

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Elizabeth Knapp <alaskaknapp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 4:31 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** School Funding

Dear Alaska Legislators.

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. Closing schools will take away jobs and increase class sizes. Larger class sizes are challenging for elementary school children! The base student allocation needs to be increased to at least \$1,000.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Knapp

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Gary Miller <gmiller.juneauak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 3:33 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

My wife and I have a 14-year-old in school. A good education for him is a top priority for us. Alaska's schools have not received the funding they need to educate our children to their maximum benefit. Please increase the BSA and any other funding that will help our children.

Thank you.

Gary Miller  
20135 Cohen Dr  
Juneau, AK 99801-8211  
(907) 789-3757



# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 • Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**George Smith**  
Chairman

**Gene Stone**  
Chief School Administrator

Good Afternoon Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Gene Stone and I am the Superintendent for the Lower Yukon School District. Thank you for providing this opportunity to advocate on school funding. It is encouraging to hear that our legislative body has publicly shared they are going to work to address the current funding deficiencies that exist as a result of flat funding for education since 2017.

As a rural school district LYSD has seen costs soar in transportation, shipping, building materials, housing and school maintenance, labor costs, recruiting costs, fuel and nutrition services costs. We have to supplement our food costs by one million dollars a year. Our activities costs have increased by 500K, recruiting costs for teachers requires overseas recruiting now along with the use of recruiters to address the existing teacher shortage.

Many of our CIP projects don't end up making the cut for funding so we as a district have to hope there are fund balances at the end of the year to pay for inherited infrastructure issues. We recently have neared zeroing out our fund balance to pay for a tank farm project in Hooper Bay that cost the district 4.5 million dollars.

The BSA amount of \$860 shared in the ADN recently should be a starting point at the lower level of increasing the BSA. We can't attract teachers without adequate housing. Our students went through the COVID pandemic without access to internet. Our District is recognized as having one of the highest poverty levels in the country.

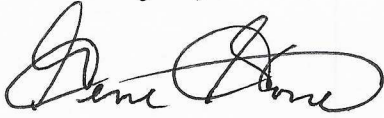
We have been an innovative district and have partnered with ASD to provide CTE opportunities. We paid for and renovated the old Long House Hotel so our students could have CTE opportunities that could not be funded if we tried to fund a program in rural LYSD. We have done our part to be innovative, share resources with ASD and provide a return on investment to stakeholders and the State of Alaska.

*CHILDREN FIRST*

Alakanuk Emmonak Hooper Bay Kotlik Marshall Mt. Village Pilot Station Russian Mission Scammon Bay Nunam Iqua

We have three collective bargaining units that deserve raises to address the rampant inflation. Please make adequate education funding a priority for our kids and teachers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Stone", with a stylized, cursive script.

Gene Stone



## Michael Mason

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**From:** George Gress <georgegress@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 1:25 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Base Allocation and Defined Benefits

As retired teachers, we have been dismayed at the continued struggles Alaska teachers and students face daily. Please develop and pass a comprehensive public education funding package that includes a permanent increase to the Base Student Allocation and a mechanism to adjust the Foundation Formula for inflation. Further, Alaska has had a difficult time retaining good teachers because of the current retirement plan. Please reinstate the defined benefit retirement plan option for all Alaska public employees. Thank you for all your efforts to support Alaskans.

George and Kristeen Gress  
Juneau, Alaska

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Grant Guy <gguyak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 8:42 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** School Funding

I am in full support to increasing the BSA to at least keep up with inflation. The fact that the BSA has not increased to at least match inflation has been a huge dis service to our kids and to our society as a whole. I hope the legislature will correct this soon.

Thank you

Sincerely,

Grant Guy

## Michael Mason

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**From:** {Hanna} Tiny Trees <hanna@tinytreesforestschool.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 7:30 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increase K-12 Funding allotment per student!

Hi,

I want to share my support in adding funding to student allotment. I receive the PFD every year and would prefer a portion go to education.

Hanna Young  
Tiny Trees Forest School  
[www.tinytreesforestschool.com](http://www.tinytreesforestschool.com)  
209-703-9892



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Heather Bogardus <hbogardus01@kibsd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 7:18 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 52

Good evening,

There are many challenges to teaching in rural areas of Alaska. The cost of living is extremely high and access to resources is limited. This is compounded by the challenge of supplementing resources for our classrooms so that our students do not go without. Due to budget constraints and lack of staffing, many teachers give up lunch breaks, prep periods, and even cover multiple roles when needed. Most of the teachers I know do it with a smile on their face because they care about their kids, but it is not sustainable over time and eventually leads to early burnout. All of this at a time when teacher retention is decreasing dramatically across this country. I am often frustrated by discussion of numbers and how rural teachers serve a small population. They are also a fragile population; a population that is scored by generational trauma, low employment rates, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, and loss of cultural identity. We are watching villages shrink as families leave in search of a better education and more opportunities in the big city, leading to further cultural degradation. We can do better! We can provide opportunity and an excellent education to our rural students in their home communities with appropriately funded schools. These students are Alaska, its history, its culture and its future. Please give them what they deserve!

Sincerely,  
Heather Bogardus  
Old Harbor School  
Kodiak Island Borough School District

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Heidi McCroskey Heimerl <heidi.mccroskey@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:18 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Support for Increasing Base Student Allocation and Increased Funding for AK Public Schools

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to you today to express my support for increasing the Base Student Allocation and increasing overall funding and recognition of the value of our public schools within our communities!

I have two students who entered the Anchorage School District during the pandemic – one is in kindergarten and the other is in second grade. I do not have knowledge of what it was like to be a parent within a public school district prior to the pandemic but can speak from my experiences of how things look within the public school system right now from a parent perspective as well as a social worker and community member working alongside local public school districts in Alaska to increase access to community-based wellness supports within our public schools.

Our public schools are the foundation of our communities – it is where students go to connect with safe and trusted adults; it is where students go to learn how to read, learn math skills and learn basic skills students need for the future; it is where students go to connect with their peers; it is where students go to feel safe; it is where students go to practice art, physical activity, music, have access to books; it is where students go to receive occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling, and other healthcare or wellness supports they and their families may not have access to in the community; it is where students go to learn and practice social, emotional, and behavioral skills within a safe environment; it is where families may go to receive additional support for their student or family.

The dwindling support for our public schools is a danger to our children and our state. If you are not already familiar, Alaska ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation in overall child well-being! Our children rank 44<sup>th</sup> in economic well-being, 44<sup>th</sup> in health (1 out of 5 children in Alaska will attempt suicide), and **49<sup>th</sup> IN EDUCATION!** Our children and youth are not well, however there are ways we can help our children and families.

Two of these solutions are as follows:

- Focus on upstream policies to expand prevention and early intervention services (e.g., universal pre-K funding, supporting our public schools) AND
- Increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) today and in the years to come. Forward fund our schools so school staff know they have a job from year to year. Stand behind our public schools and what they do for our communities across Alaska!

By increasing the BSA, our public schools can expand access to prevention and early intervention services within our public schools. They can increase wellness supports and hire additional school counselors, school psychologists and school social workers to help address barriers students and/or families have to learn, grow and succeed in life. Many schools within the Anchorage School District, and maybe across Alaska, do not have this support today.

These are just two of many solutions for improving the lives of Alaska's children, their families, and our public school staff. Both presented solutions can help relieve some of the stress and burden our educators and administration teams face so they can focus on educating our students and working with families to support their children and youth.

Prevention and early intervention solutions work! Upstream prevention provides a greater return on investment than downstream crisis response. Public school staff and our communities need our support, and they need it now!

Thank you for who you are and what you do to make Alaska a great place to live, work and play!

You are valued and appreciated,

Heidi McCroskey Heimerl  
99502

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Heidi McCroskey Heimerl  
[heidi.mccroskey@gmail.com](mailto:heidi.mccroskey@gmail.com)

"May we not just grieve, but give; May we not just ache, but act; May our signed right to bear arms, Never blind our sight from shared harm; May we choose our children over chaos. May another innocent never be lost. Maybe everything hurts, Our hearts shadowed & strange, But only when everything hurts, May everything change."

-- Amanda Gorman, Hymn for the Hurting



Iditarod Area School District  
PO Box 90  
90 Chinana Road  
McGrath, Alaska 99627  
907.524.1226  
907.574.0207

Anvik  
Grayling  
McGrath  
Holy Cross  
Iditarod Distance Learning Center  
Nikolai  
Shageluk  
Taktotna

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee

My name is Helen Cheek, and I am the Superintendent of the Iditarod Area School District. I want to testify on behalf of our district in favor of an increase to the SBA.

**We need to increase school safety for students, staff, and the community**

Over the last two years crime has risen in our villages, and the schools have incurred thousands of dollars of expenses to replace stolen items and repairs for damaged buildings.

**Technology losses:**

- ☐ Student laptops stolen
- ☐ Student iPads stolen
- ☐ School servers stolen
- ☐ School security cameras broken

**Lack of Troopers:**

- ☐ There have been no arrests
- ☐ There are no VPOs in the villages
- ☐ Although we have the thieves on tape - no repercussions
- ☐ No restitution of lost items

**Damage to structures and Emotional Well-being of staff:**

- ☐ Buildings are repaired with very little funds
- ☐ Teachers will not apply to our schools
- ☐ Teachers' quarters are broken into, and all their belongings stolen
- ☐ Doors, windows, and locks broken which result in costly repairs
- ☐ Emotional support is needed
- ☐ OCS does nothing about delinquent students and their lack of parental controls

Regards,

DocuSigned by:

*Helen Cheek*

37EBFB4107954C9...

Helen Cheek  
Superintendent  
Iditarod Area School District



## Michael Mason

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**From:** Idamarie Piccard <idie@pobox.alaska.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 1:44 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Alaska school funding'

It is my hope the BSA funding will be at least an amount to cover inflation over the last few years. Alaska's young people enrolled in the public school systems of the state deserve this.

Thank you

Idamarie Piccard

Former educator(retired) in the state; employed for 22 years by the Anchorage School District and 6 years by SESA (Special Education Service Agency)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Julia Bovee <boveejulia@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 6:22 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Testimony to increase education funding

To the Senate Education Committee-

I am writing to urge you to increase education funding in Alaska. I am a lifelong Alaska resident, a daughter of a 30 year veteran teacher, and the granddaughter of college educators.

I am deeply saddened to see the state of our education system and the strain it has taken on our teachers. Burnout is at an all time high while retirement benefits are low and not competitive with other states. I have friends who have gone through trauma after requesting additional support and not getting it. Teachers are leaving the state to teach elsewhere or leaving the field entirely.

I urge the committee to pass additional funding for educators.

Sincerely,

Julia Bovee

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Julie Zundel <jazundel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 6:35 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Increasing BSA

Hello Representatives,

I am a parent (with two children in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District), I am a 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%.

I am on the front lines - and I can tell you we are in crisis - some 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 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.

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 Alaska Resident

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Jillian Simpson <jilliandsimpson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 11:22 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Increase

Dear Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for prioritizing the need to address education funding this session. I am writing as a concerned Alaskan and as a mother of two in the Anchorage School District. I would like to lend my voice to the increase in the BSA of at least \$860 with annual increases based on inflation. As we have been hearing from our schools, in the newspapers, and in committee hearings – our school districts are in crisis. The work our administrators and teachers have been doing with diminishing resources is nothing short of amazing. However, we cannot continue the trajectory we are on with inflation-caused cuts and reduced workforces. It harms our kids, but it is harming the state as well. Alaska needs to invest in a quality public education system to address our workforce issues, both now and into the future. Alaska families need to see that we place the highest value on education (K-12 and the University). This is a fundamental tool to stop our outmigration issue.

The budget reflects our values as a state. It should be built prioritizing education first as it is the foundation to our economy and our future. Our school districts need to be able to attract more high-quality teachers and support staff and they can only do that with increased funding. The \$860 increase to the BSA only brings our districts back to baseline for purchasing power. This should be the first step in making our schools whole and the top priority for the legislature this session.

Thank you,

Jillian Simpson

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Karen Ruud <keruudak@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 29, 2023 9:31 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education funding

One intention of public education is to “level the playing field” that all children will have access to the same level of education since it is called PUBLIC education. With funding decreases apparent, our public education becomes economically segregated as those students from families of higher economic means choose to shift away from public schools to private schools. Remaining in public schools are students with families firmly committed to PUBLIC education, irregardless of economic ability, and those students whose backgrounds offer no possibility of alternatives to public education. ALL students deserve the BEST education/ learning environment, and they deserve to have it provided for by US, the public! The public is the employer of the government which is you, OUR elected officials. Please honor your future employers, the CHILDREN, by providing the necessary money to secure they receive the BEST PUBLIC EDUCATION imaginable! NOT a MARGINAL PUBLIC EDUCATION, but the BEST!

Karen Ruud, Anchorage

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Katie Botz <katie\_bug8787@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 12:55 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Cc:** Sen. Jesse Kiehl  
**Subject:** Written Testimony part 2

Greetings Madam Chair, and member of honorably members of Senate Education Committee,

My name is Katie Botz and I am speaking on behalf of myself from district B. My sincere apologies for not being able to come in person, yesterday, during the public testimony time. I'm a school bus driver, and was taking my high school students home.

I've been with First Student since 2008, I find it baffling that the rate of pay across the state isn't the same when it comes to school bus drivers and attendance - not even starting pay is the same! We are ONE state, one goal, one job - taking students to and from school safely! Why aren't we treated the same across the state? I've spoken with some fellow drivers in District B, and the general consensus is that we could use higher pay. One driver suggested start our wage for drivers should be minimum \$25 per hour. Attendants wages should be minimum \$19/20 per hour. It's extremely difficult to keep drivers and attendants to work for multiple of years if starting pay is just a dollar or two under their own wages, even. An example: Starting wage for Juneau is roughly about 20.75 now, and I'm currently making \$22.10 for being with First Student since 2008, and driving for about 5-6 years. If I am not mistaken, McDonald's starting pay is better than my 5 years of experience with a CDL. How is that even possible? A colleague of mine reminded me that we do NOT get paid for the following: teachers inservice, parent teachers conferences, nor any holidays that our school districts decides to take off. If the school district have any of those days off, bus drivers are forced to have those days off without pay. Today's inflation rates are not going to allow any bud drivers to pay essentials such as rent/mortgages, electricity, oil/propane, etc.

If you've noticed Mat-Su District, their bus drivers have been on Strike for some time - GOOD FOR THEM!! Our flat funding for education the past few years is the results of that strike.

Please let me show what kind of situations bus drivers have to deal with on a daily basis. We are the first ones that the students see in the morning, on a professional basis, as well as the last ones that they see in the evening. We are to drive our routes, both in good weather (spring/fall) as well as less good weather (winter). We are to maintain safety driving in every road conditions no matter what comes our way. Many drivers wouldn't mind about road conditions, but we are transporting our most precious cargo on a daily basis. Many bus drivers and attendants play the following roles to students: parents, counselors, teachers while transporting children for a short amount of time.

Many of my colleagues have raised the concerns of not wanting electric buses. Alaska won't do well with electric buses, and as a driver who has travelled to other locations, they won't make it far in our beautiful state. If bus drivers and attendants cannot get a basic pay raise, other cost may be beneficial as followed: we could use a camera on ALL Alaskan buses to get the license plate number of cars who decides to run our reds.

I realized that school bus drivers are super low on the priority lists for public education, but if you could help us out statewide, would truly appreciate it. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

-Katie Botz  
District B

Sent from my iPhone

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kayla Livingston <Kayla.Livingston@k21schools.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 11:29 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Education Funding

Hello,

I am a principal in a Pre-k-8 school in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District. Our district is looking at cutting staff to meet the needs of lower funding next year. Our communities are hurting, and causing community member to lose their jobs is another way to lose community members to other states. We need to keep people in Alaska. The SBA needs to be raised! It costs so much more to meet the needs of our students, especially with the learning loss from the pandemic. Our students are the reason we do the job, but when we have to cut staff and programs to meet budgeting needs, how does that show our students are important.

**Kayla Livingston**  
**Ketchikan Charter School**  
**Principal**  
**(907) 225- 8568**

***"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a teacher."***  
***The Coach Approach to School Leadership***

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kelly McBride <kelbel78@live.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 9:35 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Re: Support for SB 22

Oops-SB 52 :)

Joys of typing with a 2 year old helper.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

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**From:** Kelly McBride  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 7:05:15 PM  
**To:** Senate.Education@akleg.gov <Senate.Education@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Support for SB 22

I am writing to express support for an increase to the foundation formula. As an educator I see the impact flat funding coupled with inflation has had on our school system, especially recurring and retaining high quality teachers. As a parent, I'm especially concerned about the future of education and whether this is a place I'll want my daughter to attend Kindergarten in a few years.

Please consider the \$1000 increase to BSA as a minimum starting point. We have years of damage to recover from.

Kelly McBride  
1355 N Tranquility Lane  
Palmer AK 99645

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## Michael Mason

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**From:** Ken Zafren <kenzafren@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 1:59 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB 53: Increase Base Student Allocation

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I support increasing the base student allocation. The proposed increase of \$1,000 per student would be a good start. You should consider raising the BSA by over \$1,000.

Respectfully,

Ken Zafren MD

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Ken Zafren, MD, FAAEM, FACEP, FAWM  
Emergency Programs Medical Director, State of Alaska 2001-2017

Clinical Professor - Department of Emergency Medicine Stanford University Medical Center - Stanford, CA Staff  
Emergency Physician - Alaska Native Medical Center - Anchorage, AK

10181 Curvi St.  
Anchorage, AK 99507 USA  
tel 1.907.346.2333  
mobile 1.907.240.7960  
kenzafren@gmail.com

Senate Education Committee,  
Distinguished Senators

For the record my name is Kevin Shove, I am a school board member for the Haines Borough School District and constituent of Senator Kiehl

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on education funding for Alaskan children. The BSA has not seen an increase since 2017, even without record inflation this would not be sustainable. I do not know of any person or many entities that have not received some type of raise or increased funding during that time period. Data from the AASB's Legislative priorities state that inflation has increased 24% from 2012-2022 in Anchorage, for rural areas like Haines add another 10%. Freight rates have been going up between 3-7.5% a year alone with a fluctuating fuel surcharge that affects everything that is shipped into Haines. The BSA should be raised at least the same percentage of inflation during that period to keep pace with the cost of living and then inflation proof it. Flat funding education has eroded the districts purchasing power and overall ability to introduce new programs and hire qualified staff. The schools should not have to sacrifice qualified staff and programs to pay the fixed bills. It is our obligation as elected officials to fund education and set the next generation up to succeed.

Reliable and predictable funding enables School Boards to plan and set goals for their districts. Also properly funded Education attracts qualified Educators to the state and retains Alaskans that want to seek employment in Education.

Education funding should be decoupled from the general budget and stand on its own. I think most Alaskans would agree if we are going to increase funding to something Education is something most can get behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration  
Kevin Shove

02/01/2023

Good afternoon Chair Tobin and members of the committee,

My name is Kimberly Hankins and I am the Superintendent of the Lower Kuskokwim School District – LKSD - headquartered in Bethel. LKSD serves approximately 4,000 students, in 29 schools, located in 24 communities, over a land area of 22,000 square miles. Of our 29 schools, only six are accessible by road and the rest we must travel to by plane. As a district, we rely heavily on air transportation – to connect students for activities, to connect our itinerant staff such as social workers and counselors with students, and to connect our teachers and principals with professional development and with one another.

We have a lot to be proud of in LKSD. We have a strong grow-your-own program for teachers, administrators, and counselors. We have excellent immersion and dual language programs that rely on locally-grown talent. We have wonderful curriculum materials that are place-based and culturally relevant, and are provided both in English and Yugtun. We have outstanding students who deserve an excellent education, every day.

I am calling today to advocate for an increase in the base student allocation. In order for LKSD as a district to cover our fundamental needs, we need a substantial increase in the BSA. At a minimum, LKSD is faced with increased fuel and utility costs, increased travel costs, increased supply costs, increased insurance costs, and increased construction costs. We are struggling to recruit teachers, to provide adequate teacher housing, and to keep our facilities in working order.

As a rural district we are used to having to work extra hard to fill vacancies, however educator recruitment has become increasingly difficult in recent years. The cost of filling each vacancy continues to rise and while teachers and administrators used to be attracted in part to the salary they could make in LKSD, with flat funding, our salaries have not kept pace with the rest of the United States. Despite rigorous recruitment, we consistently begin each school year with numerous vacant positions. These position vacancies have a direct impact on student learning.

Here are some numbers that help paint the picture of the costs increases we are seeing:

- A 46% increase in fuel costs
- A 38% increase in utilities costs
- A 40% increase in travel costs
- A supply costs increase between 10-20%
- An insurance rate increase of 26%

We are not asking for more money in order to do more, we are simply advocating for an increase in the BSA to make us whole and to assist us in keeping up with rapidly increasing costs. As it is, we are doing less, with less, and the students of LKSD and Alaska deserve better than that.

Thank you for your time.

## Michael Mason

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**From:** kbenson722@gci.net  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 12:23 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA

Dear Senate Education Committee Members:

As you consider the Base Student Allocation today, I urge you to raise the BSA to over \$7,000. Our students and teachers have suffered enough of the myriad of consequences of inadequate state funding long enough. Without this urgent increase to the BSA, in my city alone, at least 40 teachers would have to be let go, with a resulting unworkable increase in class sizes. Our lack of school funding is making it hard to find employees to fill vacancies. Please support education with sufficient funding this session.

Sincerely,

Kris Benson

145 Behrends Avenue

Juneau, AK. 99801

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Kirstin Hills <savethesquirrels@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 10:06 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** education testimony

I am writing regarding education funding in the state of Alaska. I am a certified school teacher who has left public education for the private sector. I am concerned that our education funding is not being spent wisely. It seems that school districts are constantly asking for more money, and yet we are getting less and less results. I am asking that the legislature take into account the following things:

1. End October counts and have the money follow the students for the full year. In my district, there have probably been close to ten snow days this year with the solution being to simply throw kids on computers and call it a "remote learning day." I have received complaints from parents that their children have learned no new concepts this year and that it is too chaotic to try to work full time and ensure that their children are getting on computers for remote 'learning' day.
2. Create a voucher system that allows parents to use the money how they see fit for their children. As a former homeschool student, I have long advocated for a voucher program. A family can pay me to school their children for a year for \$5,000 or less, and yet I have heard that districts spend \$15,000-\$25,000 on education. This is an insane amount of money that parents could use much more wisely if there was a voucher system in place. I have heard teachers argue that such a program would "leave out a certain population group." This tends to be the low income families, many of whom come from unstable homes with substance abuse. Guess what? Remote learning days leave out that same population group, along with a population group that does not do well with learning behind a screen.
3. LGBTQ is a moral issue that should be taught in the home. In my opinion, school should lose all state funding for teaching it. However, in the event that such indoctrination continues to occur, parents should not only be notified, but given an opportunity for alternative education that does not include LGBTQ in the curriculum. A voucher system would be a great solution.
4. Increase allotment amounts for homeschool students. It is a little ridiculous that a public school is given \$15,000 per student and then homeschool families are "Gifted" about \$2,000.

Finally, school districts, along with the legislature and their covid policies in schools have led to a mental health crisis and failing schools. Now they are asking for more money to "fix" the mental health money. I think it's time to acknowledge that "more money" is not the solution. Please work to put education back in the hands of parents. THEY (not the teachers union) are the ones who should decide how the money is spent for THEIR children. The last thing that many families I work with want are the very people who caused a mental health crisis to be in charge of fixing it.

Kirstin M. Hills  
Big Lake, Alaska  
Mat-Su Borough

Sent from [Outlook](#)

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lisa Leeper <lleeper@nomeschools.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 12:31 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** Effects of Flat Funding

Dear legislators,

The effect of flat funding is MONUMENTAL at this point.

The number one concern is that districts like ours don't have the funding needed to increase salaries and create positions for the staff needed to support student wellness.

Simply put, we are expected everyday to do more with less. The teachers and staff that remain in our schools are getting completely burned out and demoralized by low salaries and lack of assistance for all the roles we are expected to serve in the students' lives.

In our town, any teacher could easily make \$20,000 more per year for the same amount of work and responsibility. Retirement looks like an unachievable goal for teachers in the TRS DPR plan, and many are choosing other fields when they think about how to manage their family's finances.

We don't have funds to hire aids and support professionals. Teachers are going it ALONE in their classrooms.

If funding doesn't compensate for these two issues, public education will be in dire straits in Alaska in a couple of years.

Lisa Leeper, Principal  
Anvil City Science Academy  
P. (907) 443-6207  
PO Box 131 | Nome, AK 99762  
[lleeper@nomeschools.org](mailto:lleeper@nomeschools.org)



## Michael Mason

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**From:** lisa a <aklawwiley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 31, 2023 8:58 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** increase the BSA and repeal SB185Z

Hello,

I am an Alaskan educator. I moved to Nome, AK in 1993, and I've been teaching since then. I've had a front row seat to a horrible situation, watching our state going from being one of the best education states in the US to one of the worst. This applies to conditions for both teachers and students state-wide.

It's far past time for the governor and the legislature to step up and fund education properly.

It's time for the governor and representatives to change their mindset on education funding. It does NOT work to withhold funding year after year because the state doesn't like the results. It's unfair to our teachers and students to be treated in such a punitive manner. I strongly believe that the youth are our strongest economic asset in this state.

Please

1. Make the BSA inflation-proof and plan education budgets that work for at least two to three years. Most districts have been working all summer and fall to prepare for the budget cuts which the state has delivered, again. This cycle of cutting, cutting, cutting puts a lot of stress on teachers, communities, and students. Plan for a stable economic future so that districts can put their resources into improving academic results. Make the BSA inflation-proof.

2. Allow retired teachers to teach full time without a complex process. SB 185 made it possible for retired teachers to teach, but it added a complex process that most principals do not want to go through. I retired in 2018 unexpectedly due to a threatening situation at my school. After working a year in non-profits, I really missed teaching and wanted to get back into the career, safely. As a retired teacher, I can only work less than part-time because of Alaska state law. I am ready, willing, and able to teach more. We have a massive shortage of teachers state-wide. Why not easily enable your retired teachers to teach more than part-time? It does not hurt the state economically to do so. The state would then have experienced professionals who know Alaska and the unique conditions here which would help stabilize the workforce. It would help the teacher shortage in our state to have extremely qualified people able to fill those positions during this unique time.

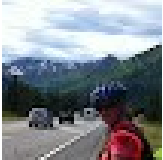
I have included the full text of the bill here so that you can see the many requirements districts have to go through annually to hire retired teachers per Alaska law.

<https://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Text/30?Hsid=SB0185Z>

Our state is in a very sad condition. The Governor funded an enormous dividend, yet the state is crying broke when it comes to schools. It looks like 2023 will be a repeat of last year, with a huge dividend but not enough money to run schools.

The legislature needs to come up with long term solutions with the aim of returning Alaska to its prior state of being one of the best places to teach AND learn.

Sincerely, and with gratitude for your service,  
Lisa Wiley



ReplyForward

## Michael Mason

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**From:** Lori Werdin <lwerdin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 30, 2023 9:14 PM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** BSA Increase NOW!!

To my Representatives;

I am writing to urge you to increase Base Student Allocation (BSA) to match inflation. Public education has been flat-funded since 2017 while inflation has increased by 15%.

I am on the frontlines of this crisis as a high school teacher and a parent of 2 students in the FNSBSD. The Fairbanks School District is no longer a desirable place to work. Teachers are leaving for other states and other professions. I myself am considering leaving the profession that I am sure I was meant to do. We are unable to retain or attract competent teachers to this state. I am also greatly concerned about the lack of rigorous education my 2 children are now receiving. Class sizes are huge, opportunities are dwindling, and our ranking in literacy is 49th of 50 states.

The future of our state and communities depends on healthy public schools. Our public schools are falling behind and falling apart. Please raise BSA before more teachers and concerned families leave our state.

Respectfully,  
Lori Werdin  
Fairbanks: 99725



# LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 32089 • Mountain Village, Alaska 99632

Phone: (907) 591-2411

[www.lysd.org](http://www.lysd.org)

**George Smith**

Chairman

**Gene Stone**

Chief School Administrator

Good Afternoon Senate Education Committee Members,

My name is Gene Stone and I am the Superintendent for the Lower Yukon School District. Thank you for providing this opportunity to advocate on school funding. It is encouraging to hear that our legislative body has publicly shared they are going to work to address the current funding deficiencies that exist as a result of flat funding for education since 2017.

As a rural school district LYSD has seen costs soar in transportation, shipping, building materials, housing and school maintenance, labor costs, recruiting costs, fuel and nutrition services costs. We have to supplement our food costs by one million dollars a year. Our activities costs have increased by 500K, recruiting costs for teachers requires overseas recruiting now along with the use of recruiters to address the existing teacher shortage.

Many of our CIP projects don't end up making the cut for funding so we as a district have to hope there are fund balances at the end of the year to pay for inherited infrastructure issues. We recently have neared zeroing out our fund balance to pay for a tank farm project in Hooper Bay that cost the district 4.5 million dollars.

The BSA amount of \$860 shared in the ADN recently should be a starting point at the lower level of increasing the BSA. We can't attract teachers without adequate housing. Our students went through the COVID pandemic without access to internet. Our District is recognized as having one of the highest poverty levels in the country.

We have been an innovative district and have partnered with ASD to provide CTE opportunities. We paid for and renovated the old Long House Hotel so our students could have CTE opportunities that could not be funded if we tried to fund a program in rural LYSD. We have done our part to be innovative, share resources with ASD and provide a return on investment to stakeholders and the State of Alaska.

*CHILDREN FIRST*

Alakanuk Emmonak Hooper Bay Kotlik Marshall Mt. Village Pilot Station Russian Mission Scammon Bay Nunam Iqua

We have three collective bargaining units that deserve raises to address the rampant inflation. Please make adequate education funding a priority for our kids and teachers.

Thank you,

Gene Stone