

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Madeline Martin <madeline.martin@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 7:49 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Proposed BSA

To whom it may concern,

There has been no evidence that increased funding correlates to improved education. The school districts are scrambling for money because parents are choosing to put their students in homeschool or charter schools. There are a variety of reasons for this, including individualized education opportunities. A key reason is the fact that public school teachers are teaching students to reject their parents' moral, social, and political grounding, presenting both history and current issues from a pervasively slanted approach. This seeps into all of the humanities subjects, and even into arts and sciences. Until this changes (and the likelihood of it changing is slim), a BSA increase will not help the school districts as parents continue to choose education that does not turn their children against them.

*Miss Madeline*

Migrant Education Tutor

Lathrop High School - Rm. 204 (Ext. 17204)

Lathrop availability - Mondays, Extension (T/W/Th), Mornings (T/W/Th), After School (M-Th)

Ryan Middle School - Migrant Ed/ANE Room (Ext. 13136)

Ryan availability - Advisory (T/W/Th), Fridays

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." - Jim Elliott

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Mark Vink <mvink@bssd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 1:02 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase in BSA

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee.

We support the proposed increase to the Base Student Allocation.

We have had our operating costs increase dramatically since June of 2017. The best example of this is fuel oil. In June of 2017, we paid \$2.23 per gallon of fuel oil. This past summer or June of 2022, we paid \$4.36 per gallon of fuel oil. That is almost doubling the cost to heat our schools and housing units.

Through construction projects of updated schools and housing units, we have been able to decrease usage by around 25,000 gallons.

As fuel prices have increased, related costs of travel, shipping , electric, and water have also increased.

We thank you for your past assistance and am hopeful for the increase to avoid a reduction in services in the future.

Thank you,

Mark Vink

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Mark Vink  
Business Manager  
Bering Strait School District  
P.O. Box 225  
Unalakleet, AK 99684  
(907)624-4256  
(907)625-1015 cell  
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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Marnie Graham <mgraham5898@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 1:08 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Fwd: Education funding

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Marnie Graham** <[mgraham5898@gmail.com](mailto:mgraham5898@gmail.com)>  
Date: Wed, Feb 1, 2023, 01:04  
Subject: Education funding  
To: <[senate.education@aklegis.gov](mailto:senate.education@aklegis.gov)>

Our kids are our future. Investing in our kids demonstrates we value our children and their future. The funding formula needs increased to keep up with inflation at a minimum. We are no longer able to recruit and retain teachers at current salary levels. Young adults no longer view education as a viable career choice. Funding formula needs to address costs are higher in Bush and rural Alaska. Anchorage has a large enough tax base to make up for funding formula shortfalls, where Bush and rural Alaska are not. Schools also need to be able to employ full time aides and provide benefits in order to recruit and retain qualified staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment!

Marnie Graham  
[Mgraham5898@gmail.com](mailto:Mgraham5898@gmail.com)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Megan Peltier <mkpeltier@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:04 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase school funding

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support increasing funding to Alaska's public schools in order to better support our children.

I have lived in Alaska since I was 3 years old and attended and graduated from Anchorage School District schools. I have 3 children - the older two are currently in ASD's French Immersion program and the youngest will enter Kindergarten next year. Due to the flat funding ASD has received from the State (no increase to account for inflation really means it was a cut in funding) the language immersion programs, as well as many other programs which make our schools special and provide important opportunities for our children, were facing elimination and major cutbacks. Thankfully the language immersion programs received a reprieve - at least for now.

Our consumer price index has risen by more than 15% in the last five years while the Base Student Allocation was raised by only 0.5% which is unacceptable. Increasing the BSA to at least \$5960 to help offset that inflation and also "inflation proofing" the BSA for the future are key steps to providing our children with quality education.

I know some legislators are hesitant to increase funding without seeing improvements in student test scores. But how can we expect to increase test scores with funding that has essentially been cut by not keeping pace with inflation? For my family in particular, the language immersion program was at risk, and immersion programs have been shown to improve student test performance. Cutting language immersion programs and increasing class sizes across ASD would be a major detriment to student instruction and test scores. We need proper funding to attract quality teachers, keep class sizes manageable, and retain programs that make ASD a stand out school district - all of which will contribute to improving student test scores.

Your constituents and all Alaskans are relying on you and your colleagues to make the right decision and increase funding for our schools.

Children are our future, please invest in our future.

Sincerely,  
Megan Peltier

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michael Baldwin <baldwinm@pribilofsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 4:34 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA increase

Hello, I am Michael Baldwin, Superintendent / K-12 Principal from Pribilof School District, Saint Paul Island. I was on the phone, but with our poor phone service I was bumped off from a loss call or couldn't call back in.

Please take this email as my public testimony on public education on the BSA increase. Here in the Pribilofs we have been hit with the Crab closure. Our community is hurting and will be in a state of panic to make things work. With the same flat funding we have in the past will cause a loss to our school in programs, and possible teacher renewal or reduction of force. We have always depended on community involvement, and entity funding donations to help our programs thrive. With the lack of increase in BSA and our community crash on funds due to no crabbing in the Bering Sea, I can see our school really suffering financially to maintain our school programs, sponsored trips, teacher retention due to increase in travel and cost of living or keeping our teachers from a reduction of force from financial loss. We are paying more on inflation to get supplies, materials, fuel, electricity travel and if we don't increase the BSA our school will be using more general funds to pay for the inflation increase and not to our programs, students, and staff.

Please keep us small rural communities in your thoughts on the decisions you will make that affect us all.

Thank you for your time.

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Michael Baldwin  
Pribilof School District  
Superintendent / K-1 Principal  
Cell: 907-351-5305  
Office: 907-546-3327  
Email: [baldwinm@pribilofsd.org](mailto:baldwinm@pribilofsd.org)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Michael Still <mike.j.still@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 2:54 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** School Funding

Dear Alaska Legislators,

It comes to my attention that you are voting on an issue very important to me this afternoon. I am in support of increasing the base student allocation for Alaskan students. Our kids need every advantage they can get to learn and grow so that our state can compete with the rest of the country and the world. Costs have gone up for everyone these past few years and schools will be forced to close, fire and cancel programs if we don't provide them with the necessary budget. \$1000 increase per student is the minimum we should be looking at!

Thank you,  
Mike Still

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Regards,  
Mike Still  
Teacher, Photographer, Writer  
[LiveTravelTeach.com](http://LiveTravelTeach.com)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Nancy Lehnhart <aklehnarts@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 9:54 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** strong education funding

Dear Education Committee,

Thank you for giving this important issue your attention and time. I am a Juneau resident and parent and Elementary Art teacher. In the Juneau School district I am the only art teacher for our 7 elementary schools. Art time is definitely a rich and joyful time, our young students have amazing things to say and express!

I go in and out of all elementary classrooms in Juneau and three things are so very clear,

- I'm impressed with the efforts teachers are making to reach students. It's very hard.
- High class sizes are a reality and very, very impactful. Flat (lower) funding each year is raising class sizes and is exactly the opposite of what is needed to meet needs.
- Early-career and talented newer teachers are not staying with teaching in Alaska because of low public support, low and uncertain salaries, and no teacher pension. I have a daughter who has just started teaching and she and her cohorts are understandably either close to leaving the field of teaching or are planning a move to another state to teach where their work is more supported. We are not keeping our next generation of strong educators.

Strong public schools are the work and heart of the communities.

Please turn this around and restore a strong commitment to funding schools!

Raise the BSA.

In gratitude,  
Nancy Lehnhart

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Nicholas Settle <nicholassettle@nomeschools.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 10:08 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Written Testimony for Public Hearing on Educational Funding 2/1/23

Honored members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Nicholas Settle, I am the assistant-principal of Nome Elementary School, in Nome Alaska. I provide this written statement as testimony for the Public Education Funding public testimony hearing.

I began serving in my current position at the start of this school year. While my tenure in this position has been short, I have already seen the great need that my school and others have for more funding. Our school district was known for its great music program, rich in instrumental and vocal performance. Due to budget cuts, we have had to cut this program back. Now elementary students do not receive any musical education until they reach middle school. Not just music, but art too. We have no art teacher at our school due to budget constraints. As such, they do not begin to see an art class until middle school as well. This robs our youth of valuable artistic creativity and expression, stunting development.

Further, in today's post-COVID landscape the need for social workers and counselors is at an all-time high. At the end of this school year, we will be losing our counselor due to the end of grant funding. Just looking across the country at the trend to violence from students who have no emotional outlet or person they can see to help with emotional support, it makes me worry for our students. Our state has an unreasonably high rate of suicide in our youth... a number that rises every year. We need counselors and social workers now more than ever.

My last point brings me to classroom aids and instructional coaches. It is no secret that our teachers are overworked and burnt out. Across the nation teaching positions lie vacant and unfilled. Our state is no different and in my own school I have gone the school year with open vacancies unfilled. This just makes the job of our teachers harder as they have to handle more and more. We need to take the pressure off our teachers and provide them the assistance they and our students need through instructional coaches and classroom aids. Our students deserve the very best education they can get. If we overtax our teachers and put undue strain on the educational process, we will never see anything more than continued loss of talented teachers to other professions and a near unrecoverable loss of learning. Our students deserve better.

Thank you for your time.

--

Nicholas Settle



Assistant Principal, Nome Elementary School  
PO Box 131 | Nome, AK 99762  
Office: 907.443.5299 ext.8922 | Fax: 907.443.2850  
[nicholassettle@nomeschools.org](mailto:nicholassettle@nomeschools.org)

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Peggy Azuyak <pazuyak01@kibsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 4:37 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for SB 52: Increase Base Student Allocation

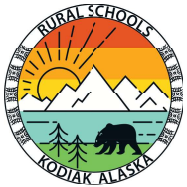
Hello,

I want to share my support for SB 52: Increase Base Student Allocation! With inflation, our costs of living in Alaska continue to rise as does the cost of educating our students. The needs continue to grow as the base funding has stayed stagnant. In order to do the job properly, districts need the base student allocation to increase as the costs increase. Our students deserve a high quality education and they deserve for our state to fund them adequately.

Thank you.

Quyanaa,

Peggy Azuyak  
Director of Rural Schools and AKTEACH  
KIBSD Arts Administrator  
[pazuyak01@kibsd.org](mailto:pazuyak01@kibsd.org)  
(907) 512-5631



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Rebecca Bezdecny <rebecca.bezdecny@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 8:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Cost Estimates for a Base Student Allocation Increase

Hello,

Please accept this email as my public comment re: the BSA increase.

I am in favor of increasing this amount even if it means we as Alaska citizens need to explore more avenues of revenue to make it happen.

Believing that the children are the future isn't just a cheesy lyric in a Whitney Houston ballad--it's the truth. If we invest in educating our kids, we in turn will reap a more robust future for this state.

Flat funding and funding below the level of inflation is a recipe for disaster and I request that increasing the BSA remain one of the top priorities of this year's legislative session.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment.

Rebecca Bezdecny  
Kenai, AK

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Robyn Taylor <robyn.taylor@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:53 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Lisa Parady  
**Subject:** Educational funding increase

Respected Senate Members,

As an educator who has had the opportunity to serve 5 districts in the state throughout my 23-year tenure, I submit this correspondence urging you to make education funding a high priority in Alaska.

I distinctly remember sitting in a staff meeting, as an early career educator in 1998, where our principal Richard Montgomery shared that it would most likely be the last of the years when education funding to districts would be adequate to support needs. He felt that the state was headed down a deep dark trench to the likes of which may be hard to recover from. Here I sit in a principal role 22 years later, reflecting on the accuracy of his statement.

I have witnessed class sizes continue to increase, offerings beyond the general scope of curricular requirements decrease, Tier 3 & 4 educators leaving the state in mass resulting in unfilled positions, failing buildings, and a true inability to even come close to keeping up with inflationary measures.

While I respect and applaud the desire to improve test scores and proficiency rates for students, the reality is that we first and foremost need to be able to support an environment that is conducive to learning. This is a basic tenant of SEL- Social Emotional Learning philosophy. Asking schools to create situations where classrooms created for 24 students are squeezing 30-plus students in rooms becomes more of a student-disciplinary situation rather than a supportive learning environment. Expecting students and staff to be focused on learning when buildings are cold, have leaks, and are unkept, not due to a lack of people doing their jobs but truly due to loss of funding to support upkeep also does not promote a positive learning environment.

It is truly time for our state to place educational funding as a high priority. These are the youth who will one day be our leaders. Let's please, support education and help our students become tomorrow's effective leaders.

I appreciate your time and service to our state.

Respectfully,

Robyn Taylor

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*ROBYN TAYLOR M.ED., ED.L.*

*Alaska Principal of the Year 2020*

Principal

Hutchison High School

3750 Geist Road

Fairbanks, AK 99709

907-479-2261 Ext. 35510

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** sally.schlichting@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 7:37 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Rep. Andi Story  
**Subject:** Please Increase the Base Student Allocation

Dear Senators,

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. 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

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sara Dykstra <sara.dykstra@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 4:46 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Testimony from 2-1-23

My name is Sara Dykstra, I live in Anchorage and I'm a volunteer with Great Alaska Schools. I'm also a mom and I have a 1st grader in the public schools here and have a 2nd will be starting in a couple years. I have lived in Alaska for 10 years – we truly love Alaska and I am often found telling my boys “Do you know how lucky you are? Do you know that most kids don't get to see this?” as we see stunning mountains or moose or climb on frozen tidal beaches. I'm proud to raise my kids here and I would love if they chose Alaska as their home when they are adults as well.

I am having increasing worries though, that the Alaska I love is not going to be one that they will be able to thrive in. Continued battles over a clear financial plan for our future has left our public schools left with instability, scarcity and the inability to think big and plan for the future that we all want. Year after year we are faced with the reality of cutting Health teachers, cutting gifted programs and now closing schools and gutting beloved programs such as language immersion or others that makes the Anchorage School District unique and attractive to move here.

Investing in our public schools is just that – it's an investment in our future – it's not about spending, it's saying, we believe in a future and we know that an educated workforce is crucial to not just our sustainability but our ability to thrive as a state and community. I am glad my children are too young to really comprehend some of the fiscal conversations going on because I don't want them to think that THEY are not worth the investment.

Our schools need comprehensive, sustainable, reliable and inflation proof funding. We should not be retraumatizing our communities and teachers year after year with projected cuts. We struggle to attract and retain high quality teachers here in Alaska and with no defined benefits for them, this will not change. The instability of funding year after year compounds that difficulty to retain great teachers.

I ask of you, our elected officials, to invest in our children, in our dedicated teachers, in our communities and to fully fund our schools by inflation proofing and increasing the BSA to at least FY 15 levels as outlined in the legislative budget and audit committee's memo reviewed earlier AND to establish a defined benefits package for our great educators of this state.

Thanks for your time.

Sara Dykstra

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Scott Ballard <[sballard@yupiit.org](mailto:sballard@yupiit.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:50 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

-The Yupiit School District cannot guarantee our school buildings are safe for teachers and students based on deteriorating facilities that we lack funding to repair. We had students and staff using honey buckets at one of our schools for a week because of failed water systems in one community.

-The Yupiit School District cannot provide students with enough certified teachers in required curriculum content areas because of inadequate funding.

-Teacher salaries and benefit packages have not kept up with inflation. Alaska is no longer competitive with the lower 48 systems when cost of living, salaries and retirement programs are considered.

-The reading instructional requirements for school districts in the Reads Act:

A. Are a repeat of ineffective innovations to improve reading and math during No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. The evidence is clear, NCLB was a failure.

B. A continuation of the past practice of cultural genocide for Native students and families by western education systems. The evidence is clear.

C. Creates a demoralizing apparatus of reporting, and testing. requirements that will significanting require additional staff and staff hours focused on unnecessary requirements for districts.

D. Will drive teachers and administrators out of education and out of the state.

Teachers dedicated to improving the lives of students will leave because of additional testing and reporting requirements, taking time away from students.

E. Will require a significant increase above \$860 in the BSA to administer the program because it is clearly an unfunded mandate.

Respectfully,

--

George (Scott) Ballard  
Superintendent  
Yupiit School District  
1 (907) 825-3603  
[sballard@yupiit.org](mailto:sballard@yupiit.org)



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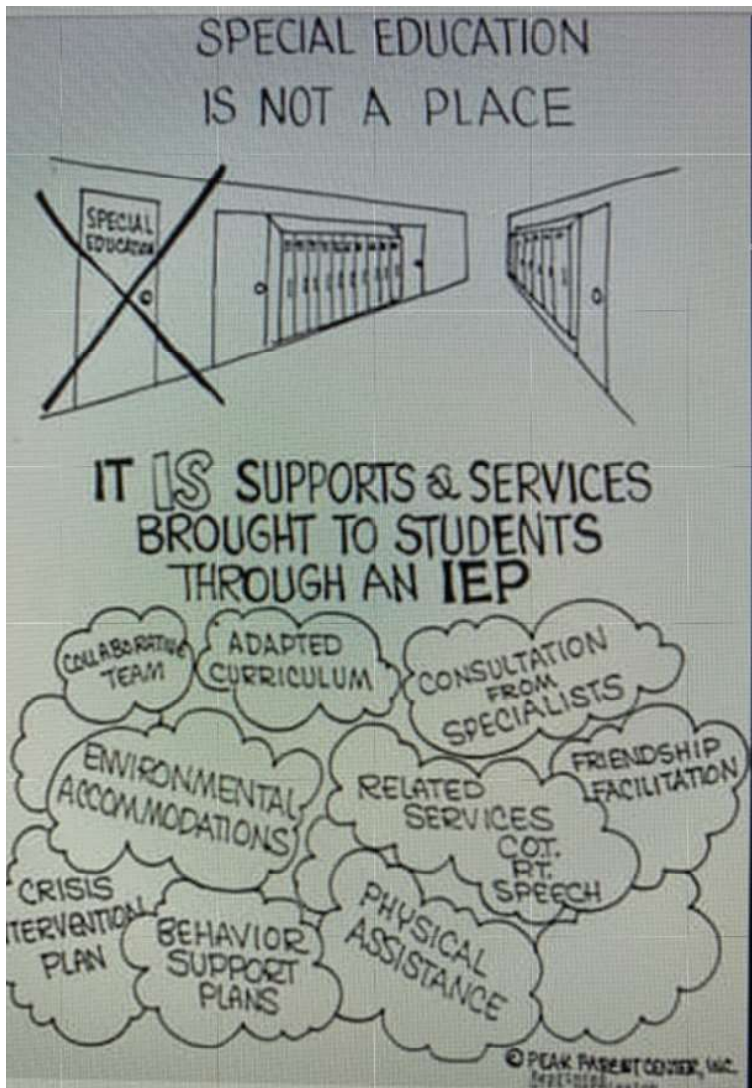


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**From:** Sharon Groner <sharon.groner@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 7:36 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase funding for Special Education

# THE FAC

- Public education has been **flat-funded**. During that time inflation has risen.
- **Schools are being closed**, learning are being stripped from students, and can't make ends meet.



Sharon Groner, SPED Secretary  
Lathrop High School  
(907) 456-7794 ext. 17607  
[sharon.groner@k12northstar.org](mailto:sharon.groner@k12northstar.org)  
Office hours Mon - Fri 7:00 am - 3:00 pm

Procedural Safeguards (Parental Rights for Special Education)  
<https://www.k12northstar.org/cms/lib/AK01901510/Centricity/Domain/1722/ProSafeguards%20%202016.pdf>

*"Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important"*

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Sheila Leinberger <sleinberger01@kibsd.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 8:00 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase Base Student Allocation

Camai,

I am in support of increasing the Base Student Allocation for our schools. There are so many issues students face today, that any assistance to their betterment is welcome. Do what's best for kids!

Sheila Leinberger  
Old Harbor, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Stacy Olver <stacyolver@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 4:14 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Rep. Andi Story; Sen. Jesse Kiehl  
**Subject:** Raise the BSA so Alaska kids will want to stay!

Good afternoon esteemed Senators,

I am writing to you today during the public testimony time period for your deliberations about the Base Student Allotment for Alaska Schools.

My voice was among many last Monday during the Rally for Education as my daughter and I braved the rain and cold to chant along with teachers, friends, and others in Juneau. Yes, raise the BSA!

My husband, daughters, and I have been Alaska residents for the last 6 years and moved to Juneau full time in 2016 for the quality of life and our desire to be part of the community where our work is based. We believe we brought dedication, talent, and commitment to Alaska and we want to see that for our children and the children in this state. We enrolled our daughters in Juneau Schools when they entered middle school and they thrived. However, we witnessed that some students do not and we fear that many others will not succeed if you do not do something now. Test results and national rankings show this fact and we heard public testimony to this point at the rally. We are fortunate that we have the means, talents, and schedule to provide enrichment activities, help with homework, have technology in the home, volunteer, plan fundraisers, and have peers that are able to do the same. But what about those families and communities that do not? Raise the BSA to keep good teachers and give them the resources to do well for all families.

One daughter has graduated and another is a senior in high school and one is attending and one is headed to four year universities out of state. You may be wondering why I am advocating now as my daughters will not be part of the Alaska K-12 system. The students in Alaska schools now could potentially be the teachers of my grandchildren, the police officers keeping our communities safe, the city managers, the representatives, the captains and crew of the Alaska Marine Highway System, the state troopers on Alaska Highways, etc. But we may have so few if graduates and young people choose to leave the state for higher education and jobs or those that do stay may not have the education and skills to keep our state functioning. My daughters may not want to return to Alaska after their college education. What a loss to the state as they are leaders, they believe in bettering their community, and they will have valuable job skills and passions that benefit others.

Senators, meet our effort with your own. We moved here and brought skills, dedication, commitment, and raised our children to be proud Alaskans. Raise the BSA- support teachers, school boards, staff, and families to keep Alaska great!

Thank you,

Stacy Olver

"Success is moving from failure to failure enthusiastically."  
-Winston Churchill

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Susan Bashore <susan.bashore@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 8:56 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Greetings Senate Members

When we expect our young people to attend school, to learn and become productive members of society, but do not provide the facilities to support that process, then we as a society have failed them.

As a nation, we continually are willing to spend money on things that do not show the next generation their value, yet, we expect them to become adults that value us when we are old.

Our government talks about the future of our planet, yet, we are unwilling to invest in the future of our children. If we don't do it, who will? You have the power, we gave it to you when we elected you to your offices, now please, support us and the next generation with the funds to provide the facilities and learning environment that you would want for your own children.

Thank you  
Susan Bashore

--

***Susan Bashore RN MS BS CCM***

The Hutchison - Nursing Office

Hours 8:45a - 12:30p

Ext 35514. 907-479-2261

Susan.Bashore@k12Northstar.org

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Susan Nedza <susan.nedza@bssd.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 8:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA  
**Attachments:** BSA Rate.png

My apologies that I am not able to make the public testimony times this week. I did want to simply say that an increase is needed. An increase is requested simply to fill in where the flat funding has left us falling further and further behind. Costs go up and flat funding leaves huge gaps. These gaps hinder us in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers, in providing programs that meet the needs of all students and in implementation of mandates such as the AkReads Act. We want to do everything possible to provide amazing educational opportunities for the students in our district but we are finding it very hard to keep up.

See attached visual.

Thank you for listening and working on this issue.

--

Susan R. Nedza  
Chief School Administrator  
Bering Strait School District  
Unalakleet, Alaska  
907-624-4261  
907-624-4275 Secretary

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Tam Agosti-Gisler <tamag5@me.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 9:46 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA increase

January 30, 2023

Dear Senators:

It's hard to believe that there hasn't been a BSA increase since 2017. In the 5 years since I retired from the Anchorage School Board, funding has continued to languish. When I now substitute teach, the impacts are obvious to me - large classes, lack of teachers, and program cuts.

I've felt the impact of inflation on my family budget and the schools are feeling it even more acutely. Please rectify this situation in this year's budget and raise the BSA.

To help pay for this dire need, please reinstate the school tax that we originally had in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Tam Agosti-Gisler  
Anchorage



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Terry Snyder <tisterryak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 5:38 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** \*\*\*\*\*SPAM\*\*\*\*\* Yes Now on raising the BSA!

Greetings,

I am a resident of Palmer and a voter in Senate District M.

I would like to add my **support** along with many, many Alaskans across the state for a substantial increase in the base student allocation rate for education. The long flat trajectory and failure to even keep up with inflation is not only unreasonable and unsustainable but damaging to one of the most important pillars and responsibilities of the state. It has contributed to a stunning hemorrhaging of teachers and families leaving Alaska as districts have cut into the meat of their operating and budgets and tread water into the next year of rinse and repeat. This is and will continue to have a serious negative impact in our present and future workforce if some sustainable agreement isn't reached by legislators.

Having lived in Alaska since 1975 I haven't had children in our public schools for many years but I know the importance of a well funded education. I have seen the years of value brought to our state when teachers were paid fairly and treated with respect. I urge you to consider the cost of this kabuki dance that wastes thousands of dollars each year as mayors, managers, superintendents, administrators, teachers and parents beg you for the certainty our public education system deserves by meeting your obligation to fund it.

Respectfully,  
Terry Snyder  
Palmer, Alaska

**From:** Timothy Doran <timothy.doran@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 11:37 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Funding - investing in Public Education

## **INVESTING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Take a moment and envision in your mind's eye what you would like our community public schools to look like and be able to offer. Consider such things as class size, course offerings, extracurricular activities, recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and educational support staff, facility qualities, options for student learning, and so forth. Be creative and innovative in your thinking.

Then think about what you would like for each of our graduates. For me, my vision is that each student will become a competent, confident, curious, caring and contributing citizen. Years ago, an elder told me on a flight from Tanana to Kaltag that we expect a lot of our high school graduates. However, he said, we need to look a few years further down the line after they have a chance to reflect on what they learn, gain experience, and mature. That is when we see who they are. Since then, I have loved to see my former students in their mid-20's and beyond as they engage in careers and begin families.

So how are we doing? Consider this. Our graduates are accepted by the thousands to colleges and universities throughout the country and indeed the world. Millions of dollars are earned in scholarships. Graduates are stepping right into union apprenticeships. Fairbanks and Alaskan educated students are starting their own businesses, taking over family enterprises, staffing our health facilities, schools, shops, running for local and State office, raising families. Alaskan educated students are making a name for themselves, nationally and internationally, in music, the arts, professional sports. Graduates volunteer their skills and talents locally, nationally and internationally. I could go on, but are these signs of a deficient system? Absolutely not!

To continue these successes and to importantly meet the needs of current and future students will take a protracted investment in public education within our

State and community. School Districts in Alaska do not generate revenue for themselves. They are dependent upon the public coffers from the State, Municipal, and Federal Governments. Since 2017, the value of the Base Student Allocation dollar has decreased steadily in the face of inflation and rising costs. Regardless of student enrollment due to overall population declines, both locally and statewide, the cost of operating schools and meeting staffing needs continues to increase. In addition, one-time supplemental appropriations to school districts have decreased. Indeed, last Spring one legislative presentation pointed out a 30-year steady decline in State dollars for public education -one of the lowest investments of any State in the Union.

Investment is not just a matter of bringing 2017 dollars up to current dollar buying power. Rather it is making up for the losses experienced over multiple years in which Districts have steadily cut programs and services for students. These have been years of staff reductions reflecting a loss of talent and expertise. Public education needs to be brought whole again, and then, it needs the additional monies to move forward to provide students -our children- with the educational opportunities they deserve. It should be noted that a similar situation exists for the Alaska University System with whom (pre)K-12 works in partnership.

While one-time supplemental funding as allocated this year by the legislature is helpful and greatly appreciated, it does not provide a stable base for planning and long-term services for students. It is like a business purchasing a piece of equipment but then not investing money for fuel, oil, maintenance and an operator. It is short-term thinking without investing for the future.

Are there challenges facing schools? Yes! However, when there was an issue with the Cushman Street overpass heading to North Pole, we invested money to repair it. When a road surface is deteriorating, we invest money and repair or resurface it. It is now time to likewise invest in public education. That investment will determine how we meet our community's vision for our local public schools. Invest in our children!

**Tim Doran**

**School Board Vice-President**

**Fairbanks No. Star Borough S.D.**

**907-712-4772**

**PLEASE NOTE:** *Written communications with public officials generally are considered a public record and subject to disclosure (viewing and/or copying of the communication) pursuant to a public records request*

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Tom McKenna <mr.t.mck@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 5:45 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Re: Mission Critical: Adequately Fund Public Education

Please make the following change to my testimony, if possible. (See blue text.) I apologize for sending before making this final edit. My career spanned 30 years in Alaska.

Thanks.

Tom

On Tue, Jan 31, 2023 at 5:18 PM Tom McKenna <[mr.t.mck@gmail.com](mailto:mr.t.mck@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for inviting testimony about the need to better fund public education in Alaska. I'm a retired teacher and principal. After student teaching in Yakutat, and then teaching at Unalaska and Juneau, I was also an elementary principal in Juneau.

As you are well aware, our Base Student Allocation is woefully behind inflation. The first point I want to make I assume is obvious: Investing for adequate conditions for our education professionals and for our children will be more effective and less expensive the sooner it is done.

I expect you'll encounter resistance from policy makers who will rightfully argue that "pouring more money" into already expensive Alaskan education gives no promise of results. True enough, but I'd argue we're at a tipping point where not doing so--and effectively starving school systems due to inflation--will guarantee poor results, and possibly systemic collapse that will take decades to recover from.

We don't try to starve police and fire departments into better performance. Our education professionals need reasonable (and ideally positive and productive) work conditions, including a pension system that will encourage them to invest their careers in our state's next generation.

Another argument you'll hear is that "teacher quality is the most important factor influencing education outcomes." While I can argue about the decontextualized nature of this statement, taking that argument at face value as an excuse not to invest in the system itself is like saying that since oxygen is more critical to our survival than water, we'll only provide oxygen. Many factors interact to make a school a productive one, and they all depend on RETAINING quality teachers and staffing positive, supportive, challenging, and joyful schools.

My brother is a Juneau teacher who started this year with two of his middle school classes at 43 students, each with almost 30% special education population, due to unfilled positions. He loves his students and is regarded as an excellent teacher, but observes that teaching right now feels like "death by 1,000 paper cuts." (He has no defined benefit pension plan, so I'm guessing he's weighing his options.) He also notes that the school is still very much being affected by the pandemic, and that what his students need more than ever is individualized attention. I encourage anyone in the Legislature to try providing that day in and day out with classes that large.

Thank you for doing the hard work of making up for years of insufficient investment. Please don't let that trend continue. Finally, whenever possible, I suggest you ask the professionals themselves what they need to do their jobs well.

Sincerely,

Tom McKenna  
1410 Mary Ellen Way  
Juneau, AK 99801

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ty Hewitt <aldermonkey@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 7:29 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase the BSA!

Good morning,

I attempted to comment during the suggested time frame of 3-5pm yesterday afternoon but couldn't get to a quiet enough location to stay on the call.

As a constituent and parent I need to make it very clear that the senate needs to increase the BSA as much as possible. Continuing to flat fund it will be devastating.

Continued flat funding will result in multiple teaching positions cut, which will greatly increase PTR (and continue to kill our local economy here in Ketchikan in non-tourism jobs).

Research clearly shows that reading and writing scores dropped during Covid, so it would seem obvious that we need to buff up the spending, not cut it. Make no mistake, flat funding at this time when the cost of absolutely everything has gone up is absolutely a CUT.

Flat funding would result in electives being reduced or cut, further negatively impacting our schools and student opportunities. The exact same (cuts and reductions) would happen to activities.

Social and emotional support would be reduced as would technology. All of these things will greatly impact student success, and in the students who need the most support.

All of the above should make clear that flat funding the BSA, instead of increasing it, will lead to a worse educational experience for our students, higher drop out rates and worse working conditions for teachers.

Please do the right thing and increase the BSA!

Thank you,

Ty Hewitt

## Michael Mason

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**From:** vicki vermillion <bveaalaska@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 8:40 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education funding

Dear Legislators:

There is NOTHING more important than public education for our State. It has been shamefully neglected in recent years. Please, please fund it fully including class size, Staff pension and other compensation. I attended schools in the Fairbanks area in the 1970s - it was super.

Thank you so much, Vicki Vermillion