

Michael Mason

From: Peggy and Alex <alaskawerts@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 9:38 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

I support SB266 to ensure that correspondence school align with the Alaska Constitution, and that public education funds are not spent on private or religious schools.

Sincerely,

Alex Wertheimer

17200 Andreanoff Drive

Juneau, AK

Michael Mason

From: Allison Clark <akscrapaholic@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 12:20 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266 Public Testimony

Allison Clark

Eagle River

SB 266

To the Senate Education Committee:

I am strongly opposed to SB 266. As written, it is a gross overreach of governmental control and is discriminatory in nature. It opens the door to further lawsuits against the State as it violates the 1st amendment rights of parents and students. It must be shot down completely.

It is clear there is a legislative lack of understanding as to the structure and function of correspondence programs in this state. The adjustments made in this bill are unnecessary as correspondence programs function in accordance with the State Constitution as it is written today. In addition, there was a clear misunderstanding or lack of knowledge as to how correspondence programs function by Judge Zeman. They are heavily regulated at the district level and should not be micromanaged at the State level as this bill outlines.

Parents are not handed allotted funds, the amount of which pales in comparison to what each brick-and-mortar school receives per student to be managed at the administrative level. Funds may be requisitioned by heavily vetted private vendors directly through a correspondence school for services they provide. Parents may submit receipts for reimbursement that go through a strict approval process. All correspondence programs have rules and regulations in place that prohibit the use of public funds for religious purchases. The problem is, a few select programs violated the statutes already laid out by blurring the lines and should be held accountable. All others have operated with integrity in upholding our contractual agreements, yet we have become victims of the fallout of the court ruling.

SB266 requires districts to absorb unused student allotments rather than allowing those allotments to roll over. The school districts already receive a significant portion of each correspondence student's allotment, and students receive a portion for the use of educational purchases and services. It is essential that those unused funds follow the child until graduation or withdrawal from a program. One class at the high school level can cost upwards of \$1200 with instructor and material fees. That is nearly half of some allotments and about one-third of others-spent on a single class. Classes at the lower levels tend to be less expensive. Knowing this, parents, such as myself, often budget allocated funds to save for the more expensive years. School districts do the same thing. They funnel more funding to high schools than elementary schools. Redistributing the individual allotments of correspondence students to school districts robs a correspondence student of access to necessary educational funds and opportunities.

The use of the term "private institutions" does not solely apply to private and/or religious schools. It is a broad term that can be interpreted to include all private businesses: bus systems, curriculum publishing

companies, universities, tutoring services, art and music instructors, STEM courses, speech-language, occupational and physical therapists, non-profits, etc. The list is long, and while public correspondence programs are bearing the brunt of the court's ruling, it opens the door to implicate and scrutinize all public schools in every Alaskan school district and their use of private institutions, paid for with public funds. Trying to overregulate what is already being regulated at the district level is unnecessary, especially when many legislators are unfamiliar with the function and structure of correspondence programs. So, when we talk about only eliminating or severely limiting access to private institutions for correspondence students, as outlined in the proposed amendments of SB266, we're really talking about eliminating access to curriculum, education classes, and necessary services for the enrichment and health of 1 in 5 Alaskan children. This bill attempts to micromanage correspondence schools to the point they can no longer function, but in doing so, you're also micromanaging brick and mortar schools and administrators will have to reinvent the way they use public funds. SB 266 is blatantly discriminatory as it targets one organization and one group of individuals; however, it has the potential to further eliminate those services for public schools as well.

SB266 outlines that allotments may be used for fine arts, music, and physical education services from certificated vendors. Are you aware that the Anchorage School District is now hiring instructors who do not have teaching certificates? All they need is a four-year degree-no classroom training required. Instruction is received during field trips and assemblies from non-certified teachers. Yet, correspondence students will only be able to receive instruction from certificated teachers-blant discrimination against one program. In addition, students in brick-and-mortar schools have access to far more elective subjects than simply fine arts, music, and physical education. There's shop and engineering courses, the King Career Center's wide array of course offerings, foreign language classes, technology courses, etc. Why do you feel it is equitable to discriminate against the use of public education funds for one group of students more than another? SB266 must be thrown out in its entirety.

Furthermore, SB266 eliminates a parent's use of educational funds to secure tutoring services and to extend the learning beyond the classroom through field trips, yet, brick-and-mortar schools will continue to allow their public funds to provide "entertainment". SB266 over-regulates one program's use of funds while turning a blind eye to the same use of funds in another public program. This tells me you are either blatantly discriminating against correspondence programs and families, or you truly do not understand the purpose, structure and function of correspondence programs. While I believe it is not your intent to discriminate against correspondence students, that is exactly what SB266 does and must be thrown out in its entirety.

Michael Mason

From: Lockwood <alockwood@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 4:14 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

Dear Committee Members,

I urge you to oppose the hastily made bills, HB400 and SB 266.

As a part of the 20% Alaskan families who have chosen correspondence education for our children, we are deeply concerned about our educational rights and choices being threatened. Our successful programs stand on the brink of destruction due to judiciary, legislative, and bureaucratic regulations. House Bill 400 and Senate Bill 266 pose a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their child's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public school students.

Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice.

We urge lawmakers not just consider these facts but also remember that each statistic represents real children whose futures are at stake here. Oppose HB 400 and SB 266.

Sincerely,
Amy Lockwood

Michael Mason

From: Angela Semonin <angieanderson_1979@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 7:43 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Please OPPOSE SB266!

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I urge you to please OPPOSE SB266! This bill discriminates against a portion of public school students and is hypocritical! Brick-and-mortar schools have a whole lot more freedom with regard to spending money than correspondence schools. They can use PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING to pay for gym equipment, field trips, private and religious education institution materials and courses that are secular, etc. Can you please tell me why you want to limit correspondence schools? Correspondence schools ARE public schools, so why can't they have the same freedoms as brick-and-mortar schools?

Please do not take away the freedom of choosing what we may purchase with my child's allotment. My child's correspondence school currently has guidelines in place that allow us to pick our curriculum as long as the curriculum is **SECULAR**. We can use private or religious educational institutes, as long as we choose only from the secular courses that they offer. The children deserve to have a curriculum that fits their needs. Not every child learns the same. One child might excel in Saxon Math, but a different child may excel in Denison Math. Why limit their choices? The recent AK Star testing results prove that the brick-and-mortar schools' curriculums are failing the students.

Taking away our freedoms will have a ripple effect on our community. Local vendors will most likely have to shut down due to the loss of their clients. We can support our local vendors and enroll our children in the secular courses that they provide.

There are a lot of families in the correspondence community saying they are going to start independent homeschooling if SB266 or HB400 passes. That will have a ripple effect on each school district in Alaska. This means teachers at the correspondence schools will lose their jobs, public education funding will decrease, more schools will shut down, etc.

Please DO NOT pass SB266. Think of the ripple effects of passing this bill. Think of the children's education. Think about the limited choices this bill will place on the education of the children. Think about the local vendors and how they might have to shut down their business if this bill passes.

Thank you,
Angela Semonin

Michael Mason

From: Avonlea Guthrie <avonlearebecca@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 9:03 PM
To: House Education
Subject: Oppose HB 400 / Oppose SB 266

Dear Committee Members,

I urge you to oppose the hastily made bills, HB400 and SB 266.

As a second generation homeschoolers, I am very passionate about this issue. My husband and I both had the privilege of reaping the tremendous benefits of being homeschooled, and are getting to experience it in a new light by providing our children with home education.

Our family came to a crossroads 5 years ago and made the decision to move our family to Alaska. Alaska's homeschool laws that supported a parent's right to choose the best form of education for their children played a great role in our choice of Alaska over other states.

The Allotment for homeschooling families has been a tremendous blessing to our children and afforded our children extracurricular opportunities, such as private music lessons. This one example has strengthened our local economy and provided jobs for other members of our community. Taking away the Allotment will hurt far more than only homeschooling families.

As a part of the 20% Alaskan families who have chosen correspondence education for our children, we are deeply concerned about our educational rights and choices being threatened. Our successful programs stand on the brink of destruction due to judiciary, legislative, and bureaucratic regulations. House Bill 400 and Senate Bill 266 pose a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their child's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public school students.

Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice.

We urge lawmakers not just consider these facts but also remember that each statistic represents real children whose futures are at stake here. Oppose HB 400 and SB 266.

Sincerely,
Avonlea Guthrie

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Carolyn Morrison <tenderheartcarebear@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 12:58 AM
To: Sen. David Wilson; Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Carolyn Morrison. I am a Mat-Su resident who taught in the Mat-Su School District for three years, have been homeschooling for the past 13 years, and helped my niece in another state learn how to read when her public school failed her. I have kept up on my teaching license.

Please vote no on legislation SB 266. Mandating state testing has nothing whatsoever to do with the judges ruling on private education and/or religious education institutions and allotment.

For mandatory testing, an opt-out possibility is an absolute must. I have friends in correspondence schools who feel strongly about wanting their students to do the state mandated testing. I have a student who at one point did not test well, and a state mandated test would have shaken his confidence in learning, no matter how well or poor he performed. I have another child who did the STAR early literacy test in third grade. He was reading *The Lord of the Rings* for the second or third time in THIRD GRADE, yet the test results came back as “probable emergent reader.” I know adults who have not been able to finish *The Lord of the Rings* series. Years ago, I worked with a public school student who scored well on state mandated testing, putting this particular student up among the most on grade level students academically, yet the students’ academic abilities were not up to par remotely.

Testing given by the parent (or teacher) is beneficial, as the parent (or teacher) have the results immediately, and know if their student can move on with new material or needs more help with current material. On the other hand, state mandated testing takes months to get the results back. The point of testing is to know HOW the students are doing, and getting the results back six to nine months later does not allow teachers in correspondence or public schools know how the students are doing so they can either review material or forge ahead.

Having taught in the public schools and as a correspondence homeschool parent, mandating state testing is extremely disruptive to the education of students. When I was a teacher in the Mat-Su school district, I would have to proctor students for an entire week of normally scheduled testing, then spend another week doing make-up testing for students school-wide who had been absent. The students I needed to be helping get up to grade level—the English Language Learners who were struggling (not all were)—were not getting the services needed during the week of make-up testing. On state mandated testing days, correspondence homeschooling parents have to disrupt the learning of ALL their students if ANY of their students are in the grades doing testing. They have to drop and pick up students at the proctoring places, then they have to stay within 20-30 minutes of the testing site until testing is done to be able to pick up their students, a very large portion of the day. Students logistically can only be released at certain times, so if the test is 3 hours long, but they finish in one hour, that is two wasted hours. There was the year that testing was being computerized—which many students do not do well on—and there was major technical difficulties across the state. Testing across the state was not finished.

Sincerely, and thanks for your support,

Carolyn Morrison

Michael Mason

From: Chester Witzak <aknaps.2012@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 8:41 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

I am a homeschooling parent and I oppose the proposed changes to Correspondence school regulations as written in SB 266. It creates unequal access for our children and is a rushed attempt to fix the problem created by recent judicial action. It would be better to wait until the AK Supreme Court weighs in on the Constitutionality of the current regulations than hurry to amend the regulations in a way that doesn't honor the students and families that use these programs.

This bill hurts more than it helps and I oppose it.

Chester Witzak

Michael Mason

From: Christie <christieshort@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 11:01 PM
To: Senate Education; House Education
Cc: James Short; Sen. James Kaufman
Subject: SB266, HB400

Dear AK Senate and House Education committees:

I am a homeschool mom of 3 boys ages 13, 11, and 7. I want to strongly urge you to oppose SB266 and HB400.

Instead of completely changing the constitution, why not penalize the few families/institutions taking advantage of the allotment funds, hold them accountable, and leave the rest of the 99% of homeschoolers alone who are using the funds within the law?

These new changes you are suggesting are threatening my ability to choose what is best for my 3 children and their education needs. I do not want the district to dictate the curriculum I must use, as it might not be suitable for my kids. And, if I choose to use curriculum not approved by a correspondence program, that is my right, not yours, to know what I'm using. If you aren't paying for it (or my funds won't cover it), it shouldn't matter to you.

I also want to be able to use funds to help my children succeed in their education, more specifically, Physical Education, by providing equipment and memberships to PE facilities without mandating a teacher, other than myself, instructing my children in PE. I instruct my children in all other subjects, why not this? It's provided for all public students, but not correspondence? Isn't this inequality for correspondence students? The list is much larger than just PE inequalities in these bills.

In addition, mandating that all children, not just correspondence kids, must take state exams is not ok. Again, it is a parent's right to decline state testing for their child, whether it's public or correspondence school. If this passes, we will, along with all of our homeschool friends, will independently homeschool. The state does not own my children.

Also, if a district is already receiving funds for the correspondence students, and an allotment is issued to the student, making students return the allotment at the end of a school year is not what is in the best interest for the student or their education needs. As my 7th grader approaches high school, we plan for him to take multiple classes that he can also use for college credit. That gets very expensive and we have planned to use some of the rollover funds to help cover the costs of these classes. The funds should stay with the student until they move from their correspondence school, or graduate. It is not the states right to take money back from a student who didn't utilize all their funds, while still homeschooling in the correspondence program.

The state has an obligation to provide education to our children, but unfortunately, Alaska is so far below standards, and my kids are proven (even tested) at over grade level standards, that I would never consider sending them back to a state system that is failing our kids. So, tell me, why would you change a correspondence program that has clearly been successful for producing better, more well rounded, academically advanced children, instead of trying to fix the education and academic problem within your brick and mortar schools?

There are many reasons we choose to homeschool. Should these changes pass, we will not be putting our kids in brick and mortar schools, or even the correspondence schools with these unfathomable changes to the AK constitution. I will independently homeschool. I will say again, the government doesn't own my children.

Please, oppose SB 266 and HB400.

Regards,

Christie Short
Homeschool mom of 3 boys
Anchorage, AK
907-947-4963

Michael Mason

From: Colton Hester <coltonhester@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 10:18 PM
To: Senate Education; House Education
Subject: Oppose SB266 and HB400

Dear committee members,

My name is Colton Hester and I am an Alaskan resident in Anchorage. I am the father of two public correspondence students enrolled in the Family Partnership (ASD) program. Our family has been enrolled for four years. I urge you to oppose the bills, HB400 and SB 266.

We need you to work on ways to attract young families to the state. **THESE BILLS DO NOTHING TO MAKE ALASKA BETTER.** The senate bill looks like it was written by the teachers union with nothing but self-interest considered. Stop wasting your time on this bill.

On the whole, the public school system is failing our state and our country. We should be looking for alternative solutions rather than strengthening the control of the union-controlled big school districts. Take a capitalist solution (what made America successful) and open up education to competing alternatives and let parents decide which is best. We need more alternatives that compete to be the best; not more hope-for-the-best blanket funding combined with additional government regulation. Parents have the best interest of their kids in mind - not the teachers union/ school district. And parents can decide to move their family and kids in or out of Alaska - not the teachers union.

As a part of the 20% Alaskan families who have chosen correspondence education for our children, we are deeply concerned about our educational rights and choices being threatened. Our successful programs stand on the brink of destruction due to judiciary, legislative, and bureaucratic regulations.

House Bill 400 and Senate Bill 266 pose a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their child's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public school students. Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice. We urge lawmakers not just consider these facts but also remember that each statistic represents real children whose futures are at stake here. Oppose HB 400. I will not consider educating my children in our neighborhood schools, and will not hesitate to remove my children from the public school system entirely in order to meet their educational needs.

Respectfully,
Colton Hester

Michael Mason

From: David Morrison <dsmwhiteknight@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 12:18 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

Dear Senator Wilson,

Hello, I am David Morrison, a professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage. I have a masters, a bachelors and an associates degree. My wife is a currently certified elementary school teacher who home schools her children. She has a double Bachelors, two minors and two associates degrees. We believe strongly in both public education and educational choices.

Please do not support Senate Bill 266.

Why is Senate Bill 266 changing whether parents can opt out of testing? Any parent who pays attention to their students' education knows what subjects they need help in and which they do not. Home schooling parents are certainly paying attention. If there is something I am missing that requires this change to be in alignment with the constitution, then change it, but that does not appear to be the case to me. Just that some people do not like it and think it should change. I can tell you that our middle child's learning, who is diagnosed ADHD and borderline autistic, would have been harmed if he had to take the state required testing when he was younger. It would have just been one more thing he failed at in school. It would be fine now that he is older and has more confidence but would not have been then. And this was before we had the diagnosis, so we could not have used the diagnosis to opt out.

Thank you for your time and representing our interests.

David Morrison

Michael Mason

From: Erik Palin <espalin03@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 8:12 PM
To: Senate Education; Rep. Justin Ruffridge
Subject: Written Testimony for SB266

Dear Sir/Madam,

Having served for 28 years in the US Navy I have seen quite a bit of reckless decisions forced through at the expense of many. What is happening now with the allotment for homeschooling/correspondence schooled children in Alaska is very similar, and unacceptable.

I have a personal impact given recent events since the 12th of April 2024 court ruling as I have four daughters who are in IDEA, the Galena City School District public correspondence school. The outstanding freedom offered parents in Alaska by the correspondence school system has until recently been second to none, a shining beacon of hope in children's education, all of which is now under imminent threat. Without the meager allotment, and parent's ambitions, there will be far fewer opportunities for my daughters to learn and gain new experiences against their approved ILP's monitored by their contact teacher, all while doing this from the safety of their own home and community.

If it were not for parental freedoms in education, I would not have been able to tour the ancient lands of Italy and Egypt with my daughters after they successfully completed modules in ancient history. To see their fascination and understanding amongst the temples and ruins of these ancient civilizations is an experience second to none, seeing your children recognizing hieroglyphs and understanding the context, priceless. English literature and grammar, being inspired by travels around the state and on Military Orders abroad, my oldest daughter has even written and published two books, both on Amazon and her most recent nominated as a finalist amongst American Indie authors in youth fiction, again, priceless. Not a believer? Check it out: [https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.ViviennePalin.com_!!LdQKC6s!MP0ydvmBNNewoLH36CyElK3GCW1ijORpopbT96aEx1xES9DDSEkI_YVM0brhUY9Y9XrxMB2jiFys30gBuil2GOc048w\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.ViviennePalin.com_!!LdQKC6s!MP0ydvmBNNewoLH36CyElK3GCW1ijORpopbT96aEx1xES9DDSEkI_YVM0brhUY9Y9XrxMB2jiFys30gBuil2GOc048w$)

Homeschooling, be it independent or in a correspondence public school, works, and works well. Many people have moved to Alaska to enjoy this freedom, and now it is under direct assault and threat. This is totally unacceptable. As such, I urge you to OPPOSE SB266. This bill is clearly a rushed example of hastily and poorly written legislation with either little to no understanding of the programs or an intentional bid to discriminate against one group of public-school students.

This bill does not pass the EQUITY test. It clearly discriminates against one group of public - school children in an effort to defund and drain the correspondence programs. On the outside it appears as if NEA wrote the legislation themselves to eliminate competition even among the public system. If a public school or district is allowed to use PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING to purchase an item(s), then the correspondence programs should as well.

Gym equipment

Field trip related costs

Transportation related to field trips-bus rides, etc.

Private educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU, UAA) Religious

educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU) Private tutoring (Ex: Sylvan

Learning center) Access to a gym or physical education space

Here is a breakdown of other areas of this bill that are poorly designed or intentionally discriminatory:

Testing: Parents have the right to withhold their child from any activity, class or program they deem to be inappropriate. This bill is an attack on parental rights that will not stop with standardized testing. Forcing correspondence students to test will falsely boost the district scores as well, misleading the public into thinking that the curriculum, policies and instruction given at brick and mortar school is faring better than it is. Rather than addressing the 70% failure rate at brick and mortar schools the authors of this bill would attempt to conflate individualized plans with a huge variety of curriculum, instruction, and tutoring to bolster the standard school scores.

Materials: Who exactly am I supposed to purchase services and materials from? All curriculum is made by private educational institutions. If the government becomes a curriculum company at tax-payer expense that would be of grave concern for me and at this point is not the case. At the current status, there is NO non-private curriculum company to purchase materials from. So all public schools would be violating this provision. Clear discrimination against one set of children not consistent with the treatment of standard students.

Assorted Expenses: Public schools purchase all sorts of items; fees, memberships, transportation, field trips, furniture, equipment...and yet correspondence students can't? The buses that take children to see the recent show Alladin, paid for. The buses that take children to Seward to the Sea Life Center, paid for.

Physical Education: I teach my children to swim, I don't need an instructor to do that, so now pool access is not allowed under SB 266 for us. Under State law I am well qualified to teach my own children, except if it is swimming? Under this bill I would have to pay for an instructor of some kind to teach my children basic skills I am qualified to teach and just require the physical space (pool/gym) to do so. My children do a variety of sports activities throughout the week but they also do PE at home-I am the instructor for that. But there won't be any PE equipment purchases allowed? Last time I checked the school districts purchase thousands of dollars of PE equipment for public school students.

Furniture: My children need desks, but that purchase isn't allowed? Bookcase? White board? Laptop? A smartboard? Of course all districts purchase these items and give them to children. Every child in the Mat Su District has a Chromebook. Why doesn't every correspondence student get one as well?

Allotment Carryover: SB 266 steals the allotment from the student at the end of the year. Punishing parents who are saving for laptops for their child. Many of the districts provide chromebooks for standard students but make correspondence parents choose between curriculum and a computer using allotment. What possible reason is there to steal from one child to supplement other children or to supplement the general fund in which NEA can then try to negotiate higher salaries from, even though they are not teaching these children.

Interestingly, anyone who works in education knows the older the child the more expensive the education (generally speaking). The allotments usually fund only at one level, not increasing with age. School districts use funding that should be for elementary students to subsidize the high school students. SB 266 wouldn't accomodate for that. Already drastically underfunded students (viewed as less than one student in the BSA) would be seriously underfunded for their high school education. This funding grab is the exact problem with the school districts in general, funding doesn't stay with the child to address their needs, it's taken from some to subsidize the others. In the process of doing that kind of wealth redistribution most of that gets gobbled up by salaries and benefits. I wonder who that benefits? Not the children. If a large influx of funds gets absorbed into the general fund the union will go after it for salaries and benefits, further stripping essential funding from the children who need it for their direct education.

Anyone who actually works in education or home education knows that correspondence programs are "cash cows" for their districts. This is an attempt to further steal money from one student to pay for others, to reduce the overall programs and attempt to force students back into brick and mortar schools, to restrict home education flexibility and efficiency, and to blatantly discriminate against correspondence public-school students.

It would appear those who wrote this have little understanding of the programs they are looking to regulate particularly the impacts on the most economically disadvantaged people in the programs.

I can't imagine that those who authored this bill desire to discriminate let alone so harshly and blatantly. I hope that by thinking critically through what this bill actually does and how the funds will be used/misused will change the direction in which this legislature is going.

In closing, I support your efforts to correct the identified issues in the allotment processing, however this needs to be done carefully so as not to hurt thousands of Alaskan children, parents, families, businesses and veterans. There are many stakeholders following this critical issue both in/out of state and I urge you to provide the level of diligence and professionalism that this task demands. Finally, do understand that your decisions will be tracked and followed by the electorate very closely.

Respectfully,

CDR Erik Palin USN (Ret.)
PO Box 521014
Big Lake, AK 99652

Michael Mason

From: Evie Opheim <evieonwater@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 8:49 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

Please read my message into public testimony:

Dear committee members,

I urge you to oppose the hastily made bills, HB 400 and SB 266.

I am a mother of three and have been homeschooling in Alaska for 5 years now. I was partially homeschooled growing up, and find it to be one of the richest environments for learning and inspiring a love for learning.

As a part of the 20% Alaskan families who have chosen correspondence education for our children, we are deeply concerned about our educational rights and choices being threatened. Our successful programs stand on the brink of destruction due to judiciary, legislative, and bureaucratic regulations. House Bill 400 and Senate Bill 266 pose a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their child's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public school students.

Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice.

We urge lawmakers not just consider these facts but also remember that each statistic represents real children whose futures are at stake here. Oppose HB 400 and SB 266.

Signed,
Evie Opheim of Palmer, Alaska

Michael Mason

From: Holly Adelman <holly.adelman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 9:02 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to oppose SB 266. Public schools all across our nation are struggling. Test scores are abysmal. Math and reading proficiency is at an all time low. Bullying is widespread and goes unchecked. Special education students aren't getting the care they need. Multiple districts have enormous deficits and are undergoing severe restructuring and layoffs. It's no wonder families are fleeing public brick and mortar education to educate their children at home and in charter schools.

The answer to Alaska's many problems in public brick and mortar schools is not to increase regulations and restrictions on homeschoolers. Public brick and mortar schools are failing and yet certain legislators want to come after homeschoolers as if this will fix the issue. It won't. Homeschoolers are doing fine. I have homeschooled independently in 3 states prior to moving to Alaska. Alaska actually has very strict oversight regulations already for their correspondence programs. Quarterly reports, quarterly work samples, monthly meetings- it's already a lot. Any more would be burdensome on parents and would drive parents away from correspondence programs. The state is trying to micro-manage homeschooling families. All it will do is cause us to opt out and go our own way outside of your programs.

Don't let anti-homeschooling legislators and the teacher's union damage educational freedom here in Alaska. The teacher's union just sees these children as a paycheck, a way to increase funding for their districts and get homeschoolers under their thumb. They don't care that these children can receive a better education at home, away from the risk of bullying and school shootings, where their parents can provide a 1:1 custom education tailored to their individual child's educational needs. We're counting on you to give homeschooling children who are THRIVING all across Alaska a voice. Please do whatever you can to support correspondence schools and homeschooling in Alaska! Oppose SB 266.

Thank you,
Holly Adelman

Michael Mason

From: James Morton, Jr. <drmortonjr@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 7:49 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Support for passing SB 266 and OPPOSE Bob Griffin nomination

Greetings,

I would like to be on the record as supporting the passing of SB 266 and opposing Bob Griffin's nomination.

SB 266 would:

- Fixes the law that violates Alaska Constitution
- Continues to enable correspondence options with fiscal controls to ensure appropriate, legal, and effective use of public funds
- Applies comparable accountability measures and standards across education programs (correspondence, charter, and neighborhood schools)

I'm NOT supportive of Bob Griffin's nomination to the State Board of Education. He has a record of being against public education.

Thank you,
James
692 Dalton Trail, Fairbanks, AK 99709

James R. Morton, Jr., Ph.D., NCC
E: drmortonjr@gmail.com

Michael Mason

From: Joan <joniclover@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 6:57 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

Legislators: I am writing in support of SB 266. I believe it provides access to correspondence education--and critical oversight--in a constitutional, responsible fashion.

Thank you for considering my views, Joan Clover

Michael Mason

From: Jase Gmail <jaseinak@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 9:36 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266 Comments

I support SB 266 to ensure that correspondence school programs align with Alaska's constitution.

Joe Klein
Anchorage

Michael Mason

From: Joseph Rueter <joseph.rueter@k12northstar.org>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 6:24 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Sb266

Please support sb266 in order that we may align our funding with constitutionally mandated formulas. Thanks for your work on this project!

Michael Mason

From: josephine cimbalova <josephine_tas1@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 10:47 PM
To: Senate Education; Sen. Löki Tobin
Subject: SB266 Testimony - from an Angry Mom in Big Lake

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have four beautiful and smart daughters, all home-schooled, road-schooled and now in Alaskan correspondence school with IDEA. I can state with some authority after living abroad in 12 countries and across the US for over 20 yrs as a military wife/mother that Alaska was amongst one of the most freedom loving and non-restrictive locations for educating my children, until the 12th of April. This day will be remembered by thousands as the day freedom died for homeschoolers in Alaska.

I ask you to be part of the solution, but to do it correctly without adding extra requirements onto homeschool parents. Being a homeschool mom is hard enough, we don't need more added to our plate in way of mandatory testing, and heavily restrictive accounting practices. The truth is, a few loopholes in the system were taken advantage of by a few bad actors, but the majority followed the regulations and followed the rules. Now we are all penalized, this is unfair and ridiculous.

My children will never return to a public school, I don't feel that it is a safe environment for them and the academic results are mediocre at best; recently a student died in a school incident right here in the Matsu valley. Such a tragedy. Add in the woke ideologies pervasive in the classroom and driven by the NEA and its members, this makes public school a no-go zone. Most homeschoolers I know, believe the same, and if forced to choose (allotment or not/homeschool or traditional public school), they will stay free and home-school.

I urge you to OPPOSE SB266. This bill is clearly a rushed example of hastily and poorly written legislation with either little to no understanding of the programs or an intentional bid to discriminate against one group of public-school students.

This bill does not pass the EQUITY test. It clearly discriminates against one group of public- school children in an effort to defund and drain the correspondence programs. On the outside it appears as if NEA wrote the legislation themselves to eliminate competition even among the public system. If a public school or district is allowed to use PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING to purchase an item(s), then the correspondence programs should as well, these kids are also public school kids... just home based!

Gym equipment

Field trip related costs

Transportation related to field trips-bus rides, etc.

Private educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU, UAA)

Religious educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU)

Private tutoring (Ex: Sylvan Learning center)

Access to a gym or physical education place

Here is a breakdown of other areas of this bill that are poorly designed or intentionally discriminatory:

Testing: Parents have the right to withhold their child from any activity, class or program they deem to be inappropriate. This bill is an attack on parental rights that will not stop with standardized testing. Forcing correspondence students to test will falsely boost the district scores as well, misleading the public into thinking that the curriculum, policies and instruction

given at brick and mortar school is faring better than it is. Rather than addressing the 70% failure rate at brick and mortar schools, the authors of this bill would attempt to conflate individualized plans with a huge variety of curriculum, instruction, and tutoring to bolster the standard school scores.

Materials: Who exactly am I supposed to purchase services and materials from? All curriculum is made by private educational institutions. If the government becomes a curriculum company at tax-payer expense, that would be of grave concern for me, and at this point, is not the case. At the current status, there is NO non-private curriculum company to purchase materials from. So all public schools would be violating this provision. Clear discrimination against one set of children not consistent with the treatment of standard students.

Assorted Expenses: Public schools purchase all sorts of items; fees, memberships, transportation, field trips, furniture, equipment...and yet correspondence students can't? The buses that take children to see the recent show Aladdin, paid for. The buses that take children to Seward to the Sea Life Center, paid for.

Physical Education: I teach my children to ski, I don't need an instructor to do that, so now lift access is not allowed under SB266 for us. Under State law I am well qualified to teach my own children, except if it is skiing? Under this bill I would have to pay for an instructor of some kind to teach my children basic skills I am qualified to teach and just require the physical space (ski slope and lift access) to do so. My children do a variety of sports activities throughout the week but they also do PE at home - I am the instructor for that. But there won't be any PE equipment purchases allowed? Last time I checked the school districts, they purchase thousands of dollars of PE equipment for public school students.

Furniture: My children need desks, but that purchase isn't allowed? Bookcase? White board? Laptop? A smartboard? Of course all districts purchase these items and give them to children. Every child in the Mat Su District has a Chromebook. Why doesn't every correspondence student get one as well? They are public school students after all.

Allotment Carryover: SB266 steals the allotment from the student at the end of the year. Punishing parents who are saving for laptops for their child. Many of the districts provide chromebooks for standard students but make correspondence parents choose between curriculum and a computer using allotment. What possible reason is there to steal from one child to supplement other children or to supplement the general fund in which NEA can then try to negotiate higher salaries from, even though they are not teaching these children.

Interestingly, anyone who works in education knows the older the child, the more expensive the education (generally speaking). The allotments usually fund only at one level, not increasing with age. School districts use funding that should be for elementary students to subsidize the high school students. SB266 wouldn't accommodate for that. Already drastically underfunded students (viewed as less than one student in the BSA) would be seriously underfunded for their high school education. This funding grab is the exact problem with the school districts in general, funding doesn't stay with the child to address their needs, it's taken from some to subsidize the others. In the process of doing that kind of wealth redistribution, most of that gets gobbled up by salaries and benefits. I wonder who that benefits? Not the children. If a large influx of funds gets absorbed into the general fund, the union will go after it for salaries and benefits, further stripping essential funding from the children who need it for their direct education.

Anyone, who actually works in education or home education, knows that correspondence programs are "cash cows" for their districts. This is an attempt to further steal money from one student to pay for others, to reduce the overall programs and attempt to force students back into brick and mortar schools, to restrict home education flexibility and efficiency, and to blatantly discriminate against correspondence public-school students. It would appear, those who wrote this, have little understanding of the programs they are looking to regulate particularly, the impacts on the most economically disadvantaged people in the programs.

I can't imagine that those, who authored this bill desire to discriminate, let alone so harshly and blatantly. I hope, that by thinking critically through what this bill actually does and how the funds will be used/misused, will change the direction in which this legislature is going.

In closing, I support your efforts to correct the identified issues in the allotment loop holes used incorrectly by a small minority, however this needs to be done carefully, so as not to hurt thousands of Alaskan children, parents, families, and small businesses (many veteran owned.) There are many stakeholders following this critical issue and I urge you to provide the level of diligence and professionalism that this task demands. Finally, do understand that your decisions will be watched closely, and we are all voters, and very angry at the moment.

Respectfully,

Jozefina Palin

PO Box 521014

Big Lake, AK 99652

Michael Mason

From: Kirstin Hills <savethesquirrels@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 8:01 AM
To: House Education; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Senate Education
Subject: Testimony for SB266 and HB 400

I am urging you to oppose the hastily made bills HB 400 and SB266. This bill is deeply concerning for me as a vendor who offers tutoring and educational support services. The current correspondence program has produced many successful students (including myself who graduated high school December of 2000). I believe this is because of the wide variety of choices available to families. This bill is a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their children's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public schools.

Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice.

I am also concerned in regards to the limited curriculum options available in this bill. It also does not define what a private institution is. I am a state certified teacher who owns a business that provides academic support for students in core subjects and this bill will likely put myself, and many other similar vendors out of business. I have to question why when my program has been successful in educating children.

Sent from [Outlook](#)

Michael Mason

From: Laura Zeiset <aklaura@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 9:29 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

To whom it may concern,

I am an Alaskan homeschool parent. I ask you to continue supporting homeschool parents and their right to choose how to school their children.

I oppose the requirement of standardized testing. I also oppose the removal of rollover funds.

Thank you.

Laura Zeiset

Michael Mason

From: Lili Misel <lmisel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 9:04 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Support for SB 266

Greeting Senate Education Committee,

I am writing because I am unable to testify in person. I support SB 266 which will ensure that the correspondence school programs align with the constitution of Alaska.

Please work to fix the law that violates the Alaska Constitution. Funds for correspondence schools is important, but there should be options with fiscal controls that ensure appropriate, legal, and effective use of public funds. I would also like to see comparable accountability measures and standards across all educational programs.

Thank you for your time, and again please support SB 266.

Sincerely,
Lili Misel
Fairbanks

Michael Mason

From: Luke <luke@hanson.org>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 11:54 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Comments on SB266

To the Alaska State Senate -

I view the current bill and the lawsuit that precipitated it as unfortunate. The outcome will likely be a more bureaucratic and restrictive system that runs counter to the idea that the primary purpose of state education funding is to provide the highest quality education possible for every child in the state. Attendance at a traditional brick-and-mortar public school is one way to educate children, but it is not the only way, and in many cases, is not the best or most effective way to accomplish this. Parents who choose to educate their children through alternative methods, such as via correspondence programs, do so for various reasons but, I expect, always because they seek a better education for their children.

The allotment provided to the children enrolled in correspondence programs dramatically benefits the enrolled students and the districts that administer the programs. The additional students enrolled in district programs bring funds to those districts above and beyond that portion that is provided as part of the allotment, which benefits the districts. The allotment benefits the students as it allows them greater resources than they would otherwise have to pursue their education.

The current bill establishes a more significant bureaucratic burden on the districts and the correspondence families and significantly constrains them as to how and where to employ these education funds. The additional restrictions and approval process will likely cause many talented educational providers to no longer be able to offer their educational services to correspondence students. The loss of these providers or programs will be a net negative to the educational landscape in Alaska. I do not see how the correspondence and allotment programs harm the traditional public school system; in my view, they likely benefited them. While I am unsure of the motive of the plaintiffs in the court case that initiated all of this, I would hope it was never with the intent to harm the educational opportunities of the students of the state of Alaska. Unfortunately, I believe that is precisely what the decision of Judge Zeman and SB 266 will do. I urge the Senate to take a different course and seek to preserve the correspondence and allotment programs.

Respectfully,

Luke Hanson

Michael Mason

From: Mary Sullivan <marycatherinesullivan@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 12:43 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266 - testimony offered in opposition/disapproval

Dear senate education committee members.

I'm writing to respectfully voice my disapproval and opposition to SB266.

I support public schools and fully funding them so that they can be strong and academically enriching for all students. At the same time, as a mother of a child with special needs who was NOT thriving in the public special education system and suffering as a result, we chose after very careful thought and in consultation with many, many experts medical and educational and otherwise to homeschool our children.

This was a major decision for our family and part of the calculus for us in making that choice was the reassurance that a correspondence homeschool program like the one we chose (IDEA) would provide not only contact teacher support, special education support, OT support for us, but also that the allotments would allow us to provide an academically rigorous and socially enriching educational experience for our son - one that could be uniquely tailored to his specific learning styles and needs. With me resigning from full time employment to be a home educator for my kids, the allotment makes it more attainable for us to be able to provide for his education. Removing or severely limiting the allotment program (even more so than it already is) undermines our ability to provide an equitable experience in education for him as his public school counterparts. If he could thrive in a public school setting, we might have made a different choice. But we tried public school and it was a very terrible fit for him and his needs.

Allotments are not broken. They are not, as some education advocates have irresponsibly said, "essentially blank checks for families."

How allotments work is that parents can purchase educational items that help provide for a student's individual learning plan and then submit a request for reimbursement to their district/charter/correspondence program to be reviewed and either approved or denied. Religious curriculum is not allowed. Sectarian stuff isn't approved or allowed. If a parent does not want to pay for an item or curriculum up front, they can select and order one from a list of approved and vetted vendors through their charter. By no means is this a blank check and there is already quite a lot of oversight to what gets approved or not.

Correspondence school districts review every request for reimbursement to ensure it complies with the law, and the student's ILP. They aren't used for frivolous things such as entertainment as some advocates have characterized. Nor are they rampantly divesting public dollars from neighborhood schools and infusing them into private schools. The vendors that provide curriculum and lessons are vetted and reviewed and approved or denied by correspondence school administrators. And the families I know who are using the allotment are spending them on educational supplies and necessary tools for the individualized education that their learners need. Many of those items are not disallowed in this bill.

I chose to homeschool our children to have more educational freedom and to make sure the learning environment is one where my kids will thrive. This bill undermines the freedom of the correspondence school programs and families to select the right education for their students, and as a mom of a special needs child I want to be able to decide whether or not a state assessment will be - in the long run - a net positive educational

experience for my child. I want to select the curriculum. I want to decide at what pace he is ready to tackle various subjects. Teaching my child at his pace and when he is ready to engage academic content is a huge reason we are homeschooling! We want him to believe in himself as a learner and to love learning so that he continues to learn his whole life. Pushing a curriculum that is forced or standards that are forced by the state and before he is interested or ready to learn it is a sure fire way to kill the love of learning in a child and is probably at least part of the reason our public schools are performing so poorly.

Please vote no on this disruptive bill which would undermine the correspondence and homeschool programs that are out performing our public schools. They are not broken. Please do not support legislation that would bring down such arduous administrative oversight as to render these programs ineffective.

If the allotment system doesn't comply with the alaska constitution, then a constitutional ammendment is needed. And would be supported by the people!

We can not as a state spend millions of public dollars on the one hand allowing neighborhood school districts to pay for the items outlined and disallowed in this bill for homeschooling families, and then turn around and deny that expense to charter or correspondence districts. State monies via direct appropriations and student loans and scholarships go to private educational institutions such as sylvan learning institute and the religious school, BYU. State dollars pay for transportation, food, and more for field trips and extracurriculars. We can't on the one hand say it is ok for one group of students, but not another.

Please work with our correspondence district superintendents to identify viable solutions. Please don't rush legislation that is short sighted and poorly written and that would create undue burden and unfair limitations on homeschooling families like mine.

Respectfully,
Mary Wagner, MSW, CFRE

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Michael Kruse <mike.t.kruse@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 7:14 PM
To: kendalpike@gmail.com; Senate Education
Subject: Re: OPPOSE SB 266

Senate Committee Members,

I am a father of 4 children, 2 of which use a correspondence program out of Palmer. I urge you to **OPPOSE SB266**. This bill is clearly a rushed example of hastily and poorly written legislation with either little to no understanding of the programs or an intentional bid to discriminate against one group of public school students.

This bill does not pass the EQUITY test. It clearly discriminates against one group of public school children in an effort to defund and drain the correspondence programs. On the outside it appears as if NEA wrote the legislation themselves to eliminate competition even among the public system.

At what point do we stop listening to an organization that doesn't deliver results. At almost every school board meeting, the data is presented reflecting less than 30% of children are at grade level. Or worse.

For those of you were probably taught in a public school and need to be told the other way to interpret that data, that means 70% are not proficient. So the nea kicks out generation after generation not proficient in school, resulting in costs to retake courses in college for which the nea supports school loan programs. The nea is not for education.

If any private organization had a 30% success rate, it would be cause for a stand down to determine the viability of the program. Even if you flipped the numbers and had a 70% success rate they would stop and say " how can we do better". The nea who can't compete with correspondence scores has resorted to bully tactics to shut down their opposition like a good dictator should. The nea should be ashamed of their results and be running to fix the issue, not bulky their way into trying to increase their budget and line their pockets.

If a public school or district is allowed to use PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING to purchase an item(s), then the correspondence programs should as well.

- **Gym equipment**
- **Field trip related costs**
- **Transportation related to field trips-bus rides, etc.**
- **Private educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU, UAA)**
- **Religious educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious (Ex: BYU)**
- **Private tutoring (Ex: Sylvan Learning center)**
- **Access to a gym or physical education pace**

Here is a breakdown of other areas of this bill that are poorly designed or intentionally discriminatory:

Testing: Parents have the right to withhold their child from any activity, class or program they deem to be inappropriate. This bill is an attack on parental rights that will not stop with standardized testing. Forcing correspondence students to test will falsely boost the district scores as well, misleading the public into thinking that the curriculum, policies and instruction given at brick and mortar school is faring better than it is. Rather than addressing the 70% failure rate at brick and mortar it appears the authors of this bill would attempt to conflate individualized plans with a huge variety of curriculum, instruction, and tutoring to bolster the standard school scores.

Materials: Who exactly am I supposed to purchase services and materials from? All curriculum is made by private educational institutions. If the government becomes a curriculum company at tax-payer expense that would be of grave concern for me and at this point is not the case. At the current status, there is **NO non-private curriculum company** to purchase materials from. So all public schools would be violating this provision. Clear discrimination against one set of children not consistent with the treatment of standard students.

Assorted Expenses: Public schools purchase all sorts of items; fees, memberships, transportation, field trips, furniture, equipment...and yet correspondence students can't? The buses that take children to see the recent show Alladin, paid for. The buses that take children to Seward to the Sea Life Center, paid for.

Physical Education: I teach my children to swim, I don't need an instructor to do that, so now pool access is not allowed under SB 266 for us. Under State law I am well qualified to teach my own children, except if it is swimming? Except if it's Jujitsu? Under this bill I would have to pay for an instructor of some kind to teach my children basic skills I am qualified to teach and just require the physical space (pool/gym) to do so. My children do a variety of sports activities throughout the week but they also do PE at home-I am the instructor for that. But there won't be any PE equipment purchases allowed? Last time I checked the school districts purchase thousands of dollars of PE equipment for public school students.

Furniture: My children need desks, but that purchase isn't allowed? Bookcase? White board? Laptop? A smartboard? Of course all districts purchase these items and give them to children. Every child in the Mat Su District has a Chromebook. Why doesn't every correspondence student get one as well?

Allotment Carryover: SB 266 **steals** the allotment from the student at the end of the year. Punishing parents who are saving for laptops for their child. Many of the districts provide chromebooks for standard students but make correspondence parents choose between curriculum and a computer using allotment. What possible reason is there to steal from one child to supplement other children or to supplement the general fund in which NEA can then try to negotiate higher salaries from, even though they are not teaching these children.

Interestingly, anyone who works in education knows the older the child the more expensive the education (generally speaking). The allotments usually fund only at one level, not increasing with age. School districts use funding that should be for elementary students to subsidize the high school students. SB 266 wouldn't accomodate for that. Already drastically underfunded students (viewed as less than one student in the BSA) would be seriously underfunded for their high school education. This funding grab is the exact problem with the school districts in general, funding doesn't stay with the child to address their needs, it's taken from some to subsidize the others. In the process of doing that kind of wealth redistribution most of that gets gobbled up by salaries and benefits. I wonder who that benefits? Not the children. If a large influx of funds gets absorbed into the general fund the union will go after it for

salaries and benefits, further stripping essential funding from the children who need it for their direct education.

Anyone who actually works in education or home education knows that correspondence programs are "cash cows" for their districts. This is an attempt to further steal money from one student to pay for others, to reduce the overall programs and attempt to force students back into brick and mortar schools, to restrict home education flexibility and efficiency, and to blatantly discriminate against correspondence public-school students. It would appear those who wrote this have little understanding of the programs they are looking to regulate particularly the impacts on the most economically disadvantaged people in the programs.

I can't imagine that those who authored this bill desire to discriminate let alone so harshly and blatantly. I hope that by thinking critically through what this bill actually does and how the funds will be used/misused will change the direction in which this legislature is going.

Sincerely,
Mike Kruse

Michael Mason

From: Missy Garrison <kmgarrison@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 8:06 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose HB 400 / Oppose SB 266

Dear Committee Members,

I urge you to oppose the hastily made bills, HB400 and SB 266.

As a part of the 20% Alaskan families who have chosen correspondence education for our children, we are deeply concerned about our educational rights and choices being threatened. Our successful programs stand on the brink of destruction due to judiciary, legislative, and bureaucratic regulations. House Bill 400 and Senate Bill 266 pose a direct attack on parental rights and authority to direct their child's education. These bills propose significantly inequitable changes that aim to strip correspondence students of funding, only to redistribute their allotment to fully funded public school students.

Alaska has always been a state that values freedom and choice when it comes to education. We believe in providing an environment where every child can thrive - whether that's in a traditional classroom or through correspondence schooling. However, these proposed bills undermine this belief by threatening the very essence of school choice.

We urge lawmakers not just consider these facts but also remember that each statistic represents real children whose futures are at stake here. Oppose HB 400 and SB 266.



Michael Mason

From: Rachel Bishop <perilinwoods@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 11:09 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: OPPOSE SB266

I am a homeschooler and I strongly urge you to oppose SB266. I have been homeschooling my child since 2018. Twice we enrolled them into a public school and twice the schools failed to provide an adequate education or environment that enabled my child to thrive and learn.

Alaska has a rich history of homeschooling because of our independence and self sustainment. Restricting allotments like SB266 attempts to do is inequitable. There are areas of Alaska where there is NO option for a brick & mortar school. There are families living in the bush or on the water and would have to completely change their lifestyle because of the restrictive nature of this bill.

This bill singles out a specific group of Alaskans and attempts to restrict their abilities to properly educate their children. If a public school or district is allowed to use PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING to purchase an item(s), then the correspondence programs should as well.

Gym equipment

Field trip related costs

Transportation related to field trips-bus rides, etc.

Private educational institution materials and courses that are non-religious

Private tutoring (Ex: Sylvan Learning center)

Access to a gym or physical education place

Here is a breakdown of other areas of this bill that are poorly designed or intentionally discriminatory:

Testing: Parents have the right to withhold their child from any activity, class or program they deem to be inappropriate. This bill is an attack on parental rights that will not stop with standardized testing.

Materials: Who exactly am I supposed to purchase services and materials from? All curriculum is made by private educational institutions. If the government becomes a curriculum company at tax-payer expense that would be of grave concern for me and at this point is not the case. At the current status, there is NO non-private curriculum company to purchase materials from. So all public schools would be violating this provision. Clear discrimination against one set of children not consistent with the treatment of standard students.

Assorted Expenses: Public schools purchase all sorts of items; fees, memberships, transportation, field trips, furniture, equipment...and yet correspondence students can't? The buses that take children to see the recent show Alladin, paid for. The buses that take children to Seward to the Sea Life Center, paid for.

Physical Education: I teach my children to swim, I don't need an instructor to do that, so now pool access is not allowed under SB 266 for us. Under State law I am well qualified to teach my own children, except if it is swimming? Except if it's ice skating? Under this bill I would have to pay for an instructor of some kind to teach my children basic skills I am qualified to teach and just require the physical space (pool/ice rink) to do so. My children do a variety of sports activities throughout the week but they also do PE at home-I am the instructor for that. But there won't be any PE equipment purchases allowed? Last time I checked the school districts purchase thousands of dollars of PE equipment for public school students. I don't see how a \$30 yoga mat is an improper use of funds.

Furniture: My children need desks, but that purchase isn't allowed? Bookcase? White board? Laptop? A smartboard? Microscope? Telescope? Of course all districts purchase items like these and give them to children. Every child in the Mat Su District has a Chromebook. Why doesn't every correspondence student get one as well?

Allotment Carryover: SB 266 steals the allotment from the student at the end of the year. Punishing parents who are saving for laptops or college courses for their child. Many of the districts provide chromebooks for standard students but make correspondence parents choose between curriculum and a computer using allotment.

Interestingly, anyone who works in education knows the older the child the more expensive the education (generally speaking). The allotments usually fund only at one level, not increasing with age. School districts use funding that should be for elementary students to subsidize the high school students. SB 266 wouldn't accomodate for that. Already drastically underfunded students (viewed as less than one student in the BSA) would be seriously underfunded for their high school education. This funding grab is the exact problem with the school districts in general, funding doesn't stay with the child to address their needs, it's taken from some to subsidize the others.

It would appear those who wrote this have little understanding of the programs they are looking to regulate particularly the impacts on the most economically disadvantaged, neurodivergent people, and people with disabilities. Brick and mortar schools are not equipped to handle the needs of homeschooling students. Further restricting our resources will lead to more INEQUITY.

I can't imagine that those who authored this bill desire to discriminate let alone so harshly and blatantly. I hope that by thinking critically through what this bill actually does and how the funds will be used/misused will change the direction in which this legislature is going.

Rachel Disney

Michael Mason

From: Rebecca Chamberlain <beccam.chamberlain@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 1:41 PM
To: House Education; House Judiciary; Senate Education
Subject: Oppose HB 400 and SB 266

I'm writing to oppose HB400 and SB266. They introduce too many restrictions on homeschoolers that are both unnecessary and un-equitable.

I would be terribly disappointed if these bills passed, allowing too much overstep into what curriculum I'm allowed to use to teach my children. Also-there seems to be no talk about clarifying what a private educational institution is.

- Does this include my children's piano teacher?
- Does it include rock climbing classes and swimming lessons from the Alaska Club?

Brick and Mortar Public School students are allowed to attend field trips and other "learning activities" that are funded and paid for by the school. Why would I not be allowed to take my children on field trips and have those paid for by the allotment?

Secondly, would I not be allowed to pay for BYU independent study classes for my children once they reach Jr. High and High School? One of the best Independent Study curriculums out there? When Brick and Mortar High Schools are allowed to do so?

Why would so much public funding be allowed to flow to support Head Start, or other private educational institutions, but not allow homeschool/correspondence students the same freedom to choose where they are spending their allotment to best serve their children's needs?

I'm also opposed to mandatory state testing and the return of the allotment money at the end of each year. I live within my means and am mindful of budgeting for future expenses as my children age and need more expensive curriculum.

I urge you to OPPOSE HB400 and SB266 and pass the Constitutional Amendment SJR28, or wait to see what stay is granted and what the Alaska Superior Court Rules.

Thank you for your time and attention.

-Rebecca Chamberlain
Homeschool Mom of 3
Anchorage, Alaska
99504

Michael Mason

From: Robin Crum <robincrum1@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 8:38 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB266 Please

Dear AK Senate Education committees:

I am a homeschool mom of 3 young leaders ages 16, 14, and 11. I want to strongly urge you to oppose SB266 and HB400.

Instead of completely changing the constitution, why not penalize the few families/institutions taking advantage of the allotment funds, hold them accountable, and leave the rest of the 99% of homeschoolers alone who are using the funds within the law?

These new changes you are suggesting are threatening my ability to choose what is best for my 3 children and their education needs. I do not want the district to dictate the curriculum I must use, as it might not be suitable for my kids. And, if I choose to use curriculum not approved by a correspondence program, that is my right, not yours, to know what I'm using. If you aren't paying for it (or my funds won't cover it), it shouldn't matter to you.

I also want to be able to use funds to help my children succeed in their education, more specifically, Physical Education, by providing equipment and memberships to PE facilities without mandating a teacher, other than myself, instructing my children in PE. I instruct my children in all other subjects, why not this? It's provided for all public students, but not correspondence? Isn't this inequality for correspondence students? The list is much larger than just PE inequalities in these bills.

In addition, mandating that all children, not just correspondence kids, must take state exams is not ok. Again, it is a parent's right to decline state testing for their child, whether it's public or correspondence school. If this passes, we will, along with all of our homeschool friends, will independently homeschool. The state does not own my children.

Also, if a district is already receiving funds for the correspondence students, and an allotment is issued to the student, making students return the allotment at the end of a school year is not what is in the best interest for the student or their education needs. As my 7th grader approaches high school, we plan for him to take multiple classes that he can also use for college credit. That gets very expensive and we have planned to use some of the rollover funds to help cover the costs of these classes. The funds should stay with the student until they move from their correspondence school, or graduate. It is not the states right to take money back from a student who didn't utilize all their funds, while still homeschooling in the correspondence program.

The state has an obligation to provide education to our children, but unfortunately, Alaska is so far below standards, and my kids are proven (even tested) at over grade level standards, that I would never consider sending them back to a state system that is failing our kids. So, tell me, why would you change a correspondence program that has clearly been successful for producing better, more well rounded, academically advanced children, instead of trying to fix the education and academic problem within your brick and mortar schools?

There are many reasons we choose to homeschool. Should these changes pass, we will not be putting our kids in brick and mortar schools, or even the correspondence schools with these unfathomable changes to the AK constitution. I will independently homeschool. I will say again, the government doesn't own my children.

Please, oppose SB 266 and HB400.

Regards,
Robin Ori
Registered voter
907-301-2540

Michael Mason

From: Sara Scoles <sara_scoles@protonmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 9:03 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266/HB400

I am a life-long Alaskan of 46 plus years and a resident of Wasilla. My husband and I have 2 children. One that is a graduate of IDEA and the other is a graduate of a brick and mortar school. I also own a small business that serves the home school community.

Both SB266 and HB400 is a knee jerk reaction and should not be rushed through. Both bills remove the right for parents to freely without limitations to educate their children as they see fit. This is one of the most fundamental rights as a parent. This includes the parents right to opt out of government developed testing and what curriculum they can purchase. Alaska is one of the few states that gives total freedom to parents and how they want their child educated. It has worked for the last 10 years without a hitch. It's unfortunate that a few out of the whole have abused the system and now have ruined it for everyone that has been abiding by the limited regulations. That includes the correspondence schools that allowed it to happen. They should be reprimanded and have to pay back those funds.

This brings me to my next concern. There needs to be a clear and specific definition given to the words "private education". It should not be left to interpretation. Curriculum and services are purchased from private companies by public schools and home school parents. I do support having allotment pay for a class or a course that a private school offers. Faith-based curriculum or courses have never been allowed to be purchased with allotment. All home school families know this. I do not support having allotment cover all or a portion of tuition for a child to physically attend that private school. I might also bring to your attention that the allotment can also pay for college courses that a student is eligible to take. This is a huge benefit to families that have children seeking four year degrees.

Neither of these bills allows the parents to continue as they have for the past 10 years in educating their children as they see fit. It leaves too much to interpretation and it is a step in the direction of the government taking total control of how students should be educated and removing the rights of the parent. That is fundamentally unconstitutional in every form and fashion.

Last but not least, the small businesses such as mine that serve our home school families will have to close their doors. This will have a huge negative impact on our already stressed economy. The allotment program allows the home school families put money back into the community and continue to support small businesses and relieve some of the stress that we all feel due to this volatile economy.

Thank you for hearing my concerning. Please enter this as written testimony. I hope that every testimony that you read will cause you to really think long and hard about how your decisions and votes will shape the communities of the great state of Alaska.

Sincerely,
Sara Scoles

Michael Mason

From: Sherry Stead <sdstead@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 7:01 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

Please pass SB 266 and keep public funds for public education.
Sherry Stead

Michael Mason

From: shonadevolld@gmail.com
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 6:54 PM
To: Senate Education; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Sen. Löki Tobin
Subject: SB 266

My name is Shona DeVolld, and I am a highly-concerned homeschool parent and vendor. The recent ruling by Judge Zeman has put my child's education and our family's financial security in jeopardy in the following ways:

1. We use our allotment funds to purchase non-religious educational services (core subject tutoring, P.E., fine arts), products, and curriculum from local vendors; without these goods and services, my daughter's academic progress and access to opportunities will suffer immensely.
2. I have been a secular IDEA and Connections vendor for 19 years, building my business from scratch in a conscientious and ethical manner. One hundred percent of my income comes from students' allotments, and that income equals approximately twenty-five percent of my family's finances. I left my full-time job to support our robust homeschool community; I believe that strongly in the value of homeschool.
3. I also teach writing classes at Kenai Peninsula College (the UAA campus in Soldotna). The vast majority of my KPC students are IDEA and Connections students. Without allotment funds, those students will not be enrolling, creating a hardship for KPC and causing my KPC class to be cancelled due to low enrollment numbers: yet another financial blow to our family, as well as the UA system.

Without my income - both as a vendor and as a KPC adjunct faculty member - and without my daughter's allotment, not only will our day-to-day family expenditures be drastically affected, but we will also not be able to pay for the educational goods and services Sara needs out of pocket, so we are being hit triply hard.

I implore you and your colleagues to create legislation that remedies what has gone awry: support Alaska's homeschool families, support the thousands of local, non-religious vendors and core subject tutors that serve Alaskan homeschool families, and support the freedom of Alaskan parents to educate their own children, if they so choose. Please fix this before I lose the business I have worked 19 years to build, before my family has to take drastic measures to survive in an increasingly expensive time, and most importantly, before my daughter's education suffers irreparable harm.

Thank you for your consideration,
Shona DeVolld

Michael Mason

From: Stacey Pike <sapgolden@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 8:13 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: OPPOSE SB 266

Senate Committee Members

The subject legislation is shameful. One of two things is happening here. The legislation is either so poorly conceived because the author(s) clearly have no understanding of the correspondence programmen OR the author(s) are doing the bidding of the NEA to eliminate their competition. In either case, this is shameful legislation.

Willful, blatant discrimination against a specific group of students is not acceptable.

Correspondence parents are investing heavily in their children to obtain better outcomes than the traditional tract is providing and for that, your legislation seeks to kill this opportunity.

Alaska scholastic rankings need improvement. I implore you to serve the students of this State NOT the NEA.

Stacey Pike
Hidden Ranch Palmer
Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Susan Ritter <arcticpouncer@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 6:03 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Rep. Thomas McKay; Rep. Craig Johnson; Office of the Governor; Sen. Matt Claman
Subject: Standing with the AK Constitution

Dear members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Susan Ritter. I am a teacher of special education in Anchorage. Thank you for taking my testimony.

Please do not support Governor Dunleavy's appointment of Bob Griffin to the State Board of Education. He does not have the experience in education to understand the intricacies of the educational picture in our great state.

I support the new bill SB 266 which would ensure that the correspondence school programs align with Alaska's constitution. Public money should only go to support PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Thank you,

Susan Ritter
Anchorage, AK 99502