

James Sexton

From: btyndall [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2023 7:37 PM
To: House Education
Subject: HB 65

Dear Representative:

I am contacting you today in opposition to HB 65. Throwing money at our ineffective education system has not helped in the past and will not do so at this time. We need accountability and proof of outcomes attached to any money we send to our schools. Most of the allocated funds go for administration rather than the classroom and that is a travesty.

Alaskans continue to pull their children out of our public schools and are moving toward homeschooling with much better outcomes.

Please reject raising the BSA this year and put in place a system that will actually fix the problems.

Thank you,
Barbara Tyndall
North Pole

Sent with Proton Mail secure email.

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&sfj=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: Jon and Ruth Ewig [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, March 19, 2023 10:57 PM
To: House Education; Jon and Ruth Ewig; [REDACTED]
duncanaands@protonmail.com
Subject: We oppose HB65 which gives money to the BSA with no accountability. The NEA does not need more money wasted and not invested in the students' academic improvement. We want our full statutory PFD.

Jon and Ruth Ewig
[REDACTED]

James Sexton

From: Rebecca Schwanke [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 10:37 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Jamie Allard; House Education
Cc: Rep. Mike Cronk; Sen. Mike Shower; Becky Schwanke; Katrina Church-Chmielowski; Joshua Scott; Hannah Bengtson; [REDACTED] Rep. George Rauscher
Subject: Opposition to HB65

Dear Representative Ruffridge, Representative Allard and other respected members of the House Education committee,

I want to offer comment before today's hearing of HB65, to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) \$1250, increasing the State's BSA from \$5,960 to \$7,210. I want to commend you bringing Alaska's youth education to the forefront and working together to find a long-term solution. However, I am opposed to this bill at this time because the State, and particularly our rural Alaskan residents right now cannot afford this.

What we can afford is personal time and commitment to our children's education. Tonight is our Copper River School District (CRSD), Superintendent Search community event. Then tomorrow evening during the hearing, I will be helping coach one last practice for my son's hockey team before they head to their State Tournament. My son as it turns out had to choose, hockey or Math Counts State Championships as he is the 2023 rural Math Counts Champion. I could not be more proud of my son of all his efforts and commitments to bettering himself. To me as a CRSD Board of Education member and a parent, these are the things that count. This is how my son and all our local kids continue to get the best education possible.

Alaska's children deserve the best education we can give them. Alaska's teachers deserve the best competitive environment we can offer them. AASB is right on these points. Will a higher BSA automatically result in something better for all our children? No.

Alaska's schools are hurting. Our transportation costs exceed our allocations, across the board. Our capital improvement needs exceed our allocations, across the board. Our insurance costs are rising rapidly and are beyond our control at the District level. Our retention and recruitment is poor, but not unlike the rest of the Alaska's State employment sector right now.

If you adopt this bill, my District will lose even more students. We are already down 10% in recent years due to the increasing cost of energy here in rural Alaska. If you blindly adopt this bill, or any significant resemblance of it, without concurrently developing a new long-term consistent revenue source for education, the funding will come directly from the Permanent Fund Dividend. This is the current reality, and it is not acceptable. It is certainly not in the best interest of districts across rural Alaska.

I respect your time and your consideration of this matter. Please keep talking, keep trying. My District has done a respectable job of using the Covid ESSER grant funds these last couple years to help our kids where they need it the most and set them up for a better future knowing this was one-time funding. When it ends, our District will manage and our kids will not lose out. This was a difficult task and not one that all districts did well. It was a lot of money thrown at us fast. Much was expended on new staff and programs across the state. Yes it will hurt when these end, but it's Econ101. Inflation is hurting all of us, but we must tighten our belts, together.

I wanted to add one more point for your consideration. Alaska's kids will only succeed if Alaskan parents put in more time and effort. We have some remarkable educators across the State, but they can't do their job when kids come to school glued to smart phones, sleep deprived and hungry. Parents need to send their kids to school ready to learn, teaching their children the true value of education in doing so. Parents need to hold their local schools accountable, get involved, volunteer. Alaskans have to do better.

The below snapshots are provided just to offer a little insight into how much parents matter. I pulled the State AKSTAR report card data from the first 4 charter schools in ASD's list, and then from my son's local CRSD Upstream correspondence school. Every school is trying their best for our children, but some have found more success than others. The difference here is not school funding, it is community and it is parents that really matter.

If you really want to help our schools, find a way to fix our school roofs and boilers, find a way to help increase energy efficiency, find a way for us to pool our insurance. Then buckle down and find a way to develop a long-term sustainable school funding model for Alaska. There's nothing wrong with addressing school accountability along the way.

I see the price of oil today is \$70.84. Alaskans win at the pump, but we lose when it comes to State-funded programs. We will feel even more of the pinch in coming years if we don't figure out how to diversify and responsibly increase our state revenue.

These comments are wholly my own. I do not speak for the CRSD Board of Education.

Thank you for your time,

Rebecca Schwanke

Copper River School District (CRSD) BOE member and parent

AKSTAR Data - Alaska's Parent Report Card <https://education.alaska.gov/compass/report-card>

First 4 charter school's in ASD's list, and my son's local school Upstream Learning

Anchorage School District - Alaska Native Cultural Charter School

ELA

Demographic	Advanced Percent			Proficient Percent			Below Proficient Percent		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students	3.36%	10.93%	8.91%	16.11%	22.99%	20.60%	39.60%	29.01%	27.7%

Anchorage School District - Aquarian Charter School 2021-2022

ELA

Demographic	Advanced Percent			Proficient Percent			Below Proficient Percent		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students	32.82%	10.93%	8.91%	29.74%	22.99%	20.60%	29.74%	29.01%	27.7%

Anchorage School District - Eagle Academy Charter School

ELA

	Advanced Percent			Proficient Percent			Below Proficient Percent		
Demographic	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students	23.16%	10.93%	8.91%	48.42%	22.99%	20.60%	22.11%	29.01%	27.7%

Anchorage School District - Family Partnership Charter School

ELA

	Advanced Percent			Proficient Percent			Below Proficient Percent		
Demographic	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students	23.81%	10.93%	8.91%	36.51%	22.99%	20.60%	22.22%	29.01%	27.7%

Copper River School District – Upstream Learning

ELA

	Advanced Percent			Proficient Percent			Below Proficient Percent		
Demographic	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students	19.67%	9.79%	8.91%	44.26%	27.84%	20.60%	11.48%	24.23%	27.7%

James Sexton

From: Hannah Bengtson [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 11:26 AM
To: Rebecca Schwanke
Cc: Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Jamie Allard; House Education; Rep. Mike Cronk; Sen. Mike Shower; Rep. George Rauscher
Subject: Re: Opposition to HB65
Attachments: 1679335853780blob.jpg; Statement to the legislature.docx

Dear representative.

I am Hannah Bengtson

I too am a member of the Copper River School district.

I speak to the issue of the BSA as a parent, the opinion stated in the attached letter is my personal opinion.

I will piggy back on what my friend and colleague Rebecca has noted.

Parents are what makes Education successful.

Hannah Bengtson

On Mon, Mar 20, 2023, 10:37 AM Rebecca Schwanke [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Representative Ruffridge, Representative Allard and other respected members of the House Education committee,

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These comments are wholly my own. I do not speak for the CRSD Board of Education.

Thank you for your time,

Rebecca Schwanke

Copper River School District (CRSD) BOE member and parent

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Anchorage School District - Aquarian Charter School 2021-2022



Anchorage School District - Eagle Academy Charter School



Anchorage School District - Family Partnership Charter School



Copper River School District – Upstream Learning



To the 33 Legislature of the state of Alaska

My name is Hannah Bengtson

I am a resident of and Parent in the Copper River School district

I would like to speak to the Bills before Both houses to raise the education BSA by \$1000. To not mince words we all know where the money for this will come from. It will be funded through the PFD. There is not one person I know who opposes education or even opposes funding education. Education is the right and privilege of all Alaskan Americans, the best opportunity any one has ever been given is an education funded by the state governments and the federal government. Teachers and educators, at all levels are the strongest, truly caring individuals I have the privilege of knowing.

If the BSA increase at this level passes it will cost many Alaskans their futures. HB 44 "an Act relating to education; Relating to public schools and school districts; establishing a cultural education program and providing an effective date." This bill enunciates the fact that in Alaska culture is of paramount importance to us all, no matter what culture we come from, we value the cross culture connectives that comes from knowing that the students here are ALL Alaska's students and no matter what district they are in, they are all the future of our state. If we remove their families ability to live and thrive in the lands inhabited for many, many thousands of years what have we done to our culture?

In a time when many if not most Alaskan families are struggling to pay for basic energy needs such as fuel and electricity, how can our communities continue to thrive? When our legislative bodies choose bloated budgets off our backs you destroy our ability to survive in our remote communities where our culture is strongest. The closer we come to the urban areas the more we lose the connectives to our land, our oceans, and our rivers that provide our strength as Alaska's children. We will ultimately lose the culture that connects us to who we are as individual people to each other. Our rural communities are shrinking, my own has lost 9% of our students in the last year. It breaks my heart to see people forced to leave because of the rising cost of basic necessities such as heating fuel and electricity. Small communities like mine in Copper River are slowly dying. If we don't continue to receive healthy PFD's we will die more quickly, so will our culture, so will my children's future. Since you care so much about our culture please help us save it by funding a statutory PFD rather than raising the BSA by \$1000.

A BSA raise would be helpful for our rising costs of education or even a utility offset grant would be more appropriate for the challenges we are all facing with the rising cost of fuel. School districts will be forced to get creative and innovative in how the finances they have are utilized in the best interest of all Alaska's students. Inter district collaboration and deeper family involvement will truly be the success of our Schools no matter how much the BSA is.

\$1000 is an irresponsible use of the state's financial resources.

Braeden Garrett

From: Katrina Church-Chmielowski [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 11:57 AM
To: Rep. Justin Ruffridge; House Education; Rep. Jamie Allard
Cc: Rep. Mike Cronk; Rep. George Rauscher; Sen. Mike Shower; Sen. Click Bishop; Rebecca Schwanke; Joshua Scott; Naomi Stickney; Hannah Bengtson
Subject: Opposition to HB65

Dear Representatives Ruffridge, Allard, and other respected members of the House Education committee:

I am Katrina Church-Chmielowski from Copper Center and would like to comment in opposition to HB65, meant to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1,250. I have served on the Copper River School District Board of Education since 2008 and today speak as a parent, not for the Board of Education. My husband and I were born and raised in the Copper Basin and raised our three children here, all graduates of Glennallen High School. We have seen the Alaskan and local economy rise and sink multiple times and have watched this school district dwindle from 850+ students to our current 411 since the 2000s.

My main opposition to HB65 is sustainability. The funds will come from the PFD, which rural families statewide depend upon to pay fuel bills, other utilities, and fund education after high school. Our electricity dropped to just 0.3628 a kilowatt this month. The last time our fuel and electricity bills were so high in our district, our schools had a dramatic drop in enrollment due to the high cost of utilities. Our district hit hold harmless five times in six years with a 10%+ drop in enrollment each year last time. This year our enrollment dropped 9%+, just shy of the 10% mark.

Funding the \$1250 BSA increase from the PFD, the most likely revenue source, will negatively affect our student population. While I appreciate efforts to help schools with more money, I would rather see a sustainable state budget, one that doesn't continue to dip into the citizen's PFD which is so important in rural Alaska. I would rather see rewards for school innovation, increased energy efficiency, and a long-term sustainable school funding model for our students. At the end of the day, \$1,250 isn't going to help us when we have fewer and fewer students in the schools.

Thank you for your time.

Best,
Katrina Church-Chmielowski
Owner, Alaska Golden Guesthouse, LLC
[REDACTED]