time she even had a reading loft in a corner of her room! What an amazing environment to learn in, right?

Every single one of these items was paid for out of pocket by my mom because her stipend barely covered the extra comforts of an excellent classroom. This is the case with every single beyond-typical classroom in that elementary school. My mom's colleagues have used their own personal funds to improve the educational environment of their students for years.

Every single classroom in Alaska could be as comfortable and prosperous as those in the elementary school I grew up in with sufficient funding.

In my high school, students' education is taking a drastic hit due to underfunding. Teachers are in and out. Programs have uncertain futures. While my generation has been labelled as "resilient," we are seeing more and more struggles to bounce back after each hit. There is a stark shortage of substitute teachers which leads to classes being held in the library, overburdening our librarians. I have sat in the library with at least four other classes and it is not a civil picture. The environment is headachingly loud, the librarians are stretched so thin that administrators are in and out checking on the students, and there certainly is no learning happening. Programs such as Advanced Placement or AP classes are at risk to be cut due to a lack of qualified teachers. Our language classes are subpar at best due to poor quality teachers. I, a passionate and dedicated student, have found myself dreading the eight hours a day I spend at school.

There is a butterfly effect caused by a lack of funding in our education system. The school district is doing as much as they can with the little money they have, teachers are unable to provide opportunities to students, the students dread school, their education takes a hit, and in the years to come we will be made fully aware of the negative impacts. Students and teachers thrive in fully funded schools, causing our society itself to thrive. We cannot fight nor prevent great tragedies and societal illnesses such as violence, mental health crises, bullying, racial and cultural injustices, suicide, abuse, addiction, and more without prosperous schools.

Thus I urge you to remain in support of HB 65, an act to increase the BSA, and consequently an act to ensure the future of our education system and Alaska as a whole.

Thank you and Sincerely,

Madisen Lundamo

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Kassandra Mirosh [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 11:10 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education; Rep. Mike Prax
Subject: Please Increase the BSA

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing to strongly urge you to pass a meaningful increase to the Base Student Allocation this year. I have been a public school teacher in Alaska for the past 24 years and I have seen first hand the devastating results flat funding has had on the education of our children. We are constantly being asked to do more with less and this means our children fall further behind. Meaningful programs like art, music, CTE are all threatened. Teachers are leaving the profession due to stress and lack of adequate compensation. In our small district, 2 of our brick and mortar schools are in danger of being shut down which would hurt those communities and eliminate the possibility for students to attend schools closer than an hour's drive from their homes.

Passing Senate Bill 52 and House Bill 65 would send a strong message that you value education for Alaska and would help support our schools to provide the very best for our children.

Please prioritize education in our state! We are a land of many natural resources and none of those resources are more important than our children.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Kassandra Mirosh
Alaska Public School Teacher

James Sexton

From: Jacy Turner [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 11:16 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: House Bill 65

Dear Representatives,

Please help in funding our children's education. Without dedicated teachers and staff and support our kids will not be able to thrive and receive the additional help that they need.

I have already personally experienced the issues with the BSA not being adequately funded to keep up with inflation. Each year my kid's elementary school gets trimmed. Programs and teachers that used to be there when my daughter started Kindergarten are no longer there now in 4th grade. Teachers are trying to do more with less.

How do we assist those kids who need additional help in reading? The reading specialist at the elementary school no longer exists. She was able to help my daughter with her phonics and get her reading correctly. However, my son doesn't have access to this resource.

Schools are doing the best they can with the resources they have. We have taken away vital services that kids need to succeed and have put more burden on teachers who are already doing a full-time job.

Please increase the BSA allotment so that our kids can go back to thriving and having access to the resources that they need to be successful not only now but as members of our community. In just a few short years these kids will be in the community contributing and we want to give them the best chance at being able to develop and contribute in a meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Jacy Petersen

James Sexton

From: Shannon Spalding [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 11:45 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Mike Prax
Cc: Rep. Justin Ruffridge; House Education; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. CJ McCormick
Subject: HB 65

I am an Anchorage resident and have been living in the city for 12 years. My husband grew up in Seward and we moved to Alaska after meeting in dental school. We decided to have a family and raise our children in Alaska. However, the SBA has not been adjusted in many years concurrent with inflation and due to this ASD has been faced with many cuts. Please adjust the BSA to a level where it should be, had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually. Please understand all the families that live in Alaska will have to consider relocating if HB 65 is not passed. I grew up in Washington where the schools are not failing their students. You cannot recruit teacher or keep residents if you don't support the family unit.

Please don't disappoint all young families that have the ability to maintain the health of the Alaska economy in the years to come.

Thank you,
Shannon Spalding

James Sexton

From: R J Potter [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 12:14 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Please support HB65

Dear Alaska State Representatives and House Education Committee,

Please support for HB 65. I am writing to let you know that I enthusiastically support an increase to the Base Student Allocation. Right now, any addition to the BSA is nothing more than adjusting the BSA to a level where it should be had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually.

One-time funds are not a solution to the problem of under-funded schools; we urgently need a BSA increase to consistently and equitably support the daily education of all of Alaska's students.

Despite significant inflation and the skyrocketing cost of operations, our school districts have been asked to provide better learning outcomes while cutting staff and programs across the board. *Alaska is a wealthy state*, and we need to prioritize our kids' education in order to attract and retain families, produce skilled and creative citizens, and ensure long-term prosperity.

Sincerely,
Rebekah Potter

James Sexton

From: Tam Agosti-Gisler [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 12:15 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: HB 65

February 18, 2023

Dear Senate Education Committee Representatives:

It's time.... it's time for HB 65 to pass.

At a dinner party last night with Alaskan friends of varied political persuasion, we could all agree that our schools are in trouble financially.

Let's play catch up on adjusting the BSA for inflation and add \$1250 per student to the BSA.

It's that simple.

Sincerely,

Tam Agosti-Gisler
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Joclyn Reilly [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 1:05 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Increase BSA

I am writing to support HB 65. I have three kids in Anchorage public schools, and the schools are doing the best they can with limited resources. Because of inflation, education funding has gone down every year. We are a rich state, let's put money into our children! Every dollar spent on public education is less money spent in the future on prison, etc.

Thanks
Joclyn Reilly
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 1:33 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story
Cc: Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Daniel Ortiz
Subject: Education Funding

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

Please fully support HB 65. Our schools have suffered the lack of sufficient funding for so long that the legislature can no longer put off raising the Base Student Allocation. When I was a substitute teacher at our high school, in one class I had about five students who not only had to sit on the floor due to the lack of sufficient desks, but also do without books. As you might imagine, it was difficult to keep the entire class focused on learning in that type of over-crowded classroom. The lack of adequate state funding of schools has the direct consequence of class sizes that are too large to allow for learning. HB 65 does nothing more than catch up school funding to make up for severe cuts that over the years have been due to inflation combined with no change in the BSA amount.

Sincerely,
Kris Benson

[REDACTED]

Julie Zundel

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 3:09 PM

Hello Representatives,

I am a parent (with two children in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District), I am a science teacher in the FNSBSD and I am a lifelong Alaskan. I am testifying to you today to ask you to increase BSA to match inflation. Public education has been flat-funded since 2017 while inflation has increased by 15% (or more).

I am on the front lines - and I can tell you we are in crisis - just a few quick examples:

1. No one wants to work in the FNSBSD. The school I work at - West Valley High School - is losing teachers faster than we can replace them. I was hired in 2007, left in 2013 when I had my second child and then returned in 2018. When I was hired in 2007, it was very competitive - but when I was hired in 2018 there were very few people who were certified to teach chemistry

Since I returned in 2018, we have lost two chemistry teachers, four biology teachers and we will lose our physics teacher in May. Teachers are either retiring as soon as they can or leaving Alaska to work in states that fully fund education. It is becoming challenging to find replacements - this year we started off short-staffed. Admin tried to hire teachers from the Philippines, but that did not work out. Finally, they hired a UAF professor to teach 9th grade biology. The professor is trying, but she has no experience with teenagers, no teaching license, and it has not been a smooth year.

2. Class sizes are huge. I have never had as many students as I do this year with most of my classes pushing 30. Some science teachers had 36 students at the start of the year. The National Science Teacher Association says for safety purposes science classrooms should not have more than 24 students with most lab accidents occurring when classes are larger than 24. The increased workload (grading, managing behaviors, buying extra supplies out of pocket) has caused massive burnout. I don't know if I am going to return next year.

(sources: <https://static.nsta.org/pdfs/overcrowdingintheinstructionalspace.pdf>)

3. I teach Alaska Zoology, Chemistry and AP Biology. The budget we have to work with cannot possibly cover everything I need. I spend over \$1000 of my own money each year on pencils, tape, dry lab ingredients, kleenex, glue, and notebooks for my at-risk students. I save my science budget money to buy the materials I need to ensure my AP Biology, Alaska Zoology and chemistry kids get the lab equipment they need to have a decent lab-based science experience.

4. Cost of living has gone up, but my wages have not. Between spending money to supply my classroom and the increased costs of fuel and food, I am worried I will have to find another job to keep up with inflation.

5. Our roof in our hallway is falling apart and leaking (we have a lot of building issues, but this one is very close to my room). There are buckets and pipes to try to fix it, but as soon as the snow melts it will be another disaster. I have been waiting for almost two years for it to be fixed. There isn't money to do so.

6. Students returned to the classroom needing extra support after COVID school. This job is harder than it was, and we are having to do more with less. This isn't the time to have giant classes and less support - students need more support than ever.

Thank you for listening, I love teaching and I want to keep working in Alaska. Please adjust BSA to reflect inflation.

Julie Zundel

Parent, Science teacher, and lifelong Alaskan

James Sexton

From: Luann McVey [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 4:43 PM
To: House Education
Cc: Rep. Andi Story
Subject: Education Funding

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

I'm a retired Alaskan teacher with some concerns about education in our state. I am appalled that the BSA has not increased since 2017, in spite of the increase in fixed costs for districts. In the long run, this situation results in fewer services for our students. I have heard about class sizes of 25-40 in Juneau elementary classrooms. Please, dear legislators, recognize that these numbers make teaching and real learning next to impossible. Please pass HB 65, increasing the BSA by \$1250. It is the least you can do for our students and their teachers.

Also, I urge you to pass HB 31, modernizing the Alaska Performance Scholarship. We need to keep Alaskan students in our state and a sure-fire way to do that is to find the students who are performing well in high school and set them up for success in our state's universities. Expanding the scope of the APS is the ticket to helping our students stay in the state and find success in their university tenures.

My husband, also a retired teacher, and I are very fortunate that our two daughters, while not APS recipients, remained in Alaska and attended our universities here. Now that they are adults, they work in Juneau at Bartlett Regional Hospital and at Sealaska Corporation, putting their university degrees to work. Their husbands, also local boys, received their degrees from the University of Alaska as well and work as Deputy Clerk of the Senate and as brewmaster/owner for the Devil's Club Brewing Company in Juneau. They're all examples of how encouraging Alaskan students to attend our universities pays off in an enhanced work force for our state.

Again, I strongly urge the passage of HB 65 and HB 31, to lift up Alaskan students and schools in these challenging times.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Luann McVey
Retired Alaskan Teacher
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Gary McCarty [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 4:53 PM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: Education funding!

I support the house bill 65 and that in fact, any addition to the BSA is nothing more than adjusting the BSA to a level where it should be had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually.

Thank you,

Gary McCarty

Jeanne Larsen

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 5:02 PM

Dear Legislators,

I am counting on you all to lead the charge to bring the Base Student Allocation up to modern standards, and inflation proof it as we lean into our future together.

As a parent of grown children educated in Alaskan public schools, I can see that we are falling behind, and our schools need your help.

We need to adjust the BSA to adequately fund our schools not just to survive, but to thrive and gain our rightful spot as one of the best and highest performing states in the country. Why not Alaska?!?

This will also help us attract and retain excellent educators. Please do the right (and hard!) thing, and lead the change we all know needs to happen. You can be an education hero. We need you to lead the charge! I'm right with you, just here in the classroom at school

Thank you for your service and I wish you strength and wisdom while you work.

Very Respectfully Yours,

Jeanne Larsen

Anchorage, AK

Lisa Paesani

To: House Education Committee; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sat 2/18/2023 6:12 PM

Dear Alaska State House Representatives,

I am writing in support of increasing the BSA for our schools. I am wanting you to listen and abide by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee to raise the BSA by at least 1000. If Alaska does not insure our schools are properly funded, in order to acquire and keep good teachers and have smaller class room sizes, our population will continue to decline, especially those in educated fields. Already we have a worker crisis in Alaska. People will not move here or stay here if they see their children can not get a good education here. This issue applies to all Alaskans. Please find our schools by increasing our BSA by at least 1000.

Thank you,

M Lisa Paesani, MSW

James Sexton

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 6:26 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: House Education
Subject: HB 65

Please support HB 65 to it's maximum. It is little enough in view of the dire conditions in Alaska's public schools.

Don't be like Anchorage's train wreck of a mayor. His administration was clearly put on notice last spring or summer that the Anchorage maintenance divisions - specifically the snow removal departments - were woefully without equipment, employees, and parts. He and his administration totally ignored this information. They probably thought since the source of the information was the worker's union, it had no merit. Now, of course, it is more difficult winter driving in Anchorage than it has ever been in my experience - and my wife and I have lived here since 1970.

Don't be taken in by the anti-education argument that the schools should improve before they deserve more funding. This is an absolutely ridiculous argument. It is like telling your dangerously underweight child that she will not be given more to eat until she first gains weight.

Thank you if you actually read this overlong email

Tom Nelson
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Alisa Carroll [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 9:36 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Please support HB65

Dear Representative, Please support HB65. We love our schools and our brilliant, inquisitive, creative, kids... our hope for a stellar future! Our state deserves to have school funding at the top of the list! Despite significant inflation and the skyrocketing cost of operations, our school districts have been asked to provide better learning outcomes while cutting staff and programs across the board. Alaska is a wealthy state, and we need to prioritize our kids' education for long term prosperity.

Please vote yes on HB 65,

Sincerely,

Alisa Carroll

James Sexton

From: Anna Polonowski [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 9:02 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; House Education
Subject: I support HB 65

Dear Representatives,

As a parent of 2 children in the Anchorage school district, I am writing to let you know I fully support funding the BSA via House Bill 65 being introduced this Monday. Despite significant inflation and the skyrocketing cost of operations, our school districts have been asked to provide better learning outcomes while cutting staff and programs across the board. Alaska is a wealthy state, and we need to prioritize our kids' education for long term prosperity.

I appreciate your support for this bill as well. Thank you for your time.

Anna Polonowski
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

James Sexton

From: Odile Meister [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 10:42 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education; Rep. Mike Prax
Subject: Please support House Bill 65!

Dear Representatives,

I have been teaching in the Wrangell Public School District for the last seven years. I have seen how the quality of our schools has continued to decline due to reduced budgets each year. It is vital for the future of Alaska that our schools receive the full addition of \$1,250 to the BSA.

Please support our students and public schools and vote for House Bill 65!

Thank you,

Odile Meister,

Spanish Teacher and more, Wrangell Public Schools.

James Sexton

From: Idamarie Piccard [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 11:09 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: House bill 65

The House Bill 65 is for the increase of the BSA by \$1250. The schools of ALaska need this increase to cover ever increasing costs due inflation, rising fuel prices, increasing wages, and operational cost increases over the last 10 years. It is my hope, should this bill pass, most of the added money will be used in the classroom, directly for the students. Yes there should be accountability and yes there should be diligent use of the increase but the education of students in Alaskan schools should be a priority. They are the hope of our future and we need to keep them here. Thank you

Idamarie Piccard
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Mari Jo Parks [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 11:42 AM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: BSA Increase

Dear Representatives,

Please support House Bill 65 to increase the BSA increase for education. It is critical that we fully support education. This would be a good start in helping schools deal with inflation and other demands on education.

Sincerely, Mari Jo Parks

Mari Jo Parks
[REDACTED]

Michele Elfers

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 11:53 AM

Good afternoon,

Please vote to support raising the BSA a minimum of \$1000 per student. We need more funding than this for our students.

I have a daughter in middle school and one in elementary school. Their class sizes are 28-35 students per class with one teacher. I hear stories from my middle schooler of kids jumping on tables and breaking them, balls being thrown, basically chaos in class because the teacher cannot control the class with so many kids. She is not being challenged because the teachers are not able to address all the varied needs and learning levels in such large classes. She sits in the gym on many days because teachers are out and there are no substitute teachers

Next year, she goes to high school and the highschool closest to us has a part time art teacher and kids can't get into art classes. She wants to be a designer - engineer/architect, so she is looking for math and art classes. In this same school, they are struggling to keep their CAD program.

Our schools are in crisis and there is nothing I can do for my kids, we don't have any other options. Please provide more funding now.

Michele Elfers

James Sexton

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 1:59 AM
To: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: New plan please.

fyi, cc of email to Jamie Allard & Justin Ruffridge...

"It could just be me. My career in education spans nearly 30 years. As an aide in the classroom and a classroom middle school teacher. Can you believe that for 30 years, every year, my budget was reduced and my new colleagues made less money under less favorable contract provisions and educational outcomes were not improved? Am I missing something here? I worked hard, and so did my colleagues, but I can say what our school can offer students has been reduced to bare bones, from when I began. No foreign languages, reduced art music and PE. No drama program, diminished vocational education, diminished home economics also called life skills. Educational outcomes have not improved.

So I guess my question is what is your plan here? 30 years is a long time...scores haven't improved...30 more years? Your plan isn't working. Time for a new plan.

SB 52 and HB 65 look good.

These students deserve better. "

James Sexton

From: Glenn Cravez [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 3:22 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Representative.Mike.Prex@akleg.gov; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Support HB 65

I am writing in support of HB 65, increasing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1250. Education funding hasn't even kept pace with inflation, and if we're serious about being pro-growth for Alaska, we need to invest in education. We can afford to invest in our long term prosperity. Thank you. Glenn Cravez, 2810 Kingfisher Drive, Anchorage 99502.

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Braeden Garrett

From: Rita Miller [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 3:30 PM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: BSA

I am a 40+ resident of Anchorage and a retired special education teacher from Dimond High School. Both my children graduated from Anchorage high schools, went outside to college and have returned to teach and counsel in high schools here. I also have 4 grandchildren in elementary, middle and high school in the ASD system I hear constantly from district employees about the lack of funding for education and consequently the very low morale of teachers across the district. In the 90s, when my daughters were in school, they had a very different experience. Education was a priority and Alaska was known as a premier place to teach and get an education. Please make students and education a priority again. Vote in favor of Senate Bill 52 and House Bill 65.

Thank you,
Rita Miller

Sent from my iPhone

Rebecca Gaguine

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 5:02 PM

Hello,

As a Juneau educator and parent of two children in the Alaskan school system I am begging you to help pass SB 52 and HB 65. Our schools are struggling. We are losing more staff and children are being underserved by large class sizes and lack of support due to lack of staffing.

Raising the BSA will help to retain staff (as well as the bill to adjust the retirement system!). Alaska needs to prioritize its education now or who knows what the future may hold.

Thank you for your time,

Rebecca Gaguine, Mother to Lilah and Benji and a Juneau School District teacher.

Braeden Garrett

From: Jenna Hamm [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 6:01 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: HB 65

Dear House Education Committee Members,

My name is Jenna Hamm and I live in Denali Park with my family. My husband and I operate a family business, a 70-year old wilderness lodge on private land inside Denali National Park. We are a team of five year-round employees in the off-season, preparing for each coming summer. Our two children attend Tri-Valley School, within the Denali Borough School District and I have served on the school board of the District for 10 years.

Seasonal tourism businesses in our area are a critical part of the economy of the Denali Borough, drawing young people and families to the area each year for employment. During my tenure in the community of Denali Park, at least 10 couples we have employed seasonally subsequently made the Denali Borough their home, building homes here, going on to work for other employers, having children, raising families, sending their kids to borough schools. They have built lives and livelihoods here, recognizing the quality of life-- on the road system, but surrounded by vast wilderness out the front door.

Essential to enabling our livelihoods has been the availability of a quality education provided by the schools in the district. Small schools such as ours-- Cantwell, Tri-Valley in Healy and Anderson Schools-- matter tremendously to the integrity and functionality of Alaska's rural communities.

As you begin to deliberate HB 65, a proposed \$1250 increase to the Base Student Allocation. I urge you to follow through and pass this legislation. Our district is at a tipping point wherein we must consider the cost savings of closing down two of our smaller schools. Doing so would be the death knell for these communities. At our last school board meeting in Cantwell, parents from no less than five young families beseeched the board to keep the school open. These people moved to the area, started up small businesses, built homes and had children, knowing that there would be a school for their growing children. Now they rightfully feel like the rug is being yanked from beneath their feet. I hope you will hear from them directly.

At this same meeting our board decided that we will, for the time being, let go of the two, draft budget scenarios that would close the two smaller schools. Because a school is better than no school, however meager the offerings, or how few the teachers, or how stretched-thin the maintenance staff. And the reality, with anything less than at least a \$900 increase to the BSA, will mean that our district must skimp on instructional student services of some kind, at each site, compromising the real instructional needs of our students and under-serving the students and families of our district.

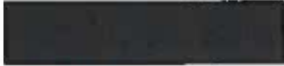
Schools are the lifeblood of Alaska's small communities-- the public libraries, the community gathering spots, the emergency shelters (yes, this happened this summer during the Clear Fire), the gymnasiums in the middle of winter, the ball fields and playgrounds in the summertime. Schools are critical to Alaska's communities, to the state's current and future economic realities. We cannot continue to serve our children well by continually underfunding public education.

Some among you will say that there is no money to allocate more to education. But you are the legislators; you hold the purse strings; you get to decide where the money is allocated and what measures must be taken in order to fulfill the State's obligations to its future generations. I urge you to revisit the recommendations of the Fiscal Policy Working Group of 2022. There is a pathway toward fiscal stability, we just need to step boldly in that direction in order to take care of our future generations.

I urge you to pass HB 65 and take bold steps toward steadying this sinking ship.

Sincerely,
Jenna Hamm

Jenna Hamm
she/her
Co-owner
[Camp Denali and Parkside Guest House](#)



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Providing active learning experiences and fostering stewardship of the natural world through a tradition of community, excellence and place.

James Sexton

From: Peggy and Alex [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 6:20 PM
To: House Education
Subject: HB65

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB65, which would raise the Base Student Allocation by \$1,250. This is great! Thank you for putting this forward. As you are well aware, years of flat funding for the BSA combined with inflation has had a devastating effect on the efficacy of funding to meet Alaska's constitutional mandate for supporting public education. We are seeing increasing class sizes, inability to recruit and retain teachers and support staff, and even the prospect of school closures. This increase would go a long way to counteract the negative effects from years of flat funding . Given the impact of the pandemic on student performance, it is more critical than ever to fully support our public education system. There is a lot of talk about accountability linked to an increase in BSA. I support the concept of accountability as long as it is also linked to tangible improvements such as decreased class sizes, improved support for special education, and adequate counseling resources for those kids that are struggling in the classroom and school. What we don't need is more burdensome paperwork for our teachers. Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill, and thank you for advocating for improving public education in Alaska.

Alice Knapp

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 7:40 PM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I am a retired Elementary Teacher, Reading Specialist, and School Librarian. I continue to be involved in our schools subbing. I grew up in Anchorage, attended Elementary, Jr. High, and High School in Anchorage and have since retirement visited rural communities (Pt. Lay, Kotzebue, Hughes, Selawik, and Buckland) working with school age kids.

As you meet to discuss the Student Base Allocation please consider the importance of raising the amount per student. Things to keep in mind when deciding the necessity of increasing the student base allocation is that the demographics of Anchorage and the State as a whole has changed dramatically. With those changes are challenges. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accomodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. When I was a student during the 1970s, Anchorage was not very diverse, we had a school tax that helped provide funding for schools, and there were few educational options available to students such as Advanced Placement courses, special needs classes, and charter schools. The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates (many unfunded) , think special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. In my experience, schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you for your efforts on this important issue.

Alice Tower Knapp

[REDACTED]

Ken Zafren

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Sun 2/19/2023 8:43 PM

Dear legislators,

We have underfunded Alaska schools long enough. Our schools are our future. We need to fund them adequately so that our children can get an education that will prepare them for life and for careers. The minimum increase should be at least \$1250 per student.

Respectfully,

Ken and Chris Zafren

[REDACTED]



**House Education Committee
H.B. 65 Increase the Base Student Allocation - Testimony**

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

February 20, 2023

Co-chair Ruffridge and Allard and members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today in support of H.B. 65, Increase the Base Student Allocation. For the record, my name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards. We are a nonprofit association serving 52 of Alaska's 54 school districts.

AASB strongly supports House Bill 65, which would increase the Base Student Allocation by \$1,250 starting with the FY2024 Budget.

AASB's Board of Directors has adopted three legislative priorities for this year. They are:

- Sufficient, sustainable, and predictable education funding
- Retention and recruitment of teachers, administrators, and staff
- Student wellness and safety

AASB has several resolutions adopted by the association membership supporting each of the priorities. A document that aligns resolutions to each of the priorities and a second document with the complete verbiage of each resolution accompanies this testimony.

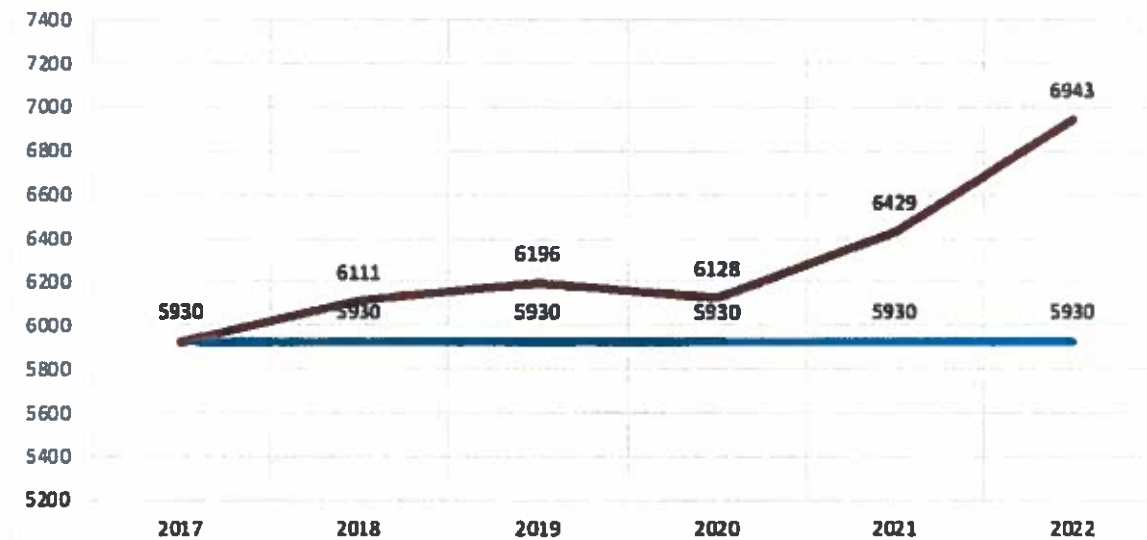
Today my testimony will focus primarily on the issue of sufficient education funding, which is a critical factor affecting, most importantly, student outcomes, and then the retention and recruitment of staff, and the safety and wellness of our students.

The state of Alaska has always statutorily fulfilled its responsibility to *Article 7, Section 1* of Alaska's Constitution, requiring the funding of a system of public education. However, for over a decade, it has not sufficiently invested the resources necessary to ensure every student receives an excellent education every day. As a result of the inability of the base student allocation to keep pace with inflation, class sizes have increased for many schools, programs such as world language, art, music, career, and technical education courses, and at times advanced placement courses have been eliminated. Budgets for school support personnel and maintenance staff have been reduced along with many of the needed supplies and materials required to keep schools operating effectively. Many teachers often dip into their own pocketbooks to make sure their classes have the materials they need to engage students actively in learning.

A recent analysis I performed using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics measurements for inflation for the CPI-Urban Alaska category spanning 2017 to 2022 shows that an annual inflation-adjusted BSA would need to have been \$1,013 greater in 2022 or a BSA of \$6,943 to keep pace with inflation. This means

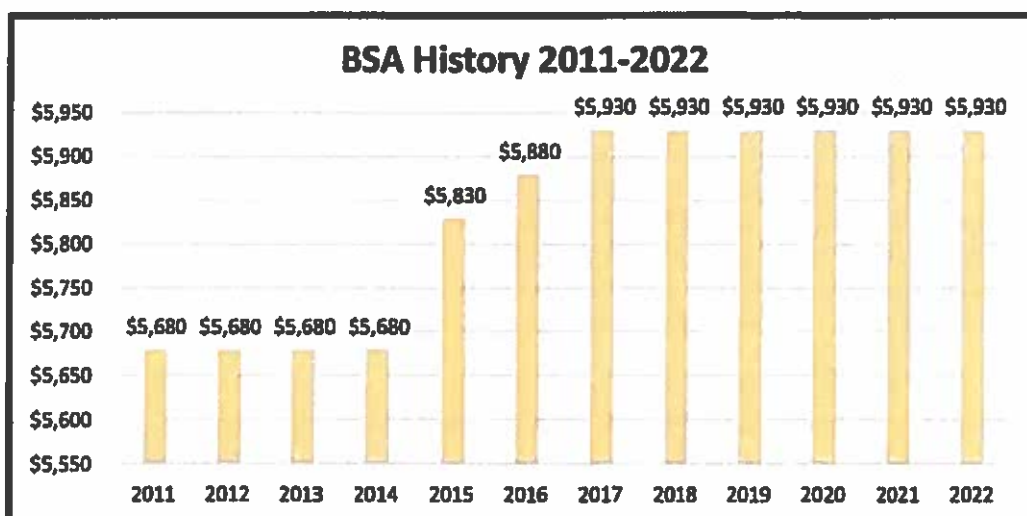
that compared to the 2017 BSA, the 2022 BSA was actually 17.1% behind in its value for funding our public education system.

BSA vs Inflation Adjusted 2017 - 2022

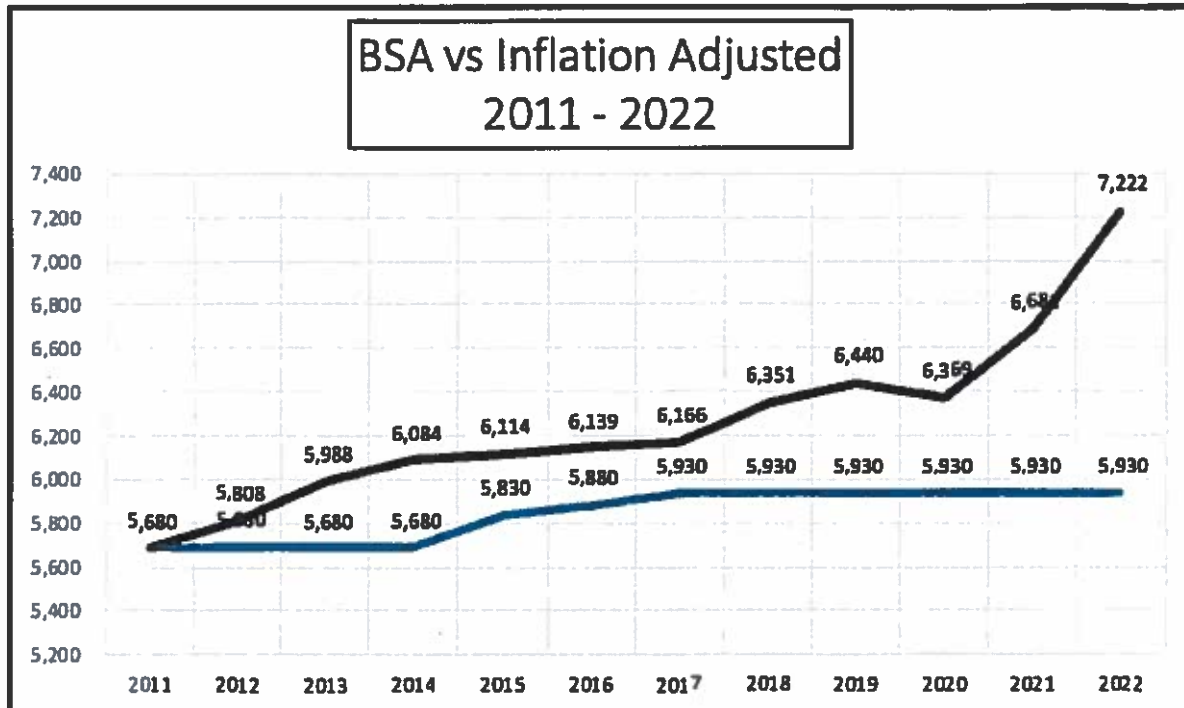


1 Inflation adjusted BSA using CPI-Urban Alaska annual inflation data, 2017-2022.

A further comparison of the BSA to inflation over the past twelve years (2011 to 2022) shows that the BSA has only increased by \$250 or a total of 4.4% percent.



Based on the CPI-Urban Alaska inflation values for that period, the cumulative inflation for that 12-year period is 24.6%. This means an inflation-adjusted BSA would need to be \$1,292 greater in 2022 (or a BSA of \$7,222). The underfunding of Alaska's public education through the BSA has been a chronic and persistent issue. Several times, additional funding outside the BSA has been provided, which has been helpful and appreciated. However, these one-time discretionary funds have not led to the stability and predictability of a statutory increase in the BSA.



2 Inflation-adjusted BSA using CPI-Urban Alaska annual inflation data, 2011-2022

In November 2022, the AASB Delegate Assembly unanimously approved the amending **RESOLUTION #2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION** by specifying an increase to the BSA. An increase of \$860 was put forward by the Anchorage School Board as a result of the Anchorage School District's analysis early last fall of the difference between the current BSA of \$5,930 and an estimated inflation-adjusted value of \$6,820. As I have explained, this early estimate of at least \$860 does not meet the mark. H.B. 65's proposed \$1,250 BSA increase provides the greatest chance to even the score with inflation and does the right thing for our students and communities.

AASB also strongly advocates that the BSA should statutorily be connected to an inflation-proofing formula. Our resolution **2.50 INFLATION-PROOFED BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION (BSA) INVESTMENTS** speaks to this issue.



So, what does this mean for school boards which, by statute, are required to establish, approve and implement balanced budgets each year? It has meant having to make hard decisions that reduce staffing, eliminate programs, curtail extracurricular activities, and diminish many of the supports that affect the conditions for learning for each student.

Locally elected school boards have been delegated the authority to implement a system of public education required by the Alaska Constitution. School board members are tasked with governing their districts and allocating funds to execute an educational plan for all public school students. It is a highly complex task. In Alaska, school boards have no taxing authority. They, therefore, must rely solely on revenue from the state, the federal government, and in organized areas, at least a minimum local contribution to fund education.

Each year, school board members and education advocates appeal for education funding to provide an excellent education for every student every day.

A myriad of operational costs, including utilities, supplies, transportation, fuel, maintenance, freight, food, instructional materials, and other services necessary for operating a school system, have all increased dramatically. As these operational costs have increased, resources to employ the staff needed to run schools and deliver educational support and instruction have been reduced. As a result, the opportunities for all students to succeed diminish, and we see declines in many indicators of student achievement.

Over the past year, I have heard from school board members and superintendents across the state about the tremendous strain their budgets face. Of particular note are the incredibly inflated fuel costs, especially for districts with schools located away from the road system. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration report of March 2022, the summer heating fuel costs for unsubsidized rural Alaska communities were 26% higher than the Winter 2021 average. Heating fuel prices were reported in many locations well over \$7 per gallon. This means the cost of heating school buildings and transporting goods, staff, or students significantly impacts the amount of funding available to hire or retain teachers and other support personnel to do the job that must be done.

For example, during discussions last spring, one superintendent of a remote rural district noted that, generally, for every \$100 of materials purchased, they must allocate nearly \$200 in freight charges.

The highly uncertain nature of the annual legislative appropriation for education funding as part of the state's general fund budget, and the potential executive vetoes, continually creates uncertainty that makes it difficult to sustain a maintenance of effort in an effective and efficient manner. Time and again, school boards and superintendents must make hard choices that may result in the reduction of staff or the elimination of programs and services, which often negatively impact student achievement.

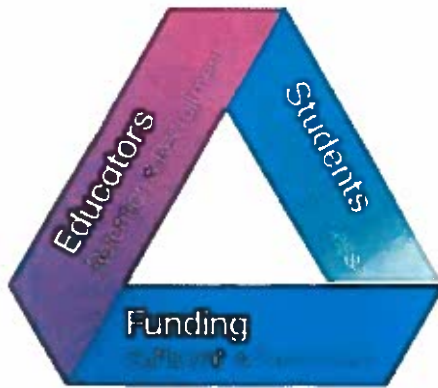
Support for H.B. 65 Increasing the Base Student Allocation is imperative and meets the request of AASB's resolutions of not less than an \$860 increase to the BSA. Locally elected school boards have been delegated the authority to implement a system of public education on behalf of the state of Alaska. In order to do that, they rely upon state, local, and federal governments for revenue. School boards implement the local control model that has served Alaska well, but they depend on your support. This



committee's support of increasing the BSA is foundational to Alaska's public school system and Alaska's future through the education of its young people.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

**Lon Garrison,
Executive Director, AASB**



AASB's 2023 Legislative Priorities

On behalf of our member school districts statewide, the AASB Board of Directors has adopted three legislative priorities: **Funding, Educators and Students**. Supporting resolutions can be found in [Where We Stand 2023](#).

Our Mission: The Association of Alaska School Boards advocates for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

Sufficient and Sustainable Public Education Funding

Sufficient, sustainable and stable funding is required to meet Alaska's obligation to provide quality, public education for every Alaska student. Educating Alaska's youth is the best strategy for successfully meeting and safeguarding Alaska's prosperity.

- ▶ **Increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA)** – From 2012 to 2022, the BSA has only increased by \$250 per student (4.2%) while inflation has increased by at least 24% (Anchorage CPI), resulting in crippling staff shortages, school closures, and program eliminations. AASB advocates for not less than an \$860 increase to the BSA for FY2024.
- ▶ **Decouple education funding from the General Fund Budget** - Create an Education Permanent Fund/ Endowment to provide reliable, stable, and predictable revenue to school districts.
- ▶ **Prevent cost-shifting of expenses** - Such as transportation, bond-debt reimbursement, major maintenance, and retirement contributions to districts and local communities.

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, Administrators & Staff

School districts face an unprecedented crisis of retaining and recruiting qualified, effective teachers, administrators, and support staff which seriously hinders providing Alaska students with a quality education.

- ▶ **Implement recommendations** - of the Teacher Recruitment & Retention Task Force.
- ▶ **Reinstitute a competitive retirement program** - including both defined benefits and defined contributions.
- ▶ **Invest in teacher housing** - required for most rural school districts.
- ▶ **Grow Alaska teachers and administrators** - work with partners and the University of Alaska to improve and expand teacher training programs, teacher-mentor programs, and alternative certification pathways.

Student Wellness and School Safety

The pandemic has impacted student wellness for every demographic, especially students experiencing poverty or trauma. Violence, neglect, and sexual abuse have increased, resulting in reduced social-emotional well-being and academic achievement.

- ▶ **Address student mental health** - Support and fund mental health services for all Alaskan students, including trauma-engaged practices in Alaska schools.
- ▶ **Prevent student sexual abuse by school staff** - Support the implementation of policies and training regarding professional boundaries between staff and students.
- ▶ **Reduce school and student violence**. Support and fund the needed programs and services.



AASB 2023

Legislative Priorities & Supporting Resolutions

Sufficient and Sustainable Public Education Funding

- ▶ **B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY**
- ▶ **B.10 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA**
- ▶ **1.4 OPPOSE SCHOOL VOUCHERS**
- ▶ **2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE**
- ▶ **2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**
- ▶ **2.6 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA**
- ▶ **2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT**
- ▶ **2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**
- ▶ **2.31 URGING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION**
- ▶ **2.63 FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION**
- ▶ **2.64 BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION INCREASE: MAKING UP FOR LOST GROUND DUE TO INFLATION**

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, Administrators & Staff

- ▶ **4.3 ALASKA STATEWIDE EDUCATOR MENTORING**
- ▶ **4.5 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, SPECIALIST AND ADMINISTRATOR SHORTAGE**
- ▶ **4.6 REPEAL THE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATORS**
- ▶ **4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT**
- ▶ **4.11 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS**
- ▶ **4.18 ESTABLISHING A NEW TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR ALASKA**

Student Wellness and School Safety

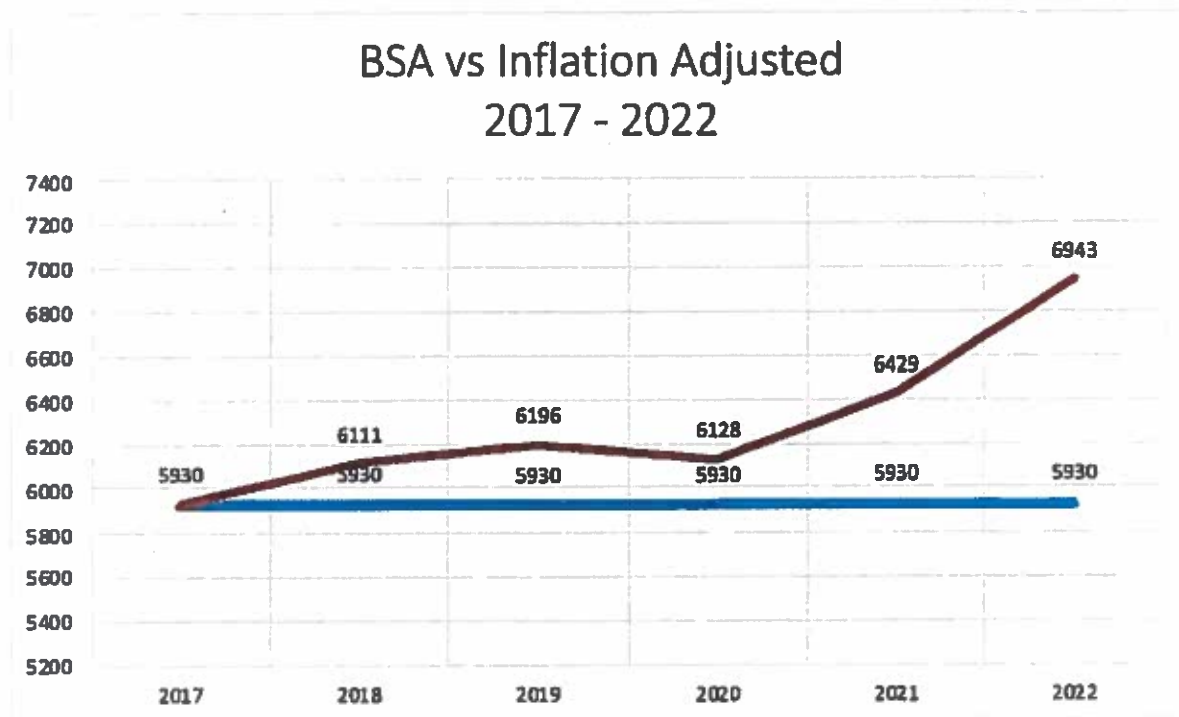
- ▶ **B.11 CHILD ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT**
- ▶ **B.14 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY AND SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION**
- ▶ **B.15 PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION**
- ▶ **B.17 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA**
- ▶ **3.1 DECLARING CHILDREN OF ALASKA OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE AND THEIR HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND EDUCATION IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE**
- ▶ **3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS**
- ▶ **3.6 OPIATES, INHALANTS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, E-CIGARETTES/ELECTRONIC DELIVERY SYSTEMS, METHAMPHETAMINES, MARIJUANA, DESIGNER DRUGS AND ANY ILLICIT SUBSTANCE USE**
- ▶ **3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS**
- ▶ **3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS**
- ▶ **3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA**
- ▶ **3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI) EDUCATION**
- ▶ **3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY**
- ▶ **3.13 IN SUPPORT OF THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST**
- ▶ **3.15 SUPPORTING THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT**
- ▶ **3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS**
- ▶ **3.21 SUPPORTING EXPANSION OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE TO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**
- ▶ **3.23 SUPPORT OF FULL STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**
- ▶ **3.25 SUPPORTING SEX ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION**
- ▶ **3.26 SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION OF TRAUMA-INFORMED AND CULTURALLY AFFIRMING PRACTICES**
- ▶ **3.27 SUPPORT FOR THE TREATMENT OF ABUSE OF OPIATES**
- ▶ **3.28 EDUCATION ON THE DANGERS OF TOBACCO, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS, MARIJUANA USE AND SECONDHAND SMOKE**

From the Anchorage School District - Comparison of BSA versus CPI Urban – Alaska 2017 to 2024

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Inflation	0.48%	3.05%	1.39%	-1.10%	4.88%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Inflation Adjusted BSA	\$ 5,930	\$ 6,111	\$ 6,196	\$ 6,127	\$ 6,426	\$ 6,555	\$ 6,686	\$ 6,820
Actual BSA	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,930	\$ 5,960
Difference	\$ -	\$ 181	\$ 266	\$ 197	\$ 496	\$ 625	\$ 756	\$ 860

US BLS – CPI-Urban Alaska

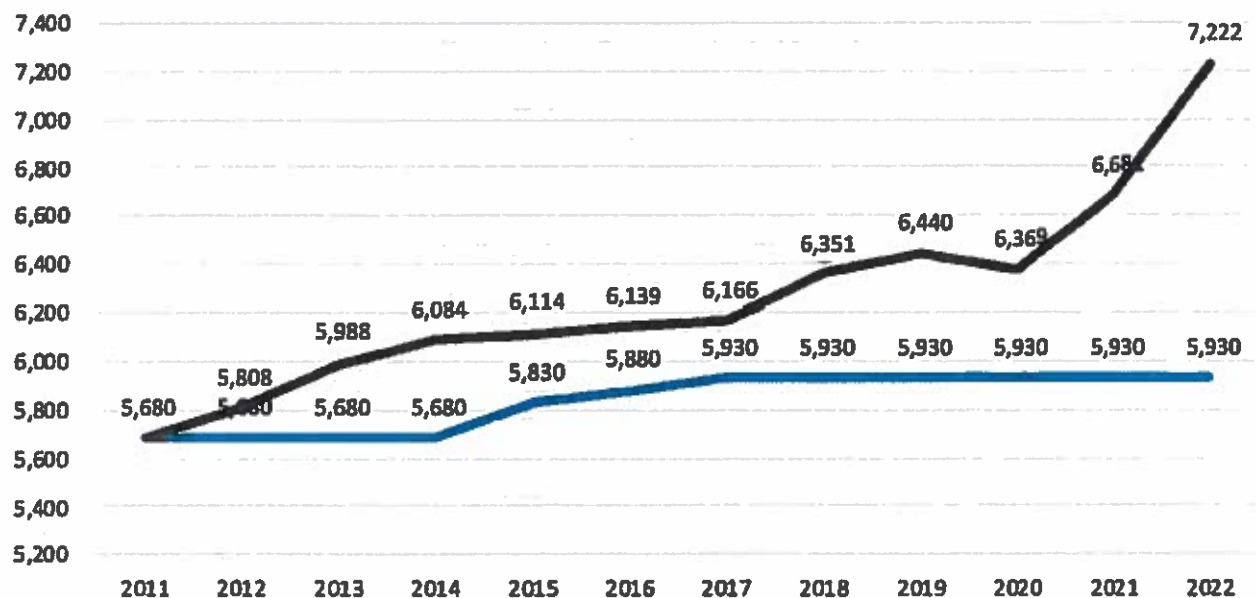
CPI-Urban Alaska data from US Bureau of Statistics, Western Office, Anchorage Area 1/22/23



CPI vs. BSA 2011 to 2022

Year	Annual Inflation Rate		Since 2011		
			BSA	Inflation Adjusted	Yearly Difference
2011	3.20	%	5,680	5,680	-
2012	2.25	%	5,680	5,808	128
2013	3.10	%	5,680	5,988	308
2014	1.60	%	5,680	6,084	404
2015	0.50	%	5,830	6,114	284
2016	0.40	%	5,880	6,139	259
2017	0.45	%	5,930	6,166	236
2018	3.00	%	5,930	6,351	421
2019	1.40	%	5,930	6,440	510
2020	-1.10	%	5,930	6,369	439
2021	4.90	%	5,930	6,681	751
2022	8.10	%	5,930	7,222	1,292
Cumulative	24.6	%	11-yr Gain		
			\$ 250 total increase		
			4.40% Percent Increase		

BSA vs Inflation Adjusted 2011 - 2022



Resolutions aligned with 2023 AASB Legislative Priorities



association of
ALASKA
school boards

Funding (Sufficient & Sustainable)

B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY

Article VII, Sec. 1 of The Alaska State Constitution states “The Legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all school age children...”. Public education is fundamental to democracy and economic advancement of the state and tribes. AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make early, sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth.

B.10 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA

AASB supports legislation to add additional funding for the planning and programming of voluntary early learning and family support programs, including online programs, for all children from birth to school age as an important long-term investment in Alaska’s future workforce and citizenry.

1.4 OPPOSE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

AASB is opposed to using public funds to finance private schools, parochial schools, or private home school/correspondence programs, whether through vouchers, tax credits, or individual K-12 savings accounts, or any other funding that would divert funds from public education.

2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA’S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE

The sustainability, reliability and adequacy of Alaska’s funding for public education are of highest concern to the Association of Alaska School Boards. AASB urges the Legislature to develop a state fiscal plan. This fiscal plan would provide a long-term approach to funding the costs of public education and other services upon which Alaska’s students and their families depend. The plan should be strategic, sustainable and realistic, providing a framework for balancing budgets while adequately funding public education.

2.2 URGING EARLY, ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide early, adequate, equitable, and predictable funding of public education. AASB believes that adequate funding should include the following:

- **State funding of the TRS-PERS retirement liability;**
- **An increase to the Base Student Allocation to inflation proof pre-K through 12th grade education funding by no less than the amount of \$860 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.**
- **Increase funding to account for flat funding in past years.**
- **Recognition of the need to keep pupil-teacher ratios to a level in line with research-based best practices;**
- **Funded career and technical education.**
- **An early adoption timeline that allows school boards and district administration to effectively plan instruction and staffing for the upcoming school year.**
- **Programs and Initiatives focusing on Alaska Native languages and cultures.**

AASB urges that in the years when the Alaska Legislature has not approved an education budget by April 1, the budget from the previous year shall be the legal minimum funding for the next fiscal year.

AASB urges the Legislature to review and recommend appropriate adjustments to AS.14.17.460, District Cost Factors, to ensure equity in school funding.

AASB urges the Legislature to provide stable forward funding that addresses inflation, including the use of an education endowment, to ensure funding predictability.

2.6 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA

AASB supports legislation to add additional funding for the planning and programming of voluntary early learning and family support programs, including online programs, for all children from birth to school age as an important long-term investment in Alaska's future workforce and citizenry.

2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT

AASB lends its full support to the establishment of an adequately funded and well- managed educational endowment as part of secure stable and full funding for education to be used for public elementary and secondary education.

2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

AASB urges the State of Alaska to adequately fund pupil transportation by increasing the transportation allocation to accurately reflect true costs, to avoid the use of operating fund dollars, and to provide funding for districts with increased transportation needs due to state legislated labor costs, rising fuel costs, special circumstances and/or student growth. Getting students safely to and from school is a vital part of public education.

2.31 URGING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION

AASB supports increased funding of Career and Technical (Vocational) Education through the foundation formula in AS 14.17.420 and funding for Alaska Construction Academies and regional training centers.

2.63 Funding for Education and Transportation

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and Administration to provide adequate funding to public education in the State of Alaska, to increase the Base Student Allocation to compensate for inflation, and increase the student transportation award to cover the true costs of student transportation.

2.64 Base Student Allocation Increase: Making Up for Lost Ground Due to Inflation

AASB urges the State of Alaska Legislature to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) as the BSA does not change automatically in response to inflation or any other factors, only by passing legislation that modifies the statute.

Students (Health & Wellness)

B.11 CHILD ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT

The advocacy role of school board members is to promote parental, public and social service commitment to the shared responsibility of educating all children and youth in public education while creating an environment that supports children to thrive and be empowered to choose a path to success in their future.

B.14 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY AND SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

AASB acknowledges the multifaceted and generational complexities of Alaska's drug and alcohol history. AASB encourages our Board Members, school staff, students, parents and community members to help in overcoming our communities' affliction with alcohol and drugs. AASB supports efforts of schools and communities to become and remain free of alcohol and

drug use through activities that: encourage the formation of sobriety groups in every Alaska community; encourage the practice of healthy lifestyles, values and activities; support existing groups working to promote sobriety; educate students on the consequences of their actions and the science of addiction; and encourage and support sober role models.

B.15 PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION

AASB believes in the prevention aspects of health and social service programs. Prevention is cost effective, both in dollars and in reducing human suffering. Many of the social and health problems we are experiencing now will only continue to grow if effective prevention/intervention programs are not in place. AASB supports early identification of and intervention for children at risk and inclusion of parents and guardians and community partners in prevention and intervention services in a culturally relevant way.

B.17 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA

AASB believes children are the top priority of our state. This declaration extends to the education, health, physical and psychological safety,, mental wellness, and future of our children.

3.1 DECLARING CHILDREN OF ALASKA OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE AND THEIR HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND EDUCATION IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE

AASB understands that the children are our most valuable resource and encourages the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to declare that our children are our most valuable resource and to further declare that their mental and physical health, safety, welfare, and highest standard of education is of paramount importance.

3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS

AASB recognizes the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and strongly recommends efforts to raise awareness of the need for prevention and appropriate intervention. AASB requests that the Alaska Legislature provide and improve effective programs and services aimed at the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of children with FASD within our state, and to allocate adequate funding to the appropriate agencies necessary to provide parent and guardian training, school staff training, paraprofessional and specialized educational services, including transportation necessary to serve children with FASD and/or who have suffered from prenatal exposure to illicit drugs. Further, AASB urges all Alaska post-secondary institutions to include FASD intervention education in their teacher preparation and paraprofessional programs.

3.6 OPIATES, INHALANTS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, E- CIGARETTES/ELECTRONIC DELIVERY SYSTEMS, METHAMPHETAMINES, MARIJUANA, DESIGNER DRUGS AND ANY ILLICIT SUBSTANCE USE

AASB calls upon the Legislature of the State of Alaska to support local communities, parents and students in their strength-based education, prevention and treatment efforts to combat opiates, inhalants, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes/electronic delivery systems, methamphetamines,

marijuana, designer drugs and other illicit substances and to provide effective law enforcement to ensure laws pertaining to controlled substances are enforced. AASB also requests the State of Alaska make adequate funds available for community-based and residential efforts to address effective substance use and abuse treatment programs for children, young people and their families.

Additionally, AASB supports regulations or modifications to the marijuana statute to counter potential negative impacts on Alaska youth that develops a clear and simple process for a community to implement local option laws. AASB also recommends allocating appropriately the tax revenue from marijuana sales, production and businesses to support education, prevention, and treatment programs regarding substance use and abuse, which are relevant and aligned to local community and cultural values.

3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS

AASB requests the State of Alaska to provide funding for statewide suicide prevention, education, and treatment efforts coordinated among various entities including peer helper programs, mental health centers, and local and state agencies. Initiatives should include a statewide program to bring professional mental health counselors on-site to visit schools as well as support school-based counseling programs.

Further, AASB urges school districts, tribal entities, and appropriate agencies and communities to engage in responding to this serious and ongoing challenge, through the implementation of protective factors, ensuring culturally relevant strategies.

3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS

AASB recognizes the importance of positive school climate, building positive relationships, and student connectedness to school as powerful influences on student academic success and on reducing youth risk behaviors and urges the Legislature and state agencies to join AASB in supporting school district efforts to improve school climate and increase student connectedness to school. AASB supports efforts to provide a school environment that is free from weapons, harassment, bullying and intimidation in any form, violence, drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), and other factors that threaten the safety of students and staff while acknowledging that schools have not historically been safe for all students.

3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Legislature to provide funding for school-based student health services.

3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI) EDUCATION

AASB supports providing effective HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) education programs for students and parents, and training for certified and classified school staff. AASB supports an effective and comprehensive education effort that focuses on reducing risk by emphasizing abstinence, healthy decision making and refusal skills. Such instruction should also

include the use of barrier methods. An effective way to do this is to bring together a broad consensus of the community in order to develop and implement the district's HIV/AIDS curriculum on preventing HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY

AASB encourages responsible behaviors relating to human sexuality by supporting programs that promote abstinence, develop healthy decision-making skills, the importance of consent, teach refusal skills and promote prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

3.13 IN SUPPORT OF THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST

AASB fully supports the work of the Alaska Children's Trust and urges all member school boards to promote the Trust and its efforts to address the tragic consequences of abuse, neglect, violence, and crime experienced by too many of Alaska's children. AASB urges the Legislature to support and increase the Children's Trust Endowment.

3.15 SUPPORTING THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT

AASB urges the U.S. Congress to continue funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act at levels adequate to support effective education, counseling and prevention efforts. The Association recommends that such valuable new initiatives as preventing violence in the schools be funded through separate appropriation.

3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS

Good physical and mental health of children is essential if they are to take full advantage of the educational services offered by their school. AASB urges students, parents, educators, guardians, community groups, tribal entities and state and local agencies to collaborate on collective ways to ensure all children are prepared to learn through healthy eating habits, physical activity, social emotional learning awareness and access to adequate housing and health care including mental health. Due to the federally mandated Child Nutrition Act, funding to school districts should be increased to support adequate school services and programs to address those mandates. Specific school-based measures to reduce child obesity issues should include increased funding and support for traditional foods for school districts.

3.21 SUPPORTING EXPANSION OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE TO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

AASB endorses the expansion of health insurance coverage to school-age Alaska children and their families. The provision of medical benefits to these children and their families ensures more students will be able to remain healthy, focus on school and grow into productive adults.

3.23 SUPPORT OF FULL STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Legislature to continue to sufficiently fund the Public Health Nurse Program, community health aides/practitioners and other immunization

programs so that necessary and required immunizations and health screenings can be provided free of charge for all disadvantaged children and youth.

3.25 SUPPORTING SEX ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

AASB supports the expansion and funding of age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades K through 12. Passage of the Alaska Safe Children's Act of 2015 offers momentum towards this goal. The law requires schools to offer education to make children and youth aware of sexual abuse and assault, as well as dating violence and healthy relationships.

AASB also supports the prohibition of students being exempted from this education by parents/guardians, except under exceptional circumstances.

3.26 SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION OF TRAUMA-INFORMED AND CULTURALLY AFFIRMING PRACTICES

AASB urges its member districts to implement and educate families and the greater community on trauma-informed and culturally affirming practices, disciplinary policies, interactions and environments. The Association of Alaska School Boards understands the importance of meeting the needs of students who have experienced childhood trauma to improve student achievement and reduce behavioral deficits for all Alaskan students.

3.27 SUPPORT FOR THE TREATMENT OF ABUSE OF OPIATES

AASB advocates for appropriate legislative funding for opiate abuse treatment. AASB strongly supports both increasing resources for medication-assisted treatment within primary care as well as access to developmentally appropriate substance use disorder counseling in community settings, which may include schools.

3.28 EDUCATION ON THE DANGERS OF TOBACCO, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS, MARIJUANA USE AND SECONDHAND SMOKE

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to provide education awareness funding for publications and educational awareness opportunities on the danger of secondhand smoke in regards to tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems, and marijuana use.

Educators (Retention & Recruitment)

4.3 ALASKA STATEWIDE EDUCATOR MENTORING

AASB applauds the willingness of veteran educators to serve as mentors to Alaska's teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals. AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide adequate and permanent funding to continue professional staff mentoring. Mentors should also be trained to support new teachers to address implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards, which are critical in ensuring our State's diverse population of students have access to culturally relevant instruction.

4.5 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, SPECIALIST AND ADMINISTRATOR SHORTAGE

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska State Legislature, Alaska State Board of Education, and Teacher Education Programs in Alaska's universities to address the severe shortage of teachers, specialists, and administrators in the State of Alaska. Suggested strategies may include:

- Incentives (salary bonuses, student loan forgiveness, student loan assumption, competitive retirement benefits, student loan interest rate reduction, etc.);
- State supported marketing and licensure assistance to recruit teachers;
- Flexibility in certification requirements and reciprocity;
- Alternative routes to teacher certification;
- Improved access to technology including bandwidth and knowledgeable staff;
- Increasing availability and/or quality of teacher housing, including state subsidized teacher housing
- Mentoring programs for new teachers and administrators;
- Streamline the rehire of retired teachers and administrators;
- Professional support/development.
- Eliminate redundant or unnecessary paperwork.
- Increasing awareness about the lives and communities of Alaska's children.
- A defined benefit retirement system
- Utilize research on system supports that promote teacher retention.
- Train more Alaska students as educators
- Seek training opportunities for staff and high school students to increase the pool of qualified staff who are representative of the diverse population they teach.

4.6 REPEAL THE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATORS AASB supports the elimination of two little known amendments to the Social Security Act that unfairly penalize

certain public employees by reducing earned retirement benefits. They are the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT

AASB supports establishment of a defined benefit retirement program that improves the hiring and retention of highly qualified and effective staff.

4.11 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

AASB encourages the Department of Education & Early Development to develop alternative pathways for certifying teachers (a) to qualify vocational/career technology teachers to provide core academic credit; and (b) to recognize an indigenous teacher certification track that will use Native/indigenous knowledge systems and pedagogy as a base for training teachers able to more effectively teach Native students. The alternative pathways should be created with participation from both urban and rural districts.

4.18 ESTABLISHING A NEW TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR ALASKA

AASB requests that the Alaska State Legislature establish and fund a New Teacher Incentive Program for the purpose of attracting and retaining new teachers to Alaska school districts. A sample incentive program that could include the following:

1. The requirement that a participant be a graduate from an approved teacher certification program meeting the requirements of initial certification for the State of Alaska; or
2. Meet the requirements of 14.20.022 (Subject-matter expert limited teacher certificate) and be currently enrolled in a Teacher Certification Program of no less than 12 credit hours per year directly related to the graduation requirements for a Teaching degree, certificate, or endorsement qualifying the person for a Professional Teacher Certificate or Second Initial Teacher Certificate; and
3. Have all eligible Federal student loans consolidated with a loan program that qualifies for Teacher Loan Forgiveness (FFEL) as long as that program or any substantively similar program exists; and
4. The student must make minimum payments as required to maintain eligibility for Teacher Loan Forgiveness (FFEL); shall be provided
5. A one-time relocation bonus to the new teacher and his/her family of \$10,000 to the district in which they are hired; and
6. A student loan forgiveness payment of the lesser of 10% or \$15,000 directly to their student loan servicer upon completion of each of their first five years of teaching in the same district; and
7. Provide a student loan forgiveness payment directly to the loan servicer of the lesser of 10% or \$10,000 directly to their student loan servicer upon completion of each of their sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and 10th years teaching in Alaska, and
8. Payoff all remaining student loans, public or private, not to exceed \$25,000 total, after the eleventh year teaching in Alaska and after the employee provides evidence

that he has applied for Teacher Loan Forgiveness and met all application requirements; and

9. Providing a retention bonus of \$3,000 per year, through year 10, for any qualified teacher not receiving a student loan forgiveness payment in the program; and
10. Provide an additional retention bonus of \$5,000 per year for any teacher certified or endorsed in a Math or Science Subject, or in Special Education, in addition to any loan forgiveness payments or any other bonus.
11. *Fund the program as a state Grant through DEED for \$10 million per year (\$150 million total over 15 years) with preference for State of Alaska Residents, graduates from Alaska Colleges and Universities, and members of Alaskan Federally-Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.*

Jessica Cochran

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:42 AM

Legistators -

I support HB65 and raising the BSA to cover inflation. Strong public schools are the backbone of our society, and schools cannot be expected to work with what amounts to fewer dollars each year and continue serving the needs of all students in Alaska.

Thank you,

Jessica Cochran

[REDACTED]

Sarah Fineman

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:10 AM

Dear Representatives,

Our children and their education is vital to the future of our state. Even with inflation and costs going through the roof, our schools are being asked to improve education with insufficient funds. Teachers are being cut, class size is crazy. My son's Algebra class doesn't have enough seats for the 31+ students. This is unacceptable. The BSA should be substantially increased to provide for our children's education and the future of Alaska. Please support House Bill 65 and Senate Bill 52.

Thank you,

Sarah Fineman

Elizabeth Knapp

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:41 AM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I teach K-6 classroom music at Bowman Elementary School. I grew up in Anchorage, attending elementary, middle, and high school through ASD.

Please support increasing the base student allocation. Costs have gone up across the board and without an increase to the student allocation schools will be forced to close across the state and other programs will have to be cancelled. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accommodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. Schools are understaffed and unable to accommodate all the high needs students. At Bowman our Structured Learning Classes used to be full with 8 students and 2-3 paraprofessionals per classroom. Our SLC classrooms now are over capacity with 10+ students and 3 paraprofessionals, with many students who need one on one support. As a teacher I struggle meeting the needs of all my students when there is not the support in place for those high needs students. Paraprofessionals often have to leave the room to support one student and I am left in a classroom by myself or with just one other adult and the nine other high needs students.

The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates (many unfunded) , think special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. Schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Knapp

[REDACTED]

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 9:35 AM

Dear Representatives,

Our schools across this state are stagnating and students are suffering from the chronic underfunding over the past five years. This has deep ramifications for students, as well as teachers, who are over-worked trying to educate more students than they can possibly reach in any given class. But what's more, the lack of increased education funding is having a profoundly negative impact on our communities.

We can't attract workers and fill jobs when families choose not to move to our Alaskan communities because of a poor quality education system. Parents want the very best educational experience for their children, and if they don't see it here in Alaska, they will go elsewhere. If we can't attract a young workforce, we can't grow our communities, and our population will start to age out. Our industries and small businesses will languish, and the arts and culture in our communities will also decline. We already see this happening here in Juneau and I am sure that it is happening elsewhere in the state.

Quality education is the rich soil upon which all good things grow. It's what makes our communities liveable. According to ISER, in 2019, our per-pupil spending was 7% below the national average. The cost to deliver education in Alaska is understandably much higher for a host of reasons you all know well. Please make a robust increase to our base student allocation and help make Alaska a desirable destination for new workers and their families.

Thank you,

Sally Schlichting

Juneau

victory lavalley

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 10:07 AM

Dear Alaska senate,

I support raising the BSA to ensure that the public education system in Alaska has the teachers and resources to ensure an enriching and robust education for all Alaskan Students.

I support the Jan. 30th 2023 memo from the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee which indicates that the BSA would need to be raised by more than the \$1,000 to restore public education funding levels from 8 years ago.

As a parent of a special needs twice exceptional child; I have seen many angles of this lacking budget.

My daughter went from the highly gifted classroom to a general education program. Her class increased from 13-28!

My daughter became the "bad kid" that no one could deal with. The classroom toxic for all students, teachers, aids.

That all changed when she was moved into the SBBS program. She now loves school, she is thriving, succeeding, winning awards. Teachers and staff have the opportunity to meet her needs and it is beautiful. We actually now have a hope that she may go further than high school in life.

Our family is safe, healthy, and hopeful due to the amazing coaching and staff at Kasuun elementary. It's only been one year but our daughter is thriving!!!! I fear that with her moving into 6th grade the reinforcements and supports will be taken away if all middle school starts at 6th grade. If there is no increase in funding there will be more need for SRO (SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS).

Continuing to flat fund our education system is punitive and is akin to expecting better morale and performance in a workplace while treating one's employees with disrespect while simultaneously demanding that your employees work more hours for the same pay.

The BSA hasn't been meaningfully raised since 2012. This is known as flat funding. When inflation goes up but your paycheck doesn't, you have less money to spend. This is why flat funding is really a budget cut.

Please increase the BSA, keep our children safe and healthy.

Victory Cheney

████████████████████

Caitlin Marine

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 10:10 AM

Dear House Members on the Education Committee,

I teach Physical Education at Bartlett High School and I have worked in several elementary, middle and high schools in my years with ASD. I urge you to please support increasing the base student allocation. Costs have gone up across the board and without an increase to the student allocation schools will be forced to close across the state and other programs will have to be cancelled. Many of our new students are English Second Language Learners, schools now have to provide services with extra staffing to accomodate students with high needs and emotional and behavior problems, many more of our students are from disadvantaged neighborhoods whose parents had limited education. Schools are understaffed and unable to accommodate all the high needs students.

The schools in Alaska have had to meet federal mandates regarding special education requirements, bussing, and providing free and reduced lunches without any additional funding. Employee salaries have fallen behind the level they once were in comparison to other states and as a result we are having a harder time keeping and recruiting teachers to the profession. The retirement system is not as robust now. There is a severe shortage of teachers in both Alaska's cities and rural schools. Teachers are consistently having to add duties to their day in addition to teaching. Schools are often the most stable environment that students have and school staff does the best they can to provide a caring environment that meets both students' educational and emotional needs. Funds invested in our schools will in the long run pay off. Please vote to increase the student base allocation by at least the \$1250 suggested.

Thank you,

Caitlin Marine

Deedie Sorensen

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 11:03 AM

Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Deedie Sorensen. I moved to Juneau in 1981. I did so as a strategic move in my career as a teacher. I had two bachelor degrees, a master's degree, and a graduate level endorsement in special education when I arrived. My first year of teaching I almost doubled my salary. I traded in my opportunity to collect my earned Social Security benefits for a quality defined benefit retirement program and put down roots. Most of the teachers that I taught with eventually retired after 20-30 years of service. My role has changed since I moved to Juneau. I am in my fourth year on our school board and am currently the president. Because of my 40 plus years in close association with the schools, I am profoundly aware of how much we have lost over a considerable number of years. In the '80's and '90's Alaska was a great place to teach. Alaska attracted highly qualified teachers from all over the country. We had outstanding resource staffing. Teacher training was dynamic and cutting edge. The first major cut to education quality wasn't directly about the BSA. The RIP's (early retirement options) in the 90's, while economically positive on a spread sheet were a brain and talent drain. Highly trained and experienced teachers left the state by the hundreds, reducing education quality and taking the hundreds of thousands of dollars the state had invested in their training to new districts out of state. In addition, it shredded the normal attrition rate leaving districts without their most experienced staff to mentor new teachers. The next blow came when Governor Murkowski blew up the defined benefit retirement system, leaving Alaska the least attractive state to contemplate a long term career in education. One thing that survives from the last century, is the myth that teachers in Alaska continue to be highly compensated. That ship sailed in the '80's, docked in the '90's and sank with the change in the retirement system and decades of failure to prioritize education as part of a healthy economy.

The Juneau School District Mission Statement is: In Juneau, we partner to provide each student with meaningful relevant and rigorous learning experiences in order to graduate diverse, engaged citizens ready for a changing world.

If our school district is successful in accomplishing this task, then none of our students who go on to earn a teaching degree either in state or out of state would realistically ever consider staying in/returning to Alaska to teach as a long term career choice if they weigh the economic cost/benefit equation. A young teacher coming to or staying in Alaska encounters the high cost of living, housing shortages that drive rents beyond the recommended budget threshold for housing, a stagnant state economy, strikingly under resourced classrooms and a salary schedule that is not even competitive with communities in many western states. There is the tourist appeal of Alaska which brings in some new teachers, however there is no incentive to stay. There is no defined retirement benefit in Alaska and no Social Security. Alaska alone has

a "make it and take it" retirement plan. That is what young teachers do. They take their Alaska school district's investment in their professional training and experience, their Alaskan experience, and their defined contribution and move to a state with a positive economic forecast that values education, competitive wages combined with a lower cost of living, and for those who stay in education, a defined benefit retirement and maybe even Social Security. Unfortunately for many of our most challenged students, educators with advanced and specialized degrees don't come here at all.

Alaska school districts have been cutting educational options, opportunities and supports for decades. There is nothing left to cut. The State of Alaska contributes approximately one third of Juneau's school budget. The constitution says that the state should fund education, but the reality is, the State's failure to adequately fund the BSA not only drives, but by law, insures the skeletonizing of our students' education opportunities. The BSA needs to be increased by at least \$800-\$1000. Schools have patched together our budgets with federal pandemic monies. The monies are gone but the needs remain. To be clear, Alaska's schools were publicly asked to "do more with less" by the Commissioner of Education in the '90's. It has been the same refrain every year since. Schools have been cutting for 20+ years. I have watched the erosion of programs, support services, staff and instructional resources at every level and in every department. By 2010 I was spending more than \$3,000 of my own money to purchase instructional materials so that my students could have the same high level learning opportunities that my students had a decade before. Today, schools do as much as they can with fewer staff and educational resources every year. The model is not sustainable.

Sincerely,

Deedie Sorensen

Juneau Board of Education

Lee Henrikson

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 6:54 PM

Dear Representatives,

I am now retire and never had children. However, I am a strong supporter of schools and education. Therefore, I urge you to raise the BSA. The proposed increase of \$1250 per student is BSA is just keeping up with inflation. We've lost ground in support our children and our future. Let's make up that ground

Thank you,

Lee Maria Henrikson

[REDACTED]

Ashley Hutton

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:32 PM

I am a teacher of 10 years in Alaska and both of my parents were as well. Please add to the base student allocation, we are seeing schools closing and programs being cut. Please add the full \$1,250.

Thank you,
Ashley Hutton

Jeanne Anderson

To: Rep. Jamie Allard

Cc: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 7:38 PM

- > To whom it may concern,
- > I just read an article that indicates the per student allocation has not been raised since 2016. Our students deserve better. They are growing in a rapidly changing world in the time of a pandemic and classroom teachers are worried about trying to share boxes of crayons. Our teachers need to be able to buy supplies and support their classrooms in order to focus on giving kids the care and attention they need while we address the residual effects of schooling during COVID. PLEASE increase the per student allocation. PLEASE.
- >
- > Thanks for the consideration,
- > Jeanne Anderson (occupational therapist in a KPBSD school)

Michal

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Mon 2/20/2023 8:58 PM

Dear legislators:

I'm writing to you to please increase funding for our public schools. As a parent of two elementary school kids, public education is a priority for me. Our kids are our future. It is distressing that Alaska schools perform so poorly on standardized tests. Please give our schools more resources. Our schools should be held accountable, so I also encourage you to consider other ways to foster improvement. Let's study what other poorly performing states have done that has worked. And then let's implement in. Create a non-partisan commission to do this. We should be ashamed that our kids score last in the nation on standardized tests. While such tests are not everything, they are an objective measure that our schools are failing. This needs to change. Everything in Alaska costs more than in other states, and so our schools also need to be funded more heavily than in other states.

Thank you for your time.

Michal Stryszak

Anchorage

Anita Green

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 9:54 AM

Good Morning,

How does one legitimize not funding education? We are allocating mountains of dollars to homelessness, violence, and mental illness... which are just symptoms of those who can't cope with life. Doesn't it make more sense to focus on the root of the problem? If children were to be the priority, and we better prepare them for success in life (and education is a great part of that), their future would change, along with the future of Alaska.

I'm all for raising the BSA but let's make sure that it is used wisely. The priority should be to employ and sustain great teachers, lower the class sizes, and make the buildings safe.

It is important also, to return sports and arts. Sports teach team building and provide real socialization instead of virtual, not to mention physical fitness. The Arts allow for self expression and have been proven to increase learning.

Our predecessors were thinking of our future when they instituted the permanent fund. It is selfishness that drives Alaskans to feel entitled to draw from that fund, without ensuring the future of the next generation.

Anita Green

[REDACTED]

Colleen Ford

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 10:03 AM

Please vote to increase the BSA for Alaskan students. Alaskan education faces many unique challenges that need to be handled through the Alaskan Public School Systems. Please continue to support public education, we cannot give away these funds to private entities. No School chose as well. Thank you

Michael Wald

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 4:10 PM

Thank you for making education funding a priority at the start of the legislative session. This is a critically important issue not only for students but for our entire state. We desperately need to increase the BSA by a minimum of \$1250.

Education funding has not increased for years and the cost of nearly everything has increased dramatically. The state has slowly defunded our schools and many are now at a breaking point. Districts that have been solvent and responsible for decades are unable to pay utility bills. Our urban schools are moth-balling buildings. We have hundreds of unfilled job vacancies for teaching positions across the state. Our school districts need more money from the state. The funding is over-due and a \$1250 increase will barely keep up with the accumulated inflation since the last increase to the BSA.

I urge you to increase the BSA by at least \$1250. What is more important for the future of Alaska than our youth.

Thank you for serving the people of Alaska.

Michael

Bruce Parham

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Tue 2/21/2023 4:15 PM

Dear Representative Ortiz,

I strongly urge you and your colleagues on the House Education Committee to pass House Bill 65, to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA), with an addition of \$1,250 to the BSA.

I am in favor of boosting the BSA to help Alaska's 55 urban and rural school districts catch up with years of inflation and having to make large program and services cuts.

Coming from a family of educators (both of my parents were elementary school teachers), I am especially concerned about continuing along the present path of large class sizes and trying to provide a stable learning environment for K-12, developmentally and intellectually challenged students, etc.

I am a retired federal government employee. I live in the Sand Lake area of South Anchorage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

R. Bruce Parham

[Redacted Signature]

Megan Martz

Tue 2/21/2023 9:22 PM

Dear Legislator,

My name is Megan Martz. I am a resident of Cantwell, in the Denali Borough, where my husband and I recently purchased land and built a home. I am a former educator, and the parent of an 11-month-old baby girl.

I am writing in support of HB 65, proposing to increase the BSA by \$1,250 to \$7,210. In lieu of an ability to increase education funding that significantly, I would strongly advise passing SB 52, which proposes to increase the BSA by \$1,000 to \$6,960, as a minimum allocation for the 23/24 school year.

Education should be our state and nation's number one priority. Children are our future, and there can be no greater investment than to support them and encourage them to grow and become educated, contributing members of our society. I was disappointed to learn that the Denali Borough School District was considering closing the Cantwell school, located in our local community for next school year, as a direct result of funding that has not kept up with inflation or supported increased school costs in recent years. **Such a school closure would be devastating for the entire community of Cantwell.**

A community that is already struggling economically, Cantwell continues to have a draw for new residents such as myself because the vistas are amazing, the outdoor recreation opportunities are unmatched, the community is a supportive and interesting place, and land/home purchasing opportunities are few and far between in the borough as a whole. If the school were to close, real estate prices in Cantwell would drop further, children would need to be bussed more than a one hour drive each way to Healy for school (10 hours/week!), and there would be less incentive and draw for others to come and revitalize our area.

At a recent school board meeting I saw so much hope. There are several new parents in the area; there is young, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial blood in the room, but even we - who have a significant investment in the area, having just built our own home here, will think about moving on if there is not a local school option as our daughter gets to be school aged. The school is the heart of this community. There are real and present impacts to not funding education at a rate that will maintain spending levels, and I'm writing to beseech you to please not only increase funding, but increase it significantly to help revitalize the schools that have been making cuts and making do since the last raise in 2017.

Residents and former attendees of the Cantwell School detailed what staffing levels used to be like when they were in school - they told of a school with several teachers, with extracurriculars,

with newly painted and cared for facilities and updated playground equipment. Now we are staring at a school that will have only one teacher for K-12 next school year, and no other teachers, principals, or adults with whom to interact in that giant, quiet school. We have a chicken and egg situation here where if we can bring back staffing and show a vibrant school with resources, energy, and opportunities for direct interaction in a small setting, I feel sure the community could attract more residents and attendees. But as the resources at the school dwindle, so too do the prospects of attracting new attendees who will bring increased funding. The fate of this entire community truly rests in the legislatures' hands and decision to fund (or not fund) education in the years ahead.

Please buy into our children and support HB 65 to increase the BSA significantly and show our priorities are in the right place. I recognize there are challenges with ensuring the state's financial future remains stable, but this is one fiscal responsibility that cannot bear compromise.

Thank you for taking the time to review my thoughts and many thanks to you for serving your community and state in the legislature. I know only a small piece of the pressures and challenges you must face in that seat and appreciate that you're up to the task of keeping these many plates spinning.

Sincerely,

Megan Martz

Kimm Schwartz

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Wed 2/22/2023 8:39 AM

Dear Mr. Ortiz,

I support your proposal to increase state and federal funding for Ketchikan and the state of Alaska schools.

The past few school board meetings have indicated that the Ketchikan Gateway School District is struggling financially due to a lack of state aid, federal impact assistance, and other factors.

These past two years, educator, para, and health aide positions that have existed since my children were students in the KGBSD were moved to COVID funding as a creative way to support these positions since money was short. COVID funding has now disappeared, and this monetary shortfall threatens these critical positions, including the frontline School Health Aide (HA) position.

As the District School Nurse, hearing this is greatly disturbing. I see the importance of all these positions, especially the Health Aide's role in keeping our kids healthy and safe, especially in schools with highly intensive students.

Many medically fragile children would not have come to my attention without our health aides contacting me and sharing their concerns. Many children in our school district struggle with chronic diseases and emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues that need constant monitoring. A child visiting the Health Aides' offices sometimes receives much-needed comfort and mental health support.

Children often come into the office complaining of a tummy ache when they really need a hug, reassurance that they are ok, someone to talk to about situations at home, or a few minutes of rest. They are comforted, and they return to class. Parents rely on Health Aides for information, support, and watching over their children when they are hurt or sick.

What is the plan for overseeing these children if these positions are eliminated? The schools are already taxed with staffing shortages. Some staff members are presently juggling more than one position. Are they now expected to fill another role as a health Aide? There are very few schools that, when I visit, do not have five or six children coming into the HA office. Their offices have a revolving door.

From a nurse's perspective, there is much-needed work to be done in our school district. There are many gaps in information sharing and processes, and policies. Our KGBSD staff need and deserve training and opportunities to help address these concerns and bring us together to fill these gaps. More staffing is required, not less.

Our Children need and deserve to feel safe and attended to while in school; they need a place to go when hurt or unsure. We need the "right" people in place to listen to them and care for them. The health aides are some of these "right" people. They help identify areas where we can do better. They are the frontline.

Thank you so much for your attention and participation.

Sincerely;

Kimm Schwartz BSN, RN

Ketchikan Gateway Borough

School District Nurse

- *"Nothing has ever been achieved by the person who says, 'It can't be done.'"* Eleanor Roosevelt

Marie Husa

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Wed 2/22/2023 8:50 PM

I support this bill. Please pass it. As a member of the Filipino community, our community is severely impacted when education is underfunded. Increasing the BSA will have effects that will be wide-reaching. It will have a positive effect in our state and our economy.

Thank you!

Marie Husa

[REDACTED]

Franklin Dekker

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Thu 2/23/2023 7:58 AM

Dear Alaska House Education Committee Co-Chairs & Committee Members,

I would like to voice my support for House Bill 65 "Increase Base Student Allocation." Failure to tie the base student allocation (BSA) to inflation has resulted in annual budget cuts to our children's education since 2017. The status quo is unsustainable for our students, teachers and state. Please act, and pass HB 65.

Sincerely,

Franklin Dekker

[REDACTED]

Kim Erickson

To: House Education; Rep. Dan Ortiz

Thu 2/23/2023 10:31 AM

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 65 proposing a \$1,250 addition to the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

It is my strong belief that for the long-term success of our state and residents, we MUST increase our funding for education in Alaska. Years of flat funding have created a crisis in our schools. This addition is nothing more than adjusting the BSA to a level where it should be had the BSA been adjusted for inflation annually.

I would also like to note that I am in favor of limiting the annual PFD payout to \$1,000 to pay for increased spending on education and other critical items in our state.

Sincerely,

Kimberly W. Erickson

[REDACTED]

Leigh Woodward

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz

Fri 2/24/2023 4:31 PM

Dear Representative Dan Ortiz,

Please urge your fellow lawmakers to increase the BSA!!!

Also, since I have your attention, I would like for the legislature in Alaska to consider looking to Mississippi to see how they were able to increase their reading skills for demographics such as African American, and Hispanic/Latino. They are doing a LOT of things right there and the education community is impressed!

I looked over our NAEP scores (don't ask me what that stands for right now but it's the tests that all American students take in 4th and 8th grade) and I noticed that 83 % of our Alaska Native students are far below a basic level of reading in the 4th grade. That number is just unacceptable. Comparatively, caucasian students were NOT reading to the tune of 30%. The same is true for math.

We need government systems to teach teachers how to teach reading because it's NOT happening and it's NOT the teacher's fault. It's a failure of the system. I would LOVE to talk more about this.

Thank you for your consideration and service to our great state.

Sincerely,
Leigh Woodward

[REDACTED]

Strongly supports HB65 being moved out of committee, open to public testimony, and passed.

Mike Bucy (Local Teacher and Political organizer)

[REDACTED]

Stopped in 02/28 3:45pm

Jennifer M. Collins



**Representative Justin Ruffridge
State Capitol Room 104
Juneau AK, 99801
907-465-2693**

March 1, 2023

Dear Representative Ruffridge,

I am a proud, 21-year Alaska resident working as an Environmental and Permitting professional in the Oil & Gas industry. Together with my husband who also works in the Oil & Gas, we are raising two boys, ages 7 and 11.

My ask is simple: fully fund education in Alaska. We don't need a larger PFD. We don't need any more standardized tests that take up valuable time when our kids should be learning. What we need is to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) through House Bill 65 and ensure our students have the best chance at success in life, starting with the education we provide to them.

We also need to ensure that we are attracting and retaining teaching talent through competitive pay, benefits, and retirement programs. It is no secret that the Anchorage School District (ASD) is struggling to fill teaching positions, and this will only get worse as increasing costs put more strain on the budget. In the last few years, I have watched as two exceptional teachers have left our public elementary school for private schools, a direct result of funding issues at ASD. While we have the means to send our boys to private school, I am a strong believer in the public school system and am determined for our children to remain in our neighborhood schools, just as my husband I did for our entire upbringing.

School funding in Alaska has not increased for more than five years, all while costs have increased by 24%. This is frankly, embarrassing at best and against the state constitution at worst since our constitution mandates that "The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all students of the State."

I sincerely hope that you take those words to heart and support increasing the BSA.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Collins

Braeden Garrett

From: Michael J. Connors, O.D. @ NATIVEYE [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 3:44 PM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: SB 52, HB 65

Hello,

I am writing to ask for your support for these two bills. It is imperative that we find our educational system in Alaska. Additionally, sports and pool complexes are integral to our communities and the development of our youth.

Please support these bills and let us get the additional funding we need to foster healthy communities. Otherwise, we become a banana republic nation finding only war and police.

Thank you

Michael Connors, OD

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Braeden Garrett

From: Danae McKinney [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 3, 2023 1:50 PM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: Please do all you can to make sure HB65 passes into law

Hello Representative Ruffridge,

I am an employee of the Kodiak Island Borough School District, and I am writing to ask you to do all in your power to make sure HB65 is passed into law.

The increase to the Base Student Allocation is not only a long time in coming, it is at a critical point right now. Due to the 6 ½% - 7% inflation hike we are all experiencing, if our district doesn't receive more funding soon, they will begin to not rehire for teacher positions (for teachers who leave the district), which will increase class sizes, and the district will cut valuable programs just to make ends meet. From what I learned this morning the KIBSD has a \$4,000,000 deficit right now, and something will have to go. I know we are a small district, but recent news of Anchorage closing schools should further encourage you to increase the BSA.

Please preserve our children's educations and our teachers' jobs. Your actions will directly affect the health and welfare of Alaskan families – your constituents.

Most Respectfully,

Danaë McKinney

Sent from my iPhone

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

James Sexton

From: Janice Banta [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 3, 2023 3:39 PM
To: Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Cc: Rep. Mike Prax; Rep. CJ McCormick; Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Rebecca Himschoot; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; House Education
Subject: Support for an Increase in the BSA

Dear Representatives:

It seems like most Alaskans have now heard that, when adjusted for inflation, public education funding in Alaska has been stagnant for 20 years. I truly appreciate that the legislature appears to be coming together this year to address this critical funding issue. In my mind, there is not a more fundamental role for government than providing for the education of our children.

Funding must be dealt with to ensure a quality education for our children as well as to keep Alaska's future economy competitive. Alaska cannot prosper without a solid, well-funded and stable public education system - 90% of our kids go to public schools, so all kids are our kids! Despite significant inflation and skyrocketing costs of operations, our school districts have been asked to provide better learning outcomes while cutting staff and programs across the board. Alaska is a wealthy state, and we should prioritize our kids' education to ensure their healthy growth and our State's long term prosperity.

In my hometown, the Anchorage School District has increased the Student/Teacher ratio this year to meet their budget shortfall, yet ASD is now facing an even bigger deficit for the 2024/25 school year. ASD will close schools and increase the Student to Teacher ratio again if they do not receive additional funding through the Base Student Allocation (BSA). The reality is that any addition to the BSA is just adjusting it to a level where it should be if it had been inflation adjusted annually.

Please continue to work to gather to ensure that the two bills in the State Legislature proposing an addition to the BSA, HB 65 and Senate Bill 52, are passed with significant funding as originally drafted.

Sincerely, Joe Banta

[REDACTED]