

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Alicia Sharp, a lifelong resident of Kodiak, Alaska, and a passionate advocate for education. As both a homeschooling parent and a product of Alaska's public education system, I am deeply invested in the future of education in our state.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 266. This bill, if passed, would have a detrimental impact on homeschooling in Alaska. As a homeschooling parent, I value the freedom in providing the education I know is best for my own children.

I am a first-generation immigrant, the first in my family to graduate with a high school diploma, an Associate's degree through our state community school, and a Bachelor's degree, all with honors. I also have specialized training in Nature-based Early Childhood Education, which environmental education is commonly [led by mostly white, affluent, highly educated individuals and mainstream organizations](#).

I attribute much of my success and drive to the education I received in Alaska. I had many teachers and educators that poured into me and grew my love of learning that I wanted to one day instill in future generations and especially my own children. Though I had a good experience in our neighborhood schools, the educational system of today is very different from what I was able to grow up in and enjoy. Resources have dwindled and the focus of education has changed, where politics and agendas are too deeply intertwined with what the education system was intended for: to rightly educate our present and future citizens for the betterment of our society.

This year I officially began my homeschooling journey with my Kindergartener. Though resources are limited in Kodiak, what is not limited are the natural resources, the community support systems, and the strong homeschooling community that has been growing in this small rural town.

My goal in educating my children at home is that I simply desire that my children will grow that same love of learning that I was able to enjoy, so much so that I not only get to continue that growth by re-learning alongside my children, but they have the privilege of following their interests, passions, and curiosities that they may not be able to follow as easily in our neighborhood schools, along with aligning their education to our family values and beliefs.

I fear our homeschooling would be negatively impacted by Senate Bill 266 due to its restrictive language in what the state allotment has been able to provide. One priority that I have implemented in our homeschool is the ability and freedom to take our learning outdoors. Outdoor education is one area that is not easily accommodated in traditional schools due to rigid schedules and limited resources (like the proper gear). Thankfully, going outside and learning from the outdoors doesn't cost much, but my focus on immersing our education in the local heritage, cultures, landscapes, and experiences have been hugely supported with the allotment this past year and this bill threatens to negatively impact homeschooling by imposing restrictive measures on state allotments, particularly affecting resources for outdoor education.. Additionally, as a former private vendor specializing in Outdoor Education, I am concerned about the bill's potential effects on private vendors' ability to support the community.

I also believe this bill goes against parental rights for all Alaskan families, especially when it comes to being able to opt-out of standardized testing. Amendment Section 1. AS 14.03.016(a) specifically singles out correspondent students, when according to the NEA themselves, [standardized testing or standards-based assessments are inaccurate, inequitable, and ineffective at gauging what students actually know](#). It is extremely confusing to families like myself that an organization that is backing and pushing this bill would also be pursuing this amendment to require all students to test when the methods that the NEA says are more effective, like performance-based-assessments, are what most homeschooling and correspondent students are already implementing into their educational practices.

This comes down to trust and actually partnering with correspondence programs to offer their children the best education that they can give them. Passing Senate Bill 266 would strip many freedoms and opportunities for families like myself.

In closing, I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 266 and consider the potential long-term consequences of this bill on our local communities, economy, and community well-being. It is important to prioritize educational choices that will benefit our state for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Alicia Sharp

Michael Mason

From: Allison Clark <akscrapaholic@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 5:34 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266 Revised Public Testimony

Allison Clark
Eagle River
SB266 Revised

To the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for working to revise SB266. There is still work to be done as the amendments continue to show signs of the over-regulation of correspondence programs and limit access to private educational institutions that would be to the benefit of Alaska students.

SB266 limits access to higher level courses through educational institutions such as BYU, which is being utilized by all public high schools. UAF does not offer as many courses for credit as BYU does, and the instruction at BYU is more interactive and supportive than courses offered through UAF. APU is also classified as a private educational institution and would therefore, no longer be a resource for high school students seeking dual credit or early college admission. Limiting access to higher education is not in the best interest of our students. We should open as many doors as possible to help them succeed, not further restrict access in a state that is already isolated from many opportunities. I'm assuming these regulations would also need to be followed by all public schools; therefore, ending their access to the same private institutions for middle and high school credit. You cannot impose regulations on one group of students without also imposing the same regulations on all groups of students who use public funds for educational purposes. That would certainly not pass an equity test and would be judged as discriminatory.

In addition, the amendments still state that "student fund accounts", not allotments, may be used for enrichment courses in the area of Music, PE, and Fine Arts. There are many more course offerings that extend beyond these categories and count towards not only elective credits, but also science and math credits. Furthermore, all allotments must be returned to the home district at the end of each school year. This is unacceptable and needs revising. It is crucial that allotments stay with a student throughout their education until graduation or withdrawal due to the high cost of classes at the high school level. One core class runs approximately \$1,000+ and electives can be even more. Even the highest allotment in the state, at \$4,500, will not cover all required classes in high school. Knowing this, parents, like myself, budget allotments at the lower, less expensive levels of education to save for high school. It would be devastating to lose access to those funds just as two of my three children are prepared to draw upon them. Public brick and mortar students receive at least four times the amount that public correspondence students are allotted. Taking from the limited monies of one lesser funded student to pour into a district, which will mainly go to administrative expenses, is unacceptable and needs to be revised. Isn't the goal to help Alaskan students succeed and excel? Further limiting access to unused student allotments prior to withdrawal or graduation must be addressed and funds must follow the student throughout his/her K-12 educational career.

While I live in an urban area and have access to P.E. resources for my children, rural students rely on the ability to purchase P.E. equipment to enrich their educational experience. Physical activity is a positive force in our lives-reduces mental disorders, increases social interaction, and fosters healthy lifestyle habits. We should encourage it and make it more available by not restricting the use of allotments to purchase necessary equipment. Most districts place restrictions on how much of a student's allotment may be spent on PE equipment. In the Anchorage School District, we are only allowed to spend \$50 per student. I have never used those funds for that purpose, but it may be more of a necessity for someone in a rural setting.

Please take the time to become familiar with the correspondence programs in your districts. Talk to administrators, correspondence teachers and parents. You will see that the programs are already heavily regulated and adding more restrictive regulation is not only unnecessary, it is detrimental to the educational experience of the child and the success of the correspondence program. Please support HB400R and try to further amend SB266 to align more closely with it. As written, I cannot support SB266 and don't believe anyone on the Senate Education Committee should either.

Thank you

Michael Mason

From: alymbaus <alymbaus@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:19 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266 and HB 400

I am writing to express concern over these two bills. These bills, in their current form, are not in the best interest of the many, many homeschool families of Alaska, especially in the rural areas.

Sincerely,
Alyssa Ohler
217 N Gulkana St
Palmer, AK 99645

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S9+, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

Michael Mason

From: Amanda Wilkens <amanda_942@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 1:46 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Testimony for Bill SB 266

Dear Education Board,

My name is Amanda Wilkens. I am a homeschooling mother of three children using a correspondence program to educate my children. I am opposed to Bill 266. Several sections do not align with homeschool education and supporting the needs of the children who choose to use this program.

I oppose Section 1: By disallowing our right as a parent to opt out of standardized testing. I am the teacher of these children and I know what they are learning. By choosing homeschooling, I am choosing to go at the pace of my particular child. That pace and standard will not be the same as the school districts. These test results will have no guidance over my child's learning. It is simply causing stress on the child and time could be better spent on learning.

I oppose section 3: regarding funds being spent on physical education equipment, used for private institutions, tutoring in only art, music, and education, fees spent on entrance to facilities, return of non-consumables, and funding that should be returned at end of year. Brick and mortar public schools have PE equipment provided for children. Why should homeschool kids not be allowed to purchase equipment?

There are several museums, pools, skating, music events, and performance arts that require fees to enter or participate. Learning is occurring at all these places. The parent as the teacher should also be covered. Even public school children are offered transportation and opportunities to take field trips. The hands on aspect of these types of trips will create a lasting memory or spark new learning interest.

I feel the phrase "private institutions" needs to be more clearly defined. As many homeschool families use online instruction to supplement their education through live classes such as language courses, writing classes, math, etc. Will this type of education no longer be funded? This would do a great disservice to our students. Families may no longer be able to afford these services.

Tutoring should be available from private individuals in all subject areas. These services can be found within our community and online. The wording appears that tutoring in academic areas may only be provided by a teacher employed through the correspondence program.

Returning of non-consumables for things such as textbooks and computers will create a nightmare for the correspondence programs. Where are all these teaching textbooks and outdated equipment from all these families going to be stored? The beautiful part of homeschooling is the opportunity to pick a just right curriculum. The material that works for your student will not be the same as another student. All three of my children use different approved curriculum for all their subjects. Most homeschoolers share their unused curriculum anyways.

Funding should roll-over for students. This money is not a bank account. All the funding can only be spent towards education. Any unused funds should continue to accumulate for when a child enters high school and requires a larger allotment. The amount a student is given each year in our current program is the same for all grades. It is not even close to the same amount allocated per student in a brick and motor school.

I value my choice as a parent and know the funding provided through a correspondence program is an advantage to providing the quality of education each of my children deserves. I can't support this bill as written. Please amend the sections as described and allow us to use our funding in a way that best supports each child's unique education. Homeschoolers are not out to cheat the school district out of funding for traditional schools. We only want to have the same rights to use our tax paying dollars.

Thank you,
Amanda Wilkens
Fairbanks, AK

amanda_942@hotmail.com

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Andrew Kerk <wiigotgames@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:10 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: I do NOT support SB 266

My name is Tatyana Tereshchenko I have 3 students that are homeschooling at Cyberlynx. I would like to put my vote against Bill SB 266.

SB 266 has more significant changes that ***I do not support***, including removing any option for opting out of state testing, removing any opportunity for rollover of unspent allotment, and restricting purchases of PE equipment, educational travel, and educational furniture.

Sent from my Galaxy

Michael Mason

From: ANWAR AMAR <permafrostmanagement@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:34 AM
To: House Education; Senate Education
Subject: SB 266 and HB 400 Opposition

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a 35yr Alaskan resident. I immigrated here to the USA when I was 6 years old with my family. My family installed the values of God, family, work and education. That upbringing raised 2 Business owners, one Federal Agent and one Corporate Executive.

In the past 15years, I have built a family and a business here in Alaska. I love Alaska and the opportunities it has offered us. We have always valued education and hard work and due to the failures in the traditional public school sector, we decided to homeschool our children a few years ago. It was one of the best decisions we could have made. We have found that while it is a little more work on us parents, the results speak for themselves. Our children have exceeded the testing curriculum for their grade compared to peers in the traditional 5 day school program. We have been able to spend more quality time with our children and most importantly, have the ability to CHOOSE how our children are being educated.

SB 266 and HB 400 have language that either directly threatens parental rights as they relate to standardized testing, or greatly curtail how allotments can be spent, well beyond religious school restrictions.

HB400 and its companion Senate Bill 266, which are both undergoing hearings, are an attempt to satisfy Judge Zeman's legal opinion, but both measures severely limit how parents use homeschool allotments and prohibits families from carrying over unspent allotment funds to the following year.

I understand from several sources, who work for local homeschool programs, that the state is looking at doing away with most vendor service options for homeschool families, including the vendor services with AK Homeschool.

I OPPOSE SB 266 and HB 400U in their current form due to the inequity they would create for homeschooling families, especially those who live in remote rural communities.

Our children's education is of the utmost importance and I strongly OPPOSE SB266 AND HB400. We need to keep options available for homeschool families. Not rip them away or limit them.

Thank You

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Anwar Amar
Permafrost Management Co.
-Management & Consulting-

phone: [907-229-0088](tel:907-229-0088)
Mailing address:
205 E. Dimond Blvd #438
Anchorage, AK 99515

From: A G <amiller727@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 2:40 PM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: Senate Bill 266

Dear Senator Tobin,

My name is Ashley Gower and I am a mother who resides in District P. I have recently heard SB 266 which in part seeks to remove parental authority from parents in regard to their children participating in state standardized testing. I strongly oppose any bill that would remove authority from a parent over their own children and I also oppose mandatory state standardized testing.

No matter how a parent chooses to have their child educated, whether it be public school, private school, or homeschool, it is imperative that parents retain their authority over their children. The government has a responsibility to educate our children, when a parent chooses to give them this responsibility, but removing parental authority that has previously been protected under the law is an overstepping of power. If this bill goes through and becomes law, your community will have suffered a great loss. Parents have a right to make choices for their children and to decide what is best for them and this right, regarding whether their child participates in state testing, should not be taken away.

My second issue is with state standardized testing. It does not give an accurate picture of how well a child is succeeding, how well they are learning, how smart they are, or where their strengths lie. It is unfair to the child, particularly our homeschool community where parents have the freedom to educate their children in a multitude of ways, to force them into a testing environment to give a test that has been predetermined with no regard to how that child is learning or what they are learning and to say whether that child is succeeding. The bill can absolutely stand without this section.

Finally, I would like to say that I do support the restricted spending of money that this bill lays out for correspondence programs. As a family that has both homeschooled children and public-school children, I would happily support the bill IF the unnecessary removal of parental authority is itself removed from the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ashley Gower, a very concerned parent

Michael Mason

From: Autumn Posey <autumn.abbott@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:17 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: No to SB 266

We oppose SB 266!!!!!!

Michael Mason

From: Jim Haning <jameshaning@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:38 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: RE: SB 266

To Whom It May Concern:

I am strongly opposed to SB 266. Our families have the right to educate their children as they see fit and homeschooling families should have the financial support of our taxes like those who choose to send their children to the public schools. There are many families and businesses who will be negatively impacted if this bill is passed. I never thought our wonderful state of Alaska would sink this low. Please do not allow this bill to pass.

Sincerely,

Beth Haning

Sent from my iPhone

From: Betty Jo Moore <bettyjo.moore@icloud.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 8:14 PM
To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>; Sen. Bill Wielechowski <Sen.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov>; Sen. Gary Stevens <Sen.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman <Sen.Jesse.Bjorkman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Kiehl <Sen.Jesse.Kiehl@akleg.gov>; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Jamie Allard <Rep.Jamie.Allard@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sarah Vance <Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov>; Sen. Mike Shower <sen.mike.shower@akleg.gov>; Sen. Bert Stedman <Sen.Bert.Stedman@akleg.gov>; Rep. Zack Fields <Rep.Zack.Fields@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andrew Gray <Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov>; Rep. Stanley Wright <Rep.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov>; Suzanne Downing <suzanne@mustreadalaska.com>; editor@alaskawatchman.com; editor@juneauempire.com; newstips@adn.com
Subject: SB 266 and the Alaska Constitution Health, Education and Welfare
Importance: High

Senators,

Since 2007-2008 each school district was given directive to adopt a policy that prohibits the harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student... AS 14.33.210 Reporting of incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. What does the DOE data and report show to the Alaska House of Representatives and the Senate about bullying within the school districts within Senator Tobin and Senator Wielechowski's districts?

Why does Clark Middle School have a reputation for student fights and brawls?

<https://mustreadalaska.com/watch-video-clark-middle-school-student-savagely-attacked-by-student-gang-during-gym-class/>

Alaska Statutes - What is the school policy?

https://education.alaska.gov/tls/safeschools/Docs/AS_14.33.200_14.33.250.pdf

Alaska Constitution VII - Health, Education and Welfare

Sec 1. Public Education The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions....

Sec 4. Public Health The legislature shall provide for the promotion and protection of public health.

Sec 5. Public Public Welfare The legislature shall provide for public welfare.

The Teacher's Union is a group a private group teachers that are union members for the benefit of better wages, etc. Is a substitute teacher required to be a certified teacher within the State of Alaska? I believe the answer is no. What is your answer?

Just as the legislature is responsible for establishing laws, etc., the legislature is also responsible for the promotion and protection of public health. When our children are not kept safe at a public school and the public school officials have failed to protect the safety and well-being of a child(ren), then parents need to have alternative methods of education to keep their children safe from abuses such as bullying, fights and brawls.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) follows the students from district to district. Does the funding for the child's IEP follow the student from a district to another district? An IEP can be for a child that is academically challenged or gifted and talented, or both.

What does the Code of Federal Regulations ADA, Section 504 and IDEA say?

28 CFR Part 35, 34 CFR Part 104 and 300.

The current correspondence school program **saves the State of Alaska money**. A parent withdrew her daughter from a public school because of on-going bullying that was happening within the school and the principal failed to make the bully stop. The girl enrolled in home schooling and successfully graduated high school and went onto college. This is one in many success stories of children being homeschooled.

The current correspondence school program **protects the State and the child** when a parent exercises their constitutional parental rights to protect their child's health and welfare.

Does the school districts get their curriculum from private groups, institutions, etc? Does the school districts get in-service training from private individuals, groups or institutions, etc.? I know the answer is yes. What is your answer?

Our Legislators are elected for we the people and not for the teachers' union. It is not the teachers' union responsibility to rewrite the State of Alaska's regulations setting out the rules for correspondence schools. **It is the Legislators responsibility to write and amend the laws.** <https://mustreadalaska.com/david-boyle-senate-teams-up-with-teachers-union-to-kill-student-opportunities/>

I know for a fact that when a school district dropped the ball and failed to provide the necessary requirements to meet a child's IEP school district monies were spent to pay for private education needs regarding reading and comprehension.

I do not support SB 266 as presented because it fails to address the responsibility of the State to ensure that every child shall not only have access to a public education system but an education system that shall provide for the child's promotion and protection of health. What is your school district doing to prevent bullying and harassment within a public school facility in your district?

Thank you for your time and service to Alaskans. Our children are paramount, and let us always remember the best interest of a child and to always do what will protect a child from ongoing trauma (ACEs).

Betty Jo Moore

Michael Mason

From: Brandy Barton Ward <brandybwt@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 4, 2024 9:51 PM
To: House Education; Senate Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266 and HB 400

Alaska State Legislature,

As a parent and a Alaska State Resident I am concerned with SB 266 and HB 400 and the effects it will have on students. I oppose SB 266 and HB 400 in its current form. Students should not be required to participate in standardized testing. Parents have the right to opt children out of standardized testing whether they attend school at a state school or participate in a homeschool program. Tax dollars should not go to private school, religious school or for religious materials. This is a separate issue from allotments provided to students who are homeschooled and participate in a homeschool program. I encourage you to look at the data and research on homeschooled students. The books Free to Learn by Peter Gray and Learning All the Time by John C. Holt are great resources. Homeschooled students are very successful in the classroom when they move onto higher education and report higher levels of life satisfaction. Parents have the right to decide how their children learn and what schooling they participate in. Current homeschool programs such as IDEA, Raven, AK Choice work great for students. These programs have teachers to support students' learning journey. Allotments supplement the learning journey as well. Allotments are used for curriculum, in person classes, books, materials, computers, travel, uniforms, furniture, PE equipment, sports and much more. These are all appropriate uses of home school allotments. Funds for family memberships to zoos, aquariums, museums are appropriate to facilitate the students' learning. The parent participates in learning with the student as the teacher requires a membership with the student. Changes should not be made to allotments beyond prohibiting use for private school, religious school and religious materials which goes against the constitution. Allotments should be able to roll over to the next year for the students' continued use. Students and families may plan for more expensive courses to be taken in high school by saving allotment dollars during elementary school. Preserving student and parents rights in Alaska is right for Alaska. Clarifying and enforcing no tax dollars going towards private school, religious school or religious material is right for Alaska. Please ensure that while the law clarifies the prohibition of tax dollars going to private school, religious school or religious material do not strip students and parents rights to homeschool as they chose. Please also protect other wonderful programs the state has like the Alaska Performance Scholarship and trades and apprentice schooling.

Respectfully,
Brandy Ward
Anchorage, AK

Michael Mason

From: Brittany Tompkins <btompkins0602@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:50 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB 266

As a homeschool parent of 8 years, I oppose this proposed bill.

Please keep roll over, keep private tutoring and small businesses covered by allotment, keep school choice for the parents. Testing should be optional.

Thank you,
Brittany Tompkins- a property tax paying resident of Wasilla, AK.

I also think that since I pay for local public schools with my tax dollars, I should be able to use allotment for my homeschool needs.

Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Carmen DeVilbiss <windyriverfarm@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 10:47 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee; House Finance; Senate Education; House Education
Subject: CS for Senate Bill NO. 266

To whom it may concern,

I have been familiarizing myself with the new version of SB 266. I am in complete shock at the make up of this bill. I feel you have missed the whole point of the amazing Correspondence Schools you have here in the State of Alaska.

The First point I would like to bring up is that there is no need to rework the whole Correspondence program that has been in place all these years. The only thing you need to do is clarify the religious terminology that Judge Zeman classified as unconstitutional. Not the whole program. This bill is a great example of an attempt at government overreach.

I am going to take this time to point out some of the fallacies that you are attempting to enact in this bill. Section 1 AS 14.03.016(a) you don't need to "adopt policies to promote the involvement of parents in the district's program." You realize that the parents are doing all the work for their children? They homeschool. They are literally teaching their kids everyday. They are involved with their kids in every aspect of their child's lives. I am actually insulted as a parent that you feel the government needs to "promote" more involvement from me. This brings up (1) As the parent/teacher of my children I know what they need. My oldest child is a voracious reader. I can't find enough books for him to read. My second absolutely hates to spend more than 10 minutes with his nose in a book, but you know what? At 14 he can drive every piece of equipment and operate all the machinery here on the farm. How do you test for that? They both have gifts, but neither are the same. Standardized tests/assessments do not prove anything to anyone out here in the real world.

Let's look at (B). To graduate from a Public Correspondence School every student must meet the graduation requirements of the district in which the school is in. All the work the student meets goes on "transcripts." You can find the "criteria " you are looking for on the Alaska Commission for Post-Secondary Education website. You do not have to add words to this bill for things that are already in place. The "criteria" are called "graduation requirements." The Correspondence schools my children have been in all have transcripts.

Now turning to page 4 line 20)allotments may not be used to pay for) (3) religious partisan, sectarian or denominational courses, classes, textbooks, or other curriculum material. You may want to define "Other curriculum material." That accounts for practically everything we purchase. We are doing Biology next year. Can I not purchase the lab materials I need for my children to complete the course work? Broad definitions like these are sticky subjects. I would also like to point out that Secular Humanism runs rampant through the school system. Secular Humanism is defined (by the Oxford Dictionary)

1. [humanism](#), with regard in particular to the belief that humanity is capable of [morality](#) and [self-fulfillment](#) without belief in God.

It would stand to reason that you should also throw out all the curriculum that has any stance on the belief system of secular humanists.

(f) This is very limiting to our gifted students. I can almost guarantee you that a majority of your Correspondence School Parents and students do not use allotments for curriculum. For good reason, many of the "approved" curriculums do not align with the standards they want to teach their children so they buy curriculum out of their own pockets. Allotments are then used as enrichment funds. These activities require more financial backing because they are not in a brick and mortar setting where many

of these enrichment activities are available to the B&M students. It is also cheaper to school your Public Homeschoolers than it is a traditional brick and mortar student. Limits of percentages should not be enacted.

I could continue on but this is already too long. After reading through this bill I am even more concerned that those who wrote this legislation actually have no idea what happens at the Public Correspondence Schools. We have attended two different Correspondence Schools here in Alaska. Neither one has allowed us to spend our allotment on books that come from Christian book publishers. When we traveled last year funding was only provided for entrance to museums and daily state/national parking. Our reimbursements go through a rigorous approval system. Allotments also benefit our local communities. Here in the Valley we have many opportunities for our children to learn from those in our own community. Money is being spent right here in Alaska benefiting our neighbors. All of the restrictions and severe oversight of allotments and course limitations hurts those in Alaska. I would absolutely suggest throwing out SB 266 in its entirety and take a closer look at HB 400 that is meeting the approval of many homeschool families.

Thank you,

Carmen DeVilbiss

From: Carol Simpson <carol.simpson@ideafamilies.org>

Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:07 PM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: Comment on SB 266

Dear Senator Tobin,

My name is Carol Simpson and I reside in Homer. I do work for IDEA, but am writing on my own behalf. I have 7 adult children that I homeschooled for 31 years, and some of them currently homeschool my grandchildren in correspondence programs. I homeschooled for the first 11 years independently, and then joined IDEA and was hired by them within a few weeks.

Over the years, I have appreciated the support of our legislators for homeschooling in general and correspondence programs in particular. I am thankful for the efforts of both the Senate and the House to ensure that this model of education continue intact after Judge Zeman's broad ruling.

SB 266 enshrines in statute much of the language that was in previous regulations. This seems like an obvious and relatively quick fix to address the judge's ruling, but I believe it to be an overreach. **SB 266 goes far beyond the judge's expressed concern about public funds going to private schools by including very many details from previous regulations**, which were originally passed in June 2004 and replaced in October 2014. My understanding and my experience over the 27 years that I have been involved in public education as well as legislation and regulations related to correspondence programs, is that the legislature provides relatively broad guidance to the State Board of Education and Early Development and then relies on the board to create specific guidelines for implementation of the legislature's intent. The current CS of HB 400 reflects this process. Relying on DEED to carefully determine what regulations are needed while the legislature is not in session provides for a more thoughtful process and inclusion of more stakeholders.

It was announced tonight that the state is filing an expedited appeal of the ruling to the Alaska Supreme Court. CS HB 400 provides DEED with direction regardless of how the Supreme Court rules without the potential necessity of a special session of the legislature before July 1.

I am in favor of the most recent version of HB 400 and urge you to reject SB 266.

Again, thank you for serving our state, for your efforts to preserve correspondence programs, and your willingness to solicit public comment.

Sincerely,

Carol Simpson

Michael Mason

From: christy montero <mavacat@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 11:49 AM
To: Rep. David Eastman; Senate Education; House Education; House Education
Subject: SB266 and 400 as well!

Dear all Senate and everyone else ...

I've been a educator to many of my students as well , my own for many years ..On behalf of many others who haven't had the chance to speak up, or conflicts in current lives. We all are fighting for our rights.. Now, Why are dipping in the homeschool public system????!!! Leave them alone! Which they had/are/is the followed states rules and such of your funding to the system of under idea, raven and more. When many people meaning (we) Do not ORDER any regligious or any pravite.... Secondly Sat is worthless.. We do test when we need to see where they are at, we do not need to inflate thier education . They need to just keep going.. We have A RIGHT to opt of whatever we choose to OUR kids, We choose what suits and what fits for Them.. On the Student Allotment, We do use it all the time TIL they graduate. Rollovers actully save MONEY for both sides teachers , schools. Why take that out?? Alot time WE do Pay our own ways, to Trips , PE ,Music to number of things unlike the schools gets..

Students actully do well at homeschool under public, when many struggle with peers, or number many reasons such small towns that why we are responblity of OUR kids WE choose what to fit for the kids.

NOW since school account of system of schools of locals leaders mess up on those high schools ,middle schools, and Elementary school's Funding . 8.8 million doallors mishandling Guts to take it out that is very very uncalled for the systems to make the mistake of mishandling money and touch the public homeschool sysytem can save money or use money ?? !! No that doesn't work that way, Can't just keep taking Maybe the gov, and rest of you sentors NEED TO LISTEN to the people!... LISTEN and HELP Them...

WE DONT NEED MANDATORY testing!
WE DONT NEED TO BE Certified! (WE all already Gradate to begin with!)
WE DO MEET with teachers !!
WE DO IEP Plans!!!!
WE USE ALLOTMENT roll over , saves money for both ways!!!
WE USE THE FREEDOM of choose what curriculum to use. !!

DO not break the contitutional amendement thank you !! The goverment senators and school board is suppose to listen and help others not to Destory a freedom.. ! Listen and you get benifts too as well!

SO The conquences is to close some schools, save chj is use one of those a buildings SAVE some funding sell a building to some others business to maybe to help business of some stora.. Therefore fix it and own up the mistake.. LETS SAVE JUNEAU and many other Cities of many in Alaska!! >>>>!!! Then there is no WASTEFUL spending.. Charters and IDEA and ohters have very good skills managements Than many public in person buildings.!!! so please considerate of your people of Alaska.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING AND SAVE YOUR PEOPLE OF Juneau and ALASKA citizens.. Help SAVE our rights!

Juneau citizen,

Christy Montero
mavacat@gmail.com
mavacat@hotmail.com

➔ Reply • Forward



Welcome to the new Outlook

(1/5)



•

Michael Mason

From: David <David@cachecamper.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 9:24 AM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Rep. David Eastman; todd.smoldon@alaska.gov; Rep. Sarah Vance; Sen. Robert Myers; Sen. Mike Shower; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Sen. Löki Tobin; House Judiciary; Sen. David Wilson; Rep. Jesse Sumner
Subject: Will this be read? SB-266 - OPPOSED - HB-400R SUPPORT

Greetings,

Opposed - strongly

- **SB-266**

Support - strongly

- **HB-400R**
- **Confirmation of Bob Griffin**
- **Confirmation of Barb Tyndall**

I like getting straight to the point, so that is what I will do. But this is a large enough topic that being too concise leaves important details and views unshared.

My hope is to raise questions worth asking and to put proper consideration into them to find if they are the correct questions. I believe they are. I hope that the readers of this can read through the full body of this email because I believe there are important points to ponder among those individuals who make up the general public, school district, and state legislature.

My goodness. Talk about an out of left field hot potato. I appreciate the quick drafting of this bill in response to the recent ruling.

At least those were my initial thoughts as a distant observer. However, now that I am looking closer. I see that yet again Mr. Scott Kendall is working on something for the NEA.

Hmm. Interesting.

This time a very powerful force of intelligent and capable parents has been united.

I am personally a product of homeschool. Initially an independent home schooler but switched to homeschool correspondence for high school. I am a local business owner here in Palmer/Wasilla. (Worked through the ranks over the past decade and a half and two years ago purchased Cache Camper MFG, a 53-year Alaskan icon, but owned another local business before that.)

I consider the structure of my education a success.

What is the point of this court ruling and SB266 anyway? Why did this even happen? Well, appears to be clear. **Who is funding Scott Kendall? There is something deeper going on that has little to do with the results of the 12-year education process of our children.**

We need to pose the critical question. What is our focus in education? **It is to produce a love and a desire, an evergreen curiosity, if you will, into tomorrow's leaders, so that, they can contribute greatness and prosperity to those around them.**

There is so much to unpack with what the real solution to this entire matter actually is. The problem with diving directly into what the real problems and solutions are is that not everybody can agree on what those are specifically at the core. Largely because of our differing core beliefs.

So, which is better? Homeschool or public. I know that is not necessarily the direct quandary SB 266 is addressing but that is quite literally the elephant in the room.

The truth is that neither is better than the other. **Attention and focus from the parent make all the difference in the world whether they are in the public schools' care or their parents.** Unfortunately, **that attention and care cannot be legislated.** That attention just seems to be higher among homeschool parents, so the outcome is better. Then we come back to the core of the issue which is yet again beliefs. What is important to be teaching our kids and at what age? And how do we measure all of it especially when we attach it to money? The school district has moved to teaching a new morality it seems. A morality that is based in social construct that "must be established and taught by the state" and not the parents. So now parents are finding themselves fighting an odd new religion. The religion of social justice. It's a real problem. So now public school is no longer an option because our children are failing the basics at school while simultaneously being enrolled in this odd social religion. Interesting. As a parent who is engaged I will not allow my children to be exposed to such an environment. **They need to be educated.**

Can the district teach self-governance into our children? No, that comes from moral conduct which is the parents' job to build into their children. This requires situational discipline. That cannot be executed by the state. We are abandoning moral virtue and conduct as a society and replacing it with the empty "all inclusive" principle established by who? **The less self-governance we have the more need we have for governance by the state and the more governance we have by the state the higher the cost of operations year after year. We're building dependents with the very structure and content of our educational system. We are not building creators in our schools anymore. This is the core of the ever-increasing fiscal deficit.**

Let's get to the nuts and bolts of my take on the bill.

Standard-based testing. The issue here is timing. This comes to my point above. Can we actually agree that a highly academic 6-to-9-year-old child is awesome and great for schoolboard stats (which is not happening anyway) but that those children who are put through rigorous early learning tend to taper off with their focus and love for learning around 6th grade and tend to decline later as they continue toward 10th grade? It is apparent that we cannot agree on this.

This is a major disparity in educational opinion. How is this the nuts and bolts of the bill? Well four things:

- Standard-based testing
- Prior district approval
- PE equipment
- Roll over funds
- Religious and Private expenditures

I will point out before continuing that I am fine on money. **I can pay to educate my children, so I approach this objectively.** What about all the families who cannot but are not willing to submit their children to the ever-failing structure we currently have? The most successful area of Alaska's education system IS the correspondence program! Think of that... Parents are doing better.

Back to the nuts and bolts. I do not intend this email as senseless bashing of the current system. Not in the slightest. Rather, I intend it as collaboration and healthy conversation. We are talking about education after all.

- **Standard-based testing** - the wording of this is extremely overreaching and has massive implications far beyond an allotment or "Fund Account". Next, the content of these tests is based on the districts standards of what students should be focused on in certain grades. I would submit for consideration that this is one of the greatest points of homeschooling. Each child is different and will excel or fall short in differing areas and subjects. This is okay! But, in homeschooling, at the parents' discretion, we find that if we need to shelf a certain subject for a given period of time and focus on others that are clear strengths for the child only to circle back to that subject **once we have gotten the child ready, it is tremendously impactful and highly effective.** But using this method will likely never produce a child that will pass standard-based testing in line with the district's schedule. The district releases a test a month prior to when it needs to be taken. Further yet, what does this type of stringent rule lead to in the coming years if test scores do not align with the desires of the district? Also who determines the content of the tests and who can influence it? The NEA? They have a poor track record with test development.
- **Prior district approval** - this entire stipulation assumes that the district is successful in education... I encourage letting that sink in. **Again, my intent is not to bash,** yet it is to encourage asking and facing the difficult questions and realities. **Is the district succeeding with our children?** What is the path that has been chosen? The district has done so good in educating our children that, if this was a race, we would literally be the second to last crossing the line. Is it right that I should allow the district with that record to set the standard with which I educate my child? Again, this is not a bash session. These are genuinely fair questions that need to be presented and pondered. Who is qualified? Or is it possible that the NEA is having success in delivering an education of their choosing that has slid far to a particular agenda? Hmm, worth pondering. Perhaps they have been successful. Far left leaning ideology that is having tremendous impact in dismantling the structure of the nuclear family. Large accusation, yes, but with merit.
- **PE equipment** - so many children are dormant. The consequences of discouraging children to play and be active in constructive play causes tremendous long-term expense on society. Some of these expenses can be directly connected back to early age lifestyle and others are more arguable. Such as mental health, for example. We live in an ever-growing structure that discourages physical activity. This issue seems to be getting worse. Especially with our current inflation issue. Basic needs get assessed first. How and what type of items get paid for here is quite broad. But shutting it down entirely is pointless in the bill. I would like to see deliberation and debate on this topic.

- **Roll Over Funds - How is removing this wise?** Let's see some deliberation on the real numbers. Parents in the correspondence programs are proving more fiscally responsible than the district and state. They are spending the money more conservatively in the monetary definition of the word. The structure of how government budgets currently work is quite absurd. That does not work in real business. Again, not bashing. Straight talk. I would go out of business if I ran my budget like the state does. Hence our massive state deficit. Parents are saving and not making unnecessary expenditures in years where it proves they do not need to. Rather, they are using the self discipline to forward think and save that money for higher levels of education when the years better define what a good direction for the child truly is. This increases the effectiveness of the child once they have been released into society. I would love to see deliberation on this among the senate. The truth is that education, at least for home school, is incredibly cheap some years and others more expensive. I would say that for first grade and second grade the cost is higher. Then grades 7th to 12th seem to ramp back up. I would like to see an assessment of this among the senate that shows the **intelligent deliberation recognizing the true cost difference between the various grades as well as the true cost per student analysis of public brick and mortar schools vs parent lead correspondence. I think we all know the answer.**
- **Religious and Private expenditures** - I'm not sure that people in the district or in the general public actually know how the allotment works combined with the ILP. Our school, IDEA, is quite stringent with how allotment expenditures are used. **There are NO religious curriculum permitted. Just straight fact. That's already how it is.** I understand there is one school that does allow all curriculum but that does not go for 90% of the other schools. If we are going to start making narratives that the outliers are the whole, then we could make some pretty crazy cases against the district and the NEA. Let's be real.

I would like to point out that there are good and bad eggs in homeschooling as well as in the teacher's union and the district. This results in difficult data. But this is reality. What are the solutions?

Thank you for your consideration and I will continue to watch, with influence, the decisions and deliberation by all of our officials in the school district as well as the legislative branch.

I hope that this full email has actually been read.

Take care,
David Shoemaker
Palmer

Michael Mason

From: Dorrance Cullison <dorrancecullison@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 8:00 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Oppose SB266 in favor of HB400R

I vehemently oppose SB266 as over reaching. HB400R is much simpler and solves the problem for now for the next school year while the case goes through the appeals afforded to it let that work and see what happens.

Sincerely
Dorrance Cullison

Michael Mason

From: Douglas (Doug) Murray <Doug.Murray@respec.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 3:27 PM
To: Senate Education; Sen. Jesse Kiehl
Subject: FW: Senate Bill No 266 and Issues affecting Homeschoolers vendors

Dear Sir/Madam,

As the legislature is faced with Judge Zeman's ruling on homeschool funding, we would like to highlight the larger consequences of that ruling's impact on the wider community. The Juneau Shotokan Karate dojo is a non-profit that provides training in self-defense and life skills to a number of homeschool children. Our dues, at only \$80 per month, are an excellent value at less than \$7.00 per lesson. Our instructors all volunteer their time and dues are strictly used for space rental, utilities and insurance. Homeschool participation helps us keep our organization viable, providing positive athletic training and personal empowerment for the youth of our community, as do other chapters of Shotokan Karate around the State of Alaska. Juneau Shotokan Karate provides martial arts instruction for children 7 through 18 years old as well as adults. The classes provide an opportunity for the young people to interact with adults in the activity.

As you consider the effects of Judge Zeman's decision and how to overcome the ramifications of his ruling, we hope you will keep a wider view of the importance homeschool has on our State economy and organizations like ours. Homeschool is a preferred alternative for thousands of Alaskan families and we encourage corrective action to stabilize funding and ensure Alaskan families have the support necessary for the educational path that best suits their families.

Thank you for consideration,

Doug Murray

Chief Instructor

Juneau Shotokan Karate

907-463-3373

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From: B Fischer <brandonandella@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 1:56 PM
To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>
Subject: SB266

Senator,

SB266 is a slap in the face of Alaskan correspondence homeschoolers. It is a power grab by NEA Alaska and the government to control what we teach, how we teach it, who is teaching. They did not receive the funding they requested and chose to go after the low man on the totem pole so to speak, correspondence homeschoolers. The new restrictions proposed within SB266 make it difficult to continue to choose to utilize correspondence programs for many parents. Homeschoolers tend to have higher test scores on average than kids in the public schools. We do not want restrictions on what curriculum we choose for our children. We choose a curriculum that best suits our children's needs, learning style, etc. We are required to meet state standards. We are not exempt from that. We already cannot purchase religious curriculum with allotment money. That is already a rule. One correspondence school in Anchorage making a poor choice with allotment funds going to a "private christian school" to cover their tuition does not mean that all the other correspondence programs are making the same poor choices. Hold that program responsible. I agree that A change needs to be made to the constitution to clearly lay out what a "private institution" truly is. That is the only change that needs to be made. All of these bills being proposed are government overreach. You took one thing that needed to be changed and ran with it, proposing many changes instead. Might I add, not good changes. Not allowing a rollover of allotment money year to year makes it difficult for kids to take some of the courses they want to take in future years. For example, we have been saving a portion of our son's allotment each year to be utilized toward taking welding courses in high school and becoming certified before he graduates. He plans to attend trade school after graduation rather than college and we support him in that decision. We have chosen to pay for most of his curriculum out of pocket over the last several years to save most of his allotment money for that purpose. Many parents save allotment money for these types of purposes. With your proposed changes, that money will disappear! We are held accountable for our spending of allotment money. Most times we are required to pay out of pocket and then be

reimbursed down the road once receipts and charges are looked over and approved for reimbursement. We don't just have allotment money handed to us. We have to prove what it was used on and when, how it was paid for before reimbursement. Correspondence homeschoolers cost the state far less than children in brick and mortar. Our allotment funds are far less. Many parents rely on these funds to allow them to afford to homeschool their children as it tends to require money to pay for curriculum, etc. and a parent to be home and present rather than working to make an income. Requiring our children to take standardized testing is ridiculous. Those tests are not used to help children get into college or trade school. Kids don't even know what their scores were. They are only utilized by the government. It should remain the way it is now- optional.

There are many reasons 23,000 children are homeschooling in Alaska. that is around 17% of Alaska's children. That number is growing every year. Bullying is a massive problem in public schools. There seems to be no repercussions, even when taken to the highest level. There are threats of school violence. Many parents don't agree with the indoctrination happening within public schools. Alaska's brick and mortar schools are failing at educating our children well. Homeschool families enjoy the freedom and independence to choose what type of education their children receive. We have been utilizing correspondence homeschool for our son over the last 4 years. It has made a significant difference in his level of learning and growth. Our family has more time in our days to enjoy time together. We will not endorse your bill. It has too many restrictions. We will also not return to brick and mortar school. If passed, we will make the difficult choice to homeschool independently. We love our correspondence program and the freedoms we enjoy as a homeschooling family now. We as a homeschool community will not just rollover and accept the changes proposed. We will fight for the rights we have to not be infringed.

Ella Fischer

Correspondence School/Homeschool “Must Haves”

Freedom to choose curriculum – Curriculum choice, secular or religious, is vital to all correspondence/homeschool families. Families do not want to use public funds for religious curriculum. They do want freedom to choose secular or religious curriculum that aligns with their ILP and be counted for credit. Curriculum choice is the primary reason families chose homeschooling. If taken away, families will become independent homeschoolers.

Allotment roll over – Year to year, unused annual allotment amount is reserved for the individual child until a) the allotment is fully utilized, the child graduates from the program, or until the child leaves the program.

Provide optional standardized testing – Continue to allow parents the option to opt out of testing. Utilize ILPs, contact with sponsor teachers, grades, and work samples as verification of academic progress.

Define “private institution” – Attempt to define what is a private institution so the definition is broad enough to include classes through private and potentially even religious providers/entities. Using the minutes from the constitutional convention, work to define “direct benefit” and “religious or other private educational institution” broadly enough to not preclude families in rural communities, with very few options, the ability to procure course/lessons from a local or national vendor (private or religious). This definition should have little effect on the ability of families to purchase services/materials. This should be done in concert with homeschool families/stakeholders.

Reimbursement of educational items for our school – This requires thinking of a homeschool family as one individual (very small) school. If a larger school has the ability to purchase items, so should a small school and vice versa. In order to help this thought process, think if money were not a hindrance and a big(ger) school would be permitted to purchase items based on their priority for the student (money was not an issue), the small homeschool should be able to purchase these same items if they align with the priorities for the student. Examples include: IT components, software and hardware, exercise equipment, school furniture, Legos, horse riding lessons, camps, curriculum, books, white boards, manipulative, posters, recreational/gym memberships, etc. Homeschool families need these items to educate their students in the same way as big(ger) schools. In the same way, parents of homeschooling children double as a teacher and just like teachers have their admission into museums, plays, fieldtrips, etc paid for by the schools, our students also require a “teacher” chaperoning them to these events.

Included in this is a process to challenge the denial of a purchase. This process would ideally have multiple layers of appeal for the family.

The overarching theme is that if the schools/districts pay money for or allow things/items, the same should be allowed for correspondence students.

Michael Mason

From: B & K Green <bkogreen@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 9:47 PM
To: Senate Education; House Education
Cc: Sen. James Kaufman; Rep. Julie Coulombe
Subject: SB 266 Testimony

Good evening Education Committee members,

I am an Anchorage resident with two elementary-aged children who are enrolled in a statewide correspondence program.

As we complete our third year homeschooling, our children have greatly benefited from our program- the care and support of our contact teachers, the option to tailor educational materials with their learning styles, and the freedom to learn in a non-traditional environment. We choose to homeschool for a multitude of reasons- learning differences, work/home rhythms, and the beautiful freedom of choice for each unique child(individual learning plan.)

Over the last several weeks, I've tuned in to listen to a variety of legislative sessions regarding the statewide correspondence programs.

I'm writing in support of HB 400U and would ask you to please consider editing SB 266 to come more directly in line with language/intent of HB 400U. Please help us support a tailored education that inspires, challenges, grows and sparks a rich desire for learning.

I ask you to please work together, both House and Senate, to come to an agreement for our correspondence families. Help us preserve the freedom of choice as we continue to partner with our children, sponsor teachers and staff, and correspondence program.

Our 2023-2024 school year is coming to a close on June 30, and for a variety of reasons, our family schools year-round. July 1 is just around the corner.

Judge Zeman's May 2 decision to approve a stay until June 30, 2024 leaves us in great uncertainty and turmoil.

I implore you, please work together.

Thank you for your time and attention,
Green Family

From: Holly Davis <hdavis7808@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 2:12 PM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support of Correspondence Schools and Student Allotments

Dear Senator Tobin,

I hope this email finds you well. I would like to tell you that I am not the best writer, and I do hope I will come across in a way that is clear and understandable.

I would first like to express gratitude to the wonderful state of Alaska for the Extraordinary homeschool support you have given us since our moving here in 2020. We are a one income, military family living on JBER with 2 beautiful girls whom we have always homeschooled. We have moved many, many times, and homeschooling provided stability for my girls in the area of education when everything else was always changing. I would like you to know that we have Never experienced as much support for our homeschooled children as we have here in Alaska! In fact, this is the top reason we decided to stay longer here in Alaska because of the homeschool support you have poured into our children. No where else compares to you in this area, state of Alaska.

And this is why I am extremely heartbroken and shocked with the current ruling. We are currently enrolled with Family Partnership Correspondence School (FPCS) who we have been ever so impressed with and have had superb support from our contact teacher. My daughter has begged us with tears not to leave Alaska because she wants to graduate from FPCS in May 2026. So we made the decision to stay here so that our oldest could graduate with her FPCS class of 2026.

FPCS student allotment has been a beautiful blessing to my girls. With the allotment they have been able to take music lessons, various lessons for PE, online courses, in-person classes from approved vendors. We have also purchased curriculum and computers for the girls. Because of the allotment money, we have

been able to provide a well-rounded, customized education with exceptional educational support from our correspondence school.

Currently, I am owed close to \$1000 in reimbursement money from FPCS, and none of that was used to pay for anything religious. I do not think it is right to halt all payments to families and operations especially before the school year has ended. I would hope you would vote to keep things as they currently have been with how the correspondence schools are functioning until the new legislation is in place.

I would like you to see in more detail some of the ways we use allotment money:

*Tennis lessons and practice, swimming, and gym workouts at the Alaska Club.... My children have been able to get exercise indoors doing activities they enjoy especially in the winter months. Unfortunately, my children do not enjoy winter sports, so the Alaska Club has been a huge blessing to them. There are no other indoor tennis courts here in Alaska except for the Alaska Club. Our allotment pays the student's portion of the family membership.

*FPCS has been paying for standardized testing for our girls. We have chosen the nation Stanford 10 (SAT 10) testing. It has been used for more than a century and meets state and national standards. I do feel that parents should have a choice in which testing they want their children to participate in. Especially, military families because we move often and we prefer a national test rather than a state test.

*My girls also take Krav Maga, a self-defense class, for PE too... They love it and it gives them confidence in themselves. It has been something they look forward to at the end of the day especially in these long winters here in Alaska. Krav Maga is a private institution and we are supporting their business by being able to participate in Krav Maga.

I am concerned with all the micromanaging that the teachers' union is trying to do to correspondence schools. I feel like we should focus on what is best for each child, and not take away parents' rights either.

Student base allotments that haven't been used up in a school year should be able to roll over to the next school year. That money was designated for my child, and so it should stay with my child.

Shouldn't correspondence schools have the right to choose their vendors without discriminating? They should be able to choose quality vendors whether they are religious or nonreligious. The focus should be what is best for the child. Quality vendors are best for the children, and this is what matters, not whether an institution is religious or nonreligious.

My girls have been FLOURISHING in the correspondence schools here. Why should we change something that is not broken?

I truly believe Alaska should support All students no matter how they are educated, whether public school, correspondence school, or independent homeschooled. Every child needs to be educated, and the state of Alaska should support (student base allotment) each child equally without discrimination. This is why I am supporting the continuation of correspondence schools, and student allotments.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and I do hope you will have a new perspective after reading that will help you in your decision.

Thank you for all you do for our state!

Sincerely,

Holly Davis

Michael Mason

From: Ingrid Roelfs <ingridr@veiconsultants.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 3:24 PM
To: House Education; Senate Education
Subject: SB 266 and HB 400

Committee Members--As a grandma of 3 homeschooled kids (kindergarten through 5th grade) I would like to urge you to offer the opportunity for public testimony on the above-referenced bills before voting them into law. In their current form, these bills may have a negative impact on current homeschool opportunities and, specifically, how funds are spent. Homeschooling appears to work very well for a growing segment of our population (my grandkids are thriving) while it looks like public schooling is in decline. I think the public education system has taken its eyes off their overall goal, which, I believe, is to produce a literate citizenry who can form objective, educated opinions and vote accordingly. My grandkids are learning just that, in a homeschool setting with aid from professional educators and dedicated, involved parents. Do you really want to upset something that is already working? There are likely other stories and viewpoints that you will not know about unless you ask. Please open up the issue to public input.

Thanks for your consideration.

Ingrid A Roelfs

VEI Consultants
1345 Rudakof Circle, Suite 201
Anchorage AK 99508
907.337.3330 Ph
907.338.5386 Fx

Michael Mason

From: Isaac Johnson <yakimamft@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 4, 2024 10:29 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: HB400

To whom it may concern,

Recently, the issue of what is and is not constitutional regarding funding with homeschooling in Alaska has come to a head. As a parent of a daughter who goes to private school and is also dual enrolled in IDEA, a local homeschool program, I have really seen the benefits of being able to use her allotment money to pay for Spanish curriculum, educational outings, and other things that have benefited her educational process. It is such a blessing to be able to have financial resources to give her those opportunities.

My wife is also a teacher with IDEA, and I have helped her over the years with hundreds of families where the parents' ability to have a lot of choice and flexibility with how allotment money is spent, seems to be a tremendous benefit to the kids. I hope you take this into consideration in passing legislation that continues to allow parents in Alaska to have as many choices for their children in the education process as possible. Not every kid flourishes in a public school environment and not every parent can afford to take care of all of the expenses in homeschooling their child, so one of the reasons we love living in Alaska has been that the state allows parents a lot of different options. I would hate to see those choices being removed.

Sincerely,

Isaac Johnson

Michael Mason

From: Jennifer Appel <jennappel7@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 7:58 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Opposition to standardized testing

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing today in opposition of SB 266, specifically the part about standardized tests being mandatory.

The archaic practice of standardized testing being mandatory is one of the reasons this bill is extremely concerning to the average homeschooler but also to any parent. This bill takes away the rights of all students-homeschoolers and public schoolers - to choose whether or not testing is something that lines up with their values. What does standardized testing actually accomplish?

Nothing for the student, I'll argue. They do not see the results for almost a year and by then, anything received is meaningless as they have moved past that.

Nothing for the teacher as she has to take too much of her time teaching to some meaningless test rather than teaching material that actually makes a difference and would be beneficial for the students.

Nothing for the parent. I have yet to meet a standardized child and therefore any data received in a "standardized test" is useless to me as the parent.

Standardized testing is a meaningless waste of time. Kids know it's meaningless. They can sit there and literally click at random on the answers in order to finish. Why do you think we have the lowest test scores? Do you really think we have students who are stupid? No, we have students who are innovate and smart, who don't appreciate their time being wasted. We have students who go on to do brilliant things. Why don't we allow their own successes to speak for themselves instead of trying to measure them all up against the same measuring stick?

"If you expect a fish to climb a tree, he will spend his whole life thinking he is stupid."

Let's stop the madness that is comparing children to other children. Let them be themselves. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Appel
Seward, AK

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Jennifer Bundy <jeeperjoebundy@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 7:02 AM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Tyson Bundy
Subject: Homeschooling/Correspondence Schooling Legislation

Ladies and Gentleman of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Jennifer Bundy and I am from Eagle River, Alaska. I have lived here since the early 90's. I graduated from Chugiak High School. I now have 4 children of which we have various options of schooling for them. We have done some traditional, neighborhood public schooling (Homestead Elementary, Mirror Lake Middle School, Chugiak High School), some Charter Schooling (Eagle Academy Charter School and Family Partnership Charter School), and an alternative option (Alaska Middle College). I have 2 that have graduated and 2 still coming through the system. This coming year my son who will be a Junior was planning to do Family Partnership Correspondence School so that he could take some college classes through UAF (where he is ultimately planning to go to college for engineering) but also still be connected to his home high school for some of the opportunities there.

One of the benefits of being in Alaska, and specifically Anchorage School District, has that there have been choices for my family to pick the best educational route for each child. Having options allows us to meet their needs of where they are. I am concerned with the direction of SB266 and whether it will still allow my children to have the education they need. Some of my concerns are:

1- Choice. I want to pick the best educational route for my children. I want to allow them to take college classes, classes at the high school, classes in the community like Driver's Education, PE, and music classes. I want them to be able to be involved in extra curricular activities at their home high school. If they need tutoring and there isn't the option through our schooling option, I want to be able to find it in the community to meet their need. There is currently a process to approve vendors through the homeschools/correspondence schools, but removing that and making the education only happened through paid school employees, limits the options that are available out there that are good options.

2- Testing. I want the option of being able to opt my children out of State Testing. My kids would do well on State Testing, however, there are so many issues with it that I have traditionally opted them out. It causes so much stress to all involved. It has not been consistent and changes every few years with new wrinkles and problems that have to be ironed out, at the sacrifice of our children's education. I could go on, but those are my two biggest concerns.

3- I want those that are involved in homeschool/correspondence school to be able to join their neighborhood schools for extra options, such as fine arts, sports, theater, etc.

4- Parental Rights- Most of all, I want to be able to decide what is best for my children. There are some decisions that are coming from Anchorage School District that I don't agree with, that don't align with what, or how my children are taught. Because of that, I want to utilize all of our resources to give my children their best education, that I, as parent feel they should have.

Please keep these important points in mind as you assess and view the upcoming legislation. I believe that SB266 would not allow these priorities to all be in place.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bundy

My name is Jennifer Stevens. My husband, Glenn and I homeschool our two special needs elementary school children via Connections Homeschool in Soldotna.

Because of this allotment program, we are able to provide quality curriculum and other non religious educational materials to our children. We would not be able to provide this quality material without the help of the allotment. We also are able to have a special needs resource teacher at Connections for assistance and guidance on quality curriculum and materials.

Our 8 year old son has Down syndrome and Autism. He requires 1:1 help with learning, due to his disabilities. Our 11 year old daughter has Down syndrome as well as ALL (leukemia) in remission, so she is also best educated by us. I have a BA in education and a masters in Social Work, and my husband has a masters in public services administration.

We also homeschooled our now adult sons (26 and 29) via Twindly Bridge Homeschool Charter School in Wasilla.

As a result of homeschooling, my eldest son became the youngest EMT in the state and is now a paramedic in interior Alaska. He also was chosen to represent Alaska at the FBI Youth Leadership Academy in Quantico. He is an Eagle Scout as well.

My 26 year old was homeschooled until he reached his junior year, when he was accepted and attended Alaska Middle College in Eagle River. He graduated from the program with 42 college credits and his high school diploma. He is now a paramedic student in interior Alaska.

Homeschooling and the allotment is very valuable to our family. Please keep Alaska number 1 in homeschool programs, and don't take away our services or modify them. They are working very well as they are now.

Thank you,

Jennifer L. Stevens

Connections Homeschool family

Soldotna, Alaska

Michael Mason

From: Jimmy and Fawn Dixon <jandfdixon@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 10:21 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266

I, Fawn and Jimmy Dixon, parents of 2 graduated IDEA homeschool and parents of 2 currently enrolled IDEA homeschool students.

We have successfully graduated 2 kids, 1 who is finishing his A&P certificate with UAF, and both are Alaska performance scholarship awardee. 1 is graduating this year, 2024.

We disagree with the Bill, SB266 in these instances:

1. No allotment used for PE facilities/memberships.

Our kids did not want to do sports, even though we tried a few. They enjoyed weight lifting, walking, running and such at the local Planet Fitness. Students should not be penalized because they don't like structured sports. With long cold winters this was a huge blessing that the kids can work out and get their needed physical education. These are now life long habits and even after graduation they still do. All students should be allowed to exercise how they choose so we encourage and teach healthy habits for their entire life.

2. No allotment to be used for physical education equipment. As you know Alaskas weather can be treacherous and we buy basic equipment like free weights to be used at home or a kayak to be used all summer. When weather or other circumstances prevent us from leaving our home. This is also a huge disadvantage to rural students who do not have access to facilities or organized individual lessons. Physical Education needs to be huge priority especially due to the obesity epidemic in Alaska and US.

3. All money not used in school year to be returned to school district. We have rolled over money for our kids when they were young so when they got to high school they could take college classes or technical classes. It helped our son in his preparation to attend college! Which I think is a huge benefit as he already is a productive member of society with a full time job in his field while finishing his certificate! It helped tremendously our family to not put a strain on our very tight budget so he could pursue his career even in high school!

4. Clarification on private education institution. Does that mean education classes held in private education center like Folk School or Science Mike here in Fairbanks. They teach specific classes (science, art, mechanics, etc) to students for a designated time. There needs to be clarification since a lot of people across the state teach classes with an Ak business license for education of specific skills.

Thank you, Jimmy and Fawn Dixon
Fairbanks, Ak

Michael Mason

From: Joann Rosario <hope07th@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 7:12 PM
To: Senate Education; House Education
Subject: HB400 and SB266 bills

Hi! As a parent I choose that my children will have the best educational paths for them. I choose that they attend private school with the partnership of homeschool program. The program helps with the burden of most parents like me financially. Please support us facilitating access to these resources, allowing us to afford the high-quality education our children deserve.

Thank you,
Jo-Ann Rosario

From: Wes Yenter <wyenter@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 1:29 AM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>; Sen. Gary Stevens <Sen.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Bjorkman <Sen.Jesse.Bjorkman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>; Sen. Jesse Kiehl <Sen.Jesse.Kiehl@akleg.gov>; Rep. George Rauscher <Rep.George.Rauscher@akleg.gov>; barbara.tyndall@alaska.gov

Subject: Oppose SB266

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is John "Wes" Yenter of Palmer Alaska. My wife and I are long time Alaskan residents, tax payers, property owners, and voters. Our three children 14, 12, and 6 were born and raised in Alaska. However, because of the current state of Alaska's education system we opted to homeschool each of our children. Alaska is our home and we love it, yet we can't in good conscious send our children to it's schools. This is because by almost all standards used, Alaska ranks at the bottom or near the bottom of every objective ranking system quantifying the quality of education provided in a state.

Now we find aspects of our homeschooling effort under attack as well. Judge Zeman recently found the state in violation of the Alaska Constitution. Specifically, "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." In this particular case, allotment funds were used in a manner that violated this requirement. I believe it's crucial to point out that this case was a specific isolated instance. The majority of correspondence program organizations and homeschooling families abide fully to this Constitutional requirement. My family has personally belonged to IDEA since 2014, and have witnessed how strictly they abide by the constitutional requirements outlined above.

I urge your opposition to SB266 as it stands. In its current form it does not adequately address many of the more pressing and urgent issues that need to be resolved since the courts judgment. I will outline the most pressing issues below.

Ending unused allotment rollovers for use in later year(s). Noted on page 3, lines 15-17 of the senate bill. Our family and many others have saved portions of our allotments to be used for the more expensive educational endeavors. Most often families and students need these funds during the high school years for learning trades and earning certifications. For our children this includes aviation, and culinary arts. These subjects are not available to them until they are in their teens. Most families could not afford to pursue these educational opportunities out of pocket. SB266 will stifle student progress in career fields such as aviation just when pilots are needed most. This hurts Alaska as a whole and not just the students and families. With such far reaching ramifications for students especially in rural locations it is crucial to understand how important and impactful a little funding can be. Our annual allotment of \$2,700 per student through IDEA is minimal compared to the \$21K allocated for students of public schools. What this means is that "kids in correspondence programs save around \$150 million per year in state funding formula distributions," per DEED's State Board member, Bob Griffin, in an article published February 15, 2024 in the Anchorage Daily News.

Family travel expenditures noted on page 3 , lines 24(e) to page 4, line 5. Allow the allotment funds for family travel expenditures associated with the ILP. For example but not limited to: entrance fees to private museums, tickets related to the arts (theater, concerts, state/national park passes, and zoos/aquariums. During the 2021-2022 school year our curriculum centered around the United States of America. We had the opportunity to take a road trip to the lower 48, starting on the east coast and making our way back up to Alaska. There were many learning experiences that were free, like the Smithsonian, National Mall, and all the state capitol buildings of each state that we drove through. However, our allotment helped pay for many other experiences. Throughout our trip, we visited many historical sites and national parks like the Minuteman National Park, Fort Sumter, Arches National Park and White Sands National Park, just to name a few. This was made possible with the purchase of our annual America the Beautiful National Park Pass. We also visited museums like the Salem Witch Museum, Boston Tea Party Museum, Paul Revere's house, Plymouth Patuxent

Museum, the Mayflower, Mount Vernon, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, 9/11 Museum, Independence Hall, Yorktown-Colonial Williamsburg. These experiences have enriched our children's education in ways that are not possible via brick-and-mortar schools. We were able to do this and more during the school year for less than their allotment amount. "Family travel" expenses should be included in their allotment because as a "family member", I am both their parent and home educator that facilitates and instructs them in their education. Education goes beyond sitting in a classroom reading textbooks and taking tests. Actual experiences that may include "family travel" outside of Alaska enhance learning.

Also, please consider the use of allotment funds for annual or membership fees to sports/recreational facilities despite not having a structured private lesson. For instance, if we were to do a general Physical Education class and want to have access to a gym and use their weights, track, basketball, racquetball court, tennis court, ice rink, or soccer field, but they don't have a structured class for students available, we should still be able to go with our children as their educator/coach/trainer and not have the membership prorated to just reflect the student's amount. There are some facilities that do not allow children without a parent or guardian. Homeschool students should also be able to have a membership or access to a local public high school pool. Even without private lessons it is important just to have access to swimming exercise. My children know how to swim because they have been able to practice. So many Alaskan children have no idea how to swim because they don't have access. In line with PE expenditures, please include PE equipment. Alaska is so vast and there are many remote places that do not have access to sports/recreational facilities. They benefit from PE and enhance their learning experience with access to equipment such as bikes, skis, rollerblades, ice skates, fitness trackers, weights, resistance bands, jump ropes, slacklines, balance balls, basketballs, footballs, frisbees, Wii Fit, exercise videos, etc. Allowing for PE equipment promotes an active and healthy lifestyle which continues into adulthood and benefits our state far beyond a child's school years. For example, imagine how much easier health care would be to solve if everyone was active and healthy.

For the reasons I've listed above, I ask you to amend or reject SB266 as it stands. Address the issues I and others have brought to your attention and pass a bill that will benefit our children and allow them a fuller educational experience.

Sincerely,
John "Wes" Yenter

Michael Mason

From: Jonathan Miller <atjis@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:34 PM
To: Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266

I'm writing in support of the updated House Bill 400. However, as a fiscally responsible, middle class homeschooling parent that is working hard to provide the best education for my children, I oppose the additional restrictions that would be added by Senate bill 266. Research shows that homeschooling consistently outperforms public school measures. Increased government oversight just interferes with a program that needs to be left alone so it can continue to do what it has been doing: allowing parents to choose how best to use our tax money to provide quality education for their children. We don't need additional oversight thank you. What we are doing is working. History shows that the more government gets involved, the more red tape and decreased performance tends to result. We are Alaskans, we pride ourselves on our independence. We should have the right to choose how we educate our children, especially when the results are proven to be effective. We are already spending less per student than public schools are, please don't punish us for doing a good job.

Thank you for your time,
Jonathan and Pamela Miller

Michael Mason

From: Judith Mitchell <jumitchell@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 2:36 PM
To: Senate Education; Senate Finance Committee
Cc: House Education; House Finance
Subject: SB266 / HB 400

Senate Education Committee:

Please simplify SB 266 and follow the example from the House (HB 400). The current Senate bill is too prescriptive and it should not be the intention of the legislature to take control of the process away from the school districts. By adding so many restrictions, it hampers both the school districts and the parents. The House has it right this time.

As a homeschooling family, we are currently working with the Juneau School system's HomeBridge program. We want the funding to stay in our city. We have always tested our students to ensure that they are performing at or better than grade level. We agree that the district needs to review the Individual learning program and ensure that the funds allocated to the family should be used ONLY in support of that ILP. We also agree that the school district should be required to monitor all expenditures to ensure that funds are not going to benefit religious or other private organizations per the Alaska Constitution.

But please, get out of the details and provide a framework that enables the schools and the parents to go back to educating our students. By adding in layers of prescriptive language, you create uncertainty, inconsistency and endless parsing of language to try to figure out what the legislation intended. You will also increase the costs associated with this bill, by adding undue overhead on the school districts who are already struggling without the necessary funding to serve all of the Alaskan students.

Thank you,

Judith Mitchell
7780 N Douglas Hwy
Juneau, AK 99801
907-419-5034
jumitchell@mac.com

Michael Mason

From: Kaleb C <forged.kc06@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 12:41 AM
To: House Education
Subject: SB.266 and HB.400R

I oppose SB.266.

I am in favor of HB.400R.

Thank You,
Kaleb Cullison

Michael Mason

From: Kate Craymer <misskate1893@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 3:39 PM
To: Senate Education
Cc: brozell@nenanalynx.org; Marnie Port
Subject: Thoughts on SB 266 as a homeschool parent.

Dear Senator Holland,
Dear Senator Stevens,
Dear Senator Hughes,
Dear Senator Micciche,
Dear Senator Begich,

I hope this letter finds you well. As a proud resident of Alaska and a homeschooling parent deeply invested in the future of education in our State, I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for your dedicated service in representing the diverse and unique needs of our state's citizens.

Alaska is a place of immense beauty and diversity, and our families come from all walks of life. As a homeschooling parent in our wild and challenging state, I understand firsthand the importance of educational flexibility and support for families like mine. Homeschooling provides a unique opportunity for students to learn in a way that best suits their individual needs and allows families to tailor their educational experiences to promote academic excellence and success. Your unwavering advocacy for our state and its citizens, particularly in ensuring educational opportunities for all, is deeply appreciated. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to representing our interests and for your tireless efforts in making Alaska a better place for every family.

As a homeschooling mother in Alaska I have been following the developments around the recent court ruling concerning correspondence school allotments for homeschooling students; and some of the legislation being introduced in response.

I am deeply concerned about the impact these legislations and court decisions will have on functional homeschoolers in Alaska. It feels like a targeted attack on parents and school choice, which is disheartening as homeschool parents work so hard to create the best possible conditions for their children to thrive in their education. The homeschool allotment program is such a valuable asset for families and students to have all the opportunities they need to succeed.

SB 266 has significant changes that **I do not support**, including removing the option for opting out of state testing, removing any opportunity for rollover of unspent allotment, and restricting purchases of PE equipment, educational travel, and educational furniture.

1: Standardized testing is not one of our homeschool values or priorities. I also don't think it's a good judge of a child's knowledge or education either. I believe this infringes on homeschool families' rights to educate as they see fit, since the state doesn't require homeschooling families to test yearly.

2: Increasing restrictions on the vendors and materials approved for reimbursement (including PE equipment and in-state travel and educational trips/experiences) would significantly infringe on a parent's ability to provide the best possible education for their student. State schools are allocated funding for extracurriculars including sporting programs and field trips as they are seen as providing a valuable "rounding" to a student's development and education. Why not homeschool students?

3: The removal of the allotment rollover after the close of this school year's reimbursement timetable should be considered a serious harm against homeschool families. Homeschool parents work hard to plan out their students' educational trajectory over the span of several years. There are many reasons why a family may desire to roll over funds from year to year as they can see the broader scope of building their child's optimal educational structure. Whether it's for use as a safety net, or meticulous budgeting to take advantage of the best opportunities - homeschool families put so much effort, time, and research into creating a personalized and fulfilling schooling plan for their students. The allotment funds support well educated students.

Tightening the already stringent guidelines for fund usage could impede parents seeking support for their children's education. Up to now, the State and homeschoolers enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. However, these additional restrictions may prompt families to reassess the advantages of utilizing State funds. Some parents facing these challenges are rallying behind the sentiment of "We've been independent before, we can do it again." Alaska's vibrant homeschooling community deserves recognition for its commitment to delivering a quality education amidst the unique challenges of our state. Instead of opposition, let's collaborate.

I urge you to advocate for homeschool students and their families, who strive to provide quality education. By championing their needs, we can enhance the educational success of thousands of Alaskan children, strengthen our communities, and ensure every child thrives. As educators, our primary goal is the success of our students, regardless of their learning environment. Alaskan students deserve comprehensive support to build a strong foundation for future success, benefiting families, communities, and Alaska's future prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Kathleen Craymer
(Full-time Parent and Home educator.)

Michael Mason

From: EK C <cullisoncrew@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 2:11 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Oppose SB 266 and favor HB400R

I very much oppose SB266. This is not the fix we need. Quite a few things contained in the bill are totally irrelevant to the recent court case/lawsuit. HB400R takes a simple approach to provide for continuity for next school year while the court case goes through appeals and we aren't trying to push hasty legislation put together at the last second. It puts the regulations back to the DEED and Board of Education and who better to make those regulations about education.

We homeschool for so many reasons but the main one is that I can cater my childrens' education to their specific needs and learning styles (plus I just love being around them). Who is a better expert of their child then his/her parents. One of my kids struggles due to dyslexia and adhd and homeschooling allows him more space to be him and he would do terrible in a traditional school room. He sees a reading tutor that he clicks with instead of possibly being stuck with only one option. He's brilliant at wood working and has a fascinating mind. I would never want to stifle all the energy he has by making him sit most of the day. My oldest, who is graduating this year, by homeschooling has allowed him to take quite a few of the free Alaska Works classes teaching him valuable trade skills for post graduation. While Alaska Works does offer a few evening classes the vast majority are during the daytime. Other reasons include safety and mental health which you can not deny those as valid concerns around brick and mortar public schools.

One of the things I like most about Alaska is its freedoms, live and let live, history of being homeschool friendly, largest percentage of homeschoolers per capita in the nation. It's amazing what we have here in Alaska. We shouldn't ruin a good thing because of a few bad apples. Only go after the few bad apples. Although I do support school choice and voucher systems too. Another point of why I don't believe the statutes as unconstitutional is because the Alaska constitution says for direct benefit of the company/institution. The direct benefit in the allotment system is the student and the company/institution would be indirect.

We are a vast state with many families living in the bush whom we cannot forget about. Our schools are some of the lowest ranked in the nation despite being one of the highest spenders on education. We need school choice.

Let's also discuss the factor that our communities have given so much to the correspondence students. They are amazing. They are our neighbors and community members. The end of allotments and if severely restricted would put a lot of businesses out of business across the state. I can't even imagine doing that to our communities who are already barely surviving this insane inflation and high cost of living in Alaska.

Please give grace for any typos or grammatical errors tonight as it's super late and I'm up with 2 sick kids.

Thank you for your time.
Katy Cullison

Michael Mason

From: LauraUriah Strong <5tkestrongs@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:06 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: SB266

To Whom It May Concern,

My family has been homeschooling our three kids, in Alaska, since 2013. Living in a remote part of the state, where the school is closed due to a low student population, made homeschooling essential. Since that time, it's been my job not only to teach my kids, but to find out how they learn best.

I do not support HB 400 or SB 266.

These bills propose to make State Testing mandatory. We've participated in State testing and, unfortunately, we found it lacking in many aspects:

- The test results didn't come back until late fall. As educators, we need results in the spring when we're making curriculum choices.
- The test took a lot of time. Many teachers spend valuable time teaching kids, beforehand, just *how* to take the test when kids could be passionately invested in learning.
- Instead of providing feedback that helped us gauge where our students need help, the test basically ranked them as "proficient", or not, and compared them to other students within their district and the State. There was nothing in the results to indicate specific learning gaps in order to help the student be more "proficient"! I was really looking forward to receiving feedback that could propel us forward in our educational journey.
- Many students stress over State Testing. Computer based testing won't allow them to go back if they think they made a mistake.

This bill should not mandate State Testing. As educators we want to utilize our time well, not teaching to a test, or sitting through a week of testing, just to rank each kid and move on. The current State Testing option is a sub par solution to gauging student progress.

For clarification in regards to the Homeschool Allotment: Homeschool families enrolled in a correspondence program get an allotment. This is a dollar amount set aside for each student enrolled, kind of like a little education banking account that the correspondence program holds onto. After writing an ILP (Individualized Learning Plan) for each student, specifying how students will be taught and what curriculum and resources will be used, parents can either have the correspondence school order learning materials for them with said funds, or, pay for the materials and then be reimbursed. Parents pay out of pocket for religious materials, or ANY material that mentions God. This means if the very BEST curriculum for a child is at all religious in nature, parents foot the bill. Families who are NOT religious will even opt to pay for a specific curriculum, despite the religious content, because it is so well done and meets the needs of the student. It should be noted that this dollar amount is about 10% of the BSA (base student allocation) that public school children receive. Another percentage of that money goes towards the correspondence school to pay for the teachers and staff. Those teachers and staff are there

to advise, counsel and approve educational plans for each family. This allotment is NOT a “blank check” given to families! Families have the option of being frugal now, to save allotment for the more expensive higher learning opportunities Highschoolers will encounter. Taking away money that families have set aside so school districts can absorb it back into their own funds is wrong.

Recent wording has suggested restrictions on allotment spending. This is not equitable. Public school kids have funding for desks, travel for sports or field trips, technology and even funding for utilities and building maintenance. Homeschool families are given less funding to start with and need the flexibility to use the funds wisely. Each family researches and selects what will promote the greatest educational growth. Each family also provides the state with a building and a teacher that the state does not have to pay for.

I urge you to support the Homeschooling community! Alaska needs the families who come here to work and live, in part, due to the homeschool freedom our state has provided. Limiting freedoms and homeschooling options will mean we lose reliable workers and families who are invested in their communities.

Thank you for your time,
Laura Strong

From: LauraUriah Strong <5tkestrongs@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 8:46 AM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: HB400 and SB266

Dear Senator Tobin,

My family has been homeschooling our three kids, in Alaska, since 2013. Living in a remote part of the state, where the school is closed due to a low student population, made homeschooling essential. Since that time, it's been my job not only to teach my kids, but to find out how they learn best.

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I urge you to support the Homeschooling community! Alaska needs the families who come here to work and live, in part, due to the homeschool freedom our state has provided. Limiting freedoms and homeschooling options will mean we lose reliable workers and families who are invested in their communities.

Thank you for your time,

Laura Strong

Michael Mason

From: Liisia Putnam <liisia08@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Senate Education; Senate Judiciary
Subject: HB400 / SB266 - Must Haves

Correspondence/homeschooling Must Haves:

1) Freedom to choose curriculum – Curriculum choice, secular or religious, is vital to all correspondence/homeschool families. Families do not want to use public funds for religious curriculum. They do want freedom to choose secular or religious curriculum that aligns with their ILP and be counted for credit. Curriculum choice is the primary reason families chose homeschooling. If taken away, families will become independent homeschoolers.

2) Allotment roll over – Year to year, unused annual allotment amount is reserved for the individual child until a) the allotment is fully utilized, the child graduates from the program, or until the child leaves the program.

3) Provide optional standardized testing – Continue to allow parents the option to opt out of testing. Utilize ILPs, contact with sponsor teachers, grades, and work samples as verification of academic progress.

4) Define “private institution” – Attempt to define what is a private institution so the definition is broad enough to include classes through private and potentially even religious providers/entities. Using the minutes from the constitutional convention, work to define “direct benefit” and “religious or other private educational institution” broadly enough to not preclude families in rural communities, with very few options, the ability to procure course/lessons from a local or national vendor (private or religious). This definition should have little effect on the ability of families to purchase services/materials. This should be done in concert with homeschool families/stakeholders.

5) Reimbursement of educational items for our school – This requires thinking of a homeschool family as one individual (very small) school. If a larger school has the ability to purchase items, so should a small school and vice versa. In order to help this thought process, think if money were not a hindrance and a big(ger) school would be permitted to purchase items based on their priority for the student (money was not an issue), the small homeschool should be able to purchase these same items if they align with the priorities for the student. Examples include: IT components, software and hardware, exercise equipment, school furniture, Legos, horse riding lessons, camps, curriculum, books, white boards, manipulative, posters, recreational/gym memberships, etc. Homeschool families need these items to educate their students in the same way as big(ger) schools. In the same way, parents of homeschooling children double as a teacher and just like teachers have their admission into museums, plays, fieldtrips, etc paid for by the schools, our students also require a "teacher" chaperoning them to these events.

Included in this is a process to challenge the denial of a purchase. This process would ideally have multiple layers of appeal for the family.

The overarching theme is that if the schools/districts pay money for or allow things/items, the same should be allowed for correspondence students.

From: Mary Fowler <mary.fowler@ideafamilies.org>

Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 12:56 PM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: SB 266

I am writing to encourage you to draft a bill similar to that of HB 400. I have served as a Contact Teacher in the IDEA program for 25 years. Over the years I have had a front row seat to the power of homeschooling, the allotment, and individualized education. Additionally, I am mother of four students, two who are recent graduates of IDEA. I think it is important that you understand the diversity of students that could potentially be negatively impacted should this issued go unresolved. I serve a wide range of students from a variety of backgrounds, and I would like to share some of their stories. One of my students who would be greatly disenfranchised is a young girl with severe disabilities. She came to homeschooling after the local schools were simply not equipped to serve her needs. The family turned to IDEA and with the help of the allotment, a team of regular and special educators, and local vendors she is thriving; she is learning to read (a skill they were told she would never be able to do), and she engages with others and is beaming with confidence.

I have served students whose parents are military, and the culture of the military lifestyle does not allow for continuity in education. As such they turn to homeschooling and if we do not ensure correspondence programs, allotments and ILPs, these students could be at risk of losing their ability to obtain high school diplomas and having the continuity in education they desire and need.

You also risk disenfranchising the transgender students who turn to homeschooling because they do not feel safe attending their neighborhood schools and are searching for a safe place.

In addition, you risk disenfranchising students in rural Alaska who have no other educational opportunities. Joining IDEA allows them to be part of a statewide network of services, support, and encouragement.

Finally, I want to share my own story. My children began their education at our local brick and mortar schools. Our oldest daughter suffered from a series of health problems, some of which made attending a brick-and-mortar school difficult. After trying to work with our local school and obtaining a medical 504 it was made clear to us that our local school would not be willing follow the medical 504 or work with us. Because of this, we began homeschooling my daughter in the

9th grade. Homeschooling and the allotment allowed for her to graduate with 28 credits from UAA/UAF system. She graduated as a UA scholar and is pursuing a degree in special education with the goal of working with special needs kids, something she is deeply passionate about. My son Kadin will be graduating this spring. Homeschooling has allowed him to pursue his passions in the areas of welding, construction, law enforcement, and the Russian language. He is graduating as a UA scholar recipient with the goal of pursuing a law enforcement career in the State of Alaska.

Finally, the story that I am the proudest of is that of my 12-year-old, Keira. Until Covid hit, Keira was enrolled in our local brick and mortar school. As a veteran teacher I began to recognize symptoms of dyslexia as early as kindergarten. I repeatedly brought by concerns to the attention of her school, and I was very disappointed that we were not met with support or teaching expertise on the part of her classroom teachers. When Covid hit we began homeschooling Keira; homeschooling allowed her the time necessary to work one on one with me and raise her reading level from below grade level to grade level. More importantly, she now loves to read and without prompting chose the Diary of Anne Frank for her summer reading. I would implore you to draft and support a bill similar to that of HB 400 and ensure support and continuity to the 22,000 who choose to homeschool in correspondence programs.

Sincerely,

Mary Fowler

Michael Mason

From: Meghan Orona <meghanorona@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 4, 2024 8:57 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Correspondence programs

I will not enroll my children in a brick and mortar school, and I will not be involved in the local school district in any way. This ruling harms my childrens' abilities to access some of the programs they previously utilized. Prior to this ruling, my daughter, who is an incoming senior, was set to graduate high school with all of the general education requirements for UAF completed. My incoming freshman son was going to begin high school with college work, since he has already completed some high school. Without our allotment, it will be a stretch to afford the program, especially in this economy. This will not change my stance on public schools in any way. This ruling leaves far more questions than answers. What is a private or religious institution? That has not been defined by anyone involved. I read it to be any for-profit institution. If that is the case, the public schools utilize a multitude of private, and even religious institutions, if they are using materials from for-profit publishers such as Houghton- Mifflin, using secular materials from religious organizations such as BYU, and using private business services from organizations such as Head Start and Sylvan learning center. This ruling intentionally targets and harms the Homeschool population. In truth, the children that will be most harmed are not children like mine, who are doing well and need very little. We have materials and resources to fill the void left by the loss of allotment. The children this truly harms are those who have special needs, that the allotment helps families to meet. It attempts to force children into a brick and mortar school, no Homeschool parent I've spoken to will do that, they will push through without the resources, a fraction of what the districts receive, that we have been able to do so much with. The reality of all of this is that the school districts will lose our enrollment, and will lose the funds they received for us, and it will be for the betterment of no one. Teachers will be harmed because they will be losing their jobs with the lower enrollment numbers. Small businesses all across Alaska, for whom the allotments have helped to keep a steady income for the resources they offered, will go out of business and close up. Families who previously felt comfortable with the way the correspondence programs worked and loved working with their contact teachers, went to them for advice, and took comfort sense of community their districts offered, will be left to try to piece together a quality curriculum they can afford. I see nothing good of this hasty ruling, nor the premature stay that creates a huge instability at a time when we Homeschool parents are planning and purchasing our curriculum for the following school year. That the stay does not go to at least the end of the appeal is egregious. This must be fixed before the next school year, preferably before July 1st. And it must be fixed without the additional oversight by districts, and without the mandate of standardized testing, or the state will see a mass exodus of students from school districts and a massive loss of the funds they receive for those students. Everything about the timing of this ruling, the ruling itself, and the bills introduced as fixes, are doing really harm to the future of our children and, by extension, our State.

Meghan Orona
Homeschool graduate
Homeschool parent of 11 years

Michael Mason

From: Melinda Degnan <melindadegnan13@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 4, 2024 8:47 PM
To: Senate Education
Subject: NO to SB 266

We do not want a bill that removes roll over allotment, mandates state testing which does not help our students academically, and narrows the resources needed for homeschooling throughout Alaska.

Thank you for your time
Melinda Degnan

Michael Mason

From: MelissaJonathan G <gordaoff42@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 10:07 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: Do not support sb266

To whom it concerns regarding Alaskan's future in education.

I am a homeschool parent of 4 years, before we homeschooled our kiddos I was very active in our public school setting. I was a recess monitor and a substitute to my kids. My son had difficulty following the curriculum available to him and was not able to read at his reading level in third grade. When covid happened we decided to make the choice to transition into homeschooling, my son within one year brought his reading to grade level through homeschooling with Idea. Public school environment made it very difficult for my son to learn because he was constantly being picked on and bullied. My son enjoyed wearing suspenders and a bow tie to school. It made him a constant target by a certain group of kids that just liked to pick on kids for standing out. He had rocks thrown at him at recess into his head and constantly called names. The teachers would single him out and not let him participate in activities because his reading was below level so he didn't get science or art, he had to go to a reading class that was so full that the teacher would ask me to sit in after my duties after recess, because she had no help.

Cutting off choices for children to escape bullies and situations where they feel their learning environment is not conducive to them is just mean. There's no reason for it. It's actually going to cost the state more to take away homeschool programs. It's going to cost taxpayers more and our quality of education and mental health of our kids will be declining because of this ruling. Everyone remembers David Grunwald and what happened to the families in our community when bullies struck at school. Last weekend our Wasilla community was plagued with another tragedy and a family where a child didn't come home from an activity. Then the next day children faced shooter threats because of this at their school. Is this a conducive learning environment for our kiddos and why can't we have other options? Who is this really hurting?

Now let's talk about the word soup of the constitutional ruling provided by the judge... because that's what it is... word soup. We're talking about programs that have been funded for years by the state, including public school curriculum. The Constitution states that the state will not pay for private institution curriculum.... What kind of curriculum does public school provide? By a private institution it's a private institution curriculum, but we're going to specifically pick on a small 17% of Alaskans that want an alternative education choice.

Alaska has been the last frontier and a homeschool beacon because we have kiddos in all walks of life in rural areas that don't have access to schools or activities as big cities do. We're going to take that away because NEA wants more money?

Our homeschool program has gone through every single purchase and receipt from our allotment and made sure it followed our kids' learning plan, was not religious material and met the criteria of the state. Not only are we talking homeschool families affected by this, but this would literally obliterate the correspondent programs in Alaska and multiple small businesses that provide curriculum. Taking jobs and education from our community for no need just to fuel a system that is at the bottom of the barrel for the nation. As far as education is concerned, it is still the most costly.

Alaskan families and more importantly, the kiddos of Alaska deserve alternative options at best, if not a whole better system for education. When our money is going outside of Alaska to lobby for teachers unions, why are we not getting anywhere in education? Most homeschool correspondent programs pay families about \$2,700 to purchase curriculum for their kids or programs. Public school, it's a lot more. It's about greed, not about education, We're not talking about funding teachers. We're talking about funding unions.

Alaskan families work very hard to make sure their kids get to their activities, Have a good education, and live in a community where they feel safe. The Alaska legal system should not be counterproductive our efforts. There is no more active parent than a homeschool parent. They are literally dedicating their lives to ensure their child's education and future.

There are families that have been saving for certain programs, kiddos that have been working and dedicating their school lives to these programs that their funds will be cut. Taking children's savings and hard work right out from under them like pulling the rug.

This is the next generation even if you don't care or have children in the education system this has to hit your heart or your wallet because you're paying more for nothing. These are our future leaders, the ones that will be taking care of us in the near future... Do we want them educated?

I gave public testimony earlier today and I would like to change my testimony in support of HB 400 u version. I was under the impression that there was different clarifications on testing, and purchases. After reading the new changes to the bill more closely, I would like to change my testimony and support. As a mom of two Alaska native kiddos, I believe that homeschooling is fundamentally important for their education. I also believe it's fundamentally important for their safety. My son not only struggled with learning disabilities but also is a target of bullying due to this. Having him at home not only provides a quality education, but it provides him safety. Not all children are one size fits all. Both of my kiddos are completely different. My daughter is phenomenal in any school setting and my son struggles with different types of learning. As a mom, I've watched him grow and have assessed his learning daily. I found out things that help my son because I have the time to do so. Idea is one of the best programs I have ever seen when it comes to schooling, checks and balances and overall operating. I have wholeheartedly encourage everyone to support HB 400 version U for all Alaskan kiddos and parents freedom of choice in education.

Thank you for your time, please stand up for our kiddos.

Sincerely, just another Alaskan mom.

Melissa Gordaoff

9072023992

gordaoff42@gmail.com

From: MelissaJonathan G <gordaoff42@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 10:50 AM

To: Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>

Subject: Please drop SB266

To whom it concerns regarding Alaskan's future in education.

I am a homeschool parent of 4 years, before we homeschooled our kiddos I was very active in our public school setting. I was a recess monitor and a substitute to my kids. My son had difficulty following the curriculum available to him and was not able to read at his reading level in third grade. When covid happened we decided to make the choice to transition into homeschooling, my son within one year brought his reading to grade level through homeschooling with Idea. Public school environment made it very difficult for my son to learn because he was constantly being picked on and bullied. My son enjoyed wearing suspenders and a bow tie to school. It made him a constant target by a certain group of kids that just liked to pick on kids for standing out. He had rocks thrown at him at recess into his head and constantly called names. The teachers would single him out and not let him participate in activities because his reading was below level so he didn't get science or art, he had to go to a reading class that was so full that the teacher would ask me to sit in after my duties after recess, because she had no help.

Cutting off choices for children to escape bullies and situations where they feel their learning environment is not conducive to them is just mean. There's no reason for it. It's actually going to cost the state more to take away homeschool programs. It's going to cost taxpayers more and our quality of education and mental health of our kids will be declining because of this ruling. Everyone remembers David Grunwald and what happened to the families in our community when bullies struck at school. Last weekend our Wasilla community was plagued with another tragedy and a family where a child didn't come home from an activity. Then the next day children faced shooter threats because of this at their school. Is this a conducive learning environment for our kiddos and why can't we have other options? Who is this really hurting?

Now let's talk about the word soup of the constitutional ruling provided by the judge... because that's what it is... word soup. We're talking about programs that have been funded for years by the state, including public school curriculum. The Constitution states that the state will not pay for private institution curriculum.... What kind of curriculum does public school provide? By a private institution it's a private institution curriculum, but we're going to specifically pick on a small 17% of Alaskans that want an alternative education choice.

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Alaskan families and more importantly, the kiddos of Alaska deserve alternative options at best, if not a whole better system for education. When our money is going outside of Alaska to lobby for teachers unions, why are we not getting anywhere in education? Most homeschool correspondent programs pay families about \$2,700 to purchase curriculum for their kids or programs. Public school, it's a lot more. It's about greed, not about education, We're not talking about funding teachers. We're talking about funding unions.

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parent than a homeschool parent. They are literally dedicating their lives to ensure their child's education and future.

There are families that have been saving for certain programs, kiddos that have been working and dedicating their school lives to these programs that their funds will be cut. Taking children's savings and hard work right out from under them like pulling the rug.

This is the next generation even if you don't care or have children in the education system this has to hit your heart or your wallet because you're paying more for nothing. These are our future leaders, the ones that will be taking care of us in the near future... Do we want them educated?

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As a mom of two Alaska native kiddos, I believe that homeschooling is fundamentally important for their education. I also believe it's fundamentally important for their safety. My son not only struggled with learning disabilities but also is a target of bullying due to this. Having him at home not only provides a quality education, but it provides him safety. Not all children are one size fits all. Both of my kiddos are completely different. My daughter is phenomenal in any school setting and my son struggles with different types of learning. As a mom, I've watched him grow and have assessed his learning daily. I found out things that help my son because I have the time to do so. Idea is one of the best programs I have ever seen when it comes to schooling, checks and balances and overall operating. I have wholeheartedly encourage everyone to support HB 400 version U for all Alaskan kiddos and parents freedom of choice in education.

Thank you for your time, please stand up for our kiddos.

Sincerely, just another Alaskan mom.

Melissa Gordaoff

Michael Mason

From: Melissa Talaro <melissataro@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 11:02 PM
To: House Education; Senate Education
Subject: I oppose SB 266 and HB 400U

Hello,

I strongly OPPOSE SB 266 and HB 400U in their current form due to the inequity they would create for homeschooling families, especially those who live in remote rural communities. Every student and family should have the choice and resources to homeschool with the support of funds.

Thanks,
Melissa

Sent from my iPhone

Michael Mason

From: Meridith Peele <meridithpeelee@ymail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:25 AM
To: Senate Education
Subject: I oppose SB 266

Hello My Name is Meridith Peele,

I oppose the SB 266 and here is why:

I choose to homeschool my children because I want to teach them how to think and not what to think. I do not want my children to be pushed into all of the sexual and social propaganda that the NEA backed public school system teaches. I want my children to grow in safety, true wisdom and to just be children. So I see this bill to be the beginning of the NEA backed school system trying to control my children and have control on what they learn. I am grateful to the State of Alaska and what I have been able to accomplish in homeschooling with my children. However, with a bill like this, I take pause and may consider other States that care more about my children and other children. I support my children while my husband serves this state in public safety. It is getting to a point where I ponder if this state is worth my time and effort. My husband has no pension, no medical benefits after retirement while risking his life daily for the state's safety. Now you want to take away my children's funding. Please consider this is on the minds of many citizens of AK right now. So this bill and others that want to take away homeschool benefits may have a trickling down effect. The goal of the case that started all of this was to get homeschool kids back into the public system so that those four individuals in the case did not have school closures. Their goal will not be obtained by hindering homeschool kids because we already have half a foot out the door and the lower 48 is calling. So in trying to pass this bill you may be sending the state into an economic downfall. Turning your back on the families of 24,000 kids, a **sizable** percentage of the population, demonstrates the state is becoming non-supportive of homeschool.

Here are a few more things to consider...

instruct, and evaluate the student's learning of the subject.
Tutoring paid for under this
02 subsection may not be provided by a private or religious educational
institution.
03 (g) Textbooks and other curriculum materials purchased with student fund
04 account funds are property of the department or district. A parent or guardian of
a
05 student enrolled in the correspondence study program shall return materials that
are
06 not consumables to the district when the student exits the program for any
reason.

- What is the definition of 'private'? There are many in the public system also using private resources so where is the line?

- Have you considered the economical impact on these private vendors? My children are thriving on the use of private vendors. *And those private vendors are all secular, not religious.*
- Is the public school system the only system that can educate children? This bill diminishes the fact that home school families also pay taxes and have a right to see a return and use those resources. It completely disregards the fact that the public school system pays exponentially more per student than homeschool stipends. We receive far less for each one of our children through homeschool stipends than the State would pay if they were to attend the public school system. So, 24,000 kids multiplied by the amount given for public school kids is a large increase in your funding. If those homeschool families leave the state for better opportunities for their children, then it is 24,000 families no longer paying taxes. Have you considered this?
- What this bill is very clearly stating is that the public school system will have control on everything, teach everything, provide everything, etc. I am disappointed in the Alaska legislation if this is the best you have to offer. Alaska is rated number one in the country for homeschool benefits and support. They are rated close to last for public school testing. You have voted to lower the standards. ([Alaska board of education lowers standard for student test scores, citing nationally high bar • Alaska Beacon](#)) This is embarrassing. Perhaps, we should continue to keep the #1 for homeschooling because I see no improvement for the low bar of public schools.

I hope that those of you that still care about children, will oppose this bill. Please act swiftly to legislate a bill that provides support for **ALL** Alaska children.

Thank you for your time,
Meridith

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony in regards to our personal experience with homeschooling in Alaska.

I, Micah Peter, was one of the first homeschoolers in western Alaska. My parents first started homeschooling using curriculum that my mom had sourced herself. All the neighbors and extended family thought that it was strange that my mother, a former public school teacher, would want to privately educate her own children instead of entrusting them to the school system and she received much ridicule for that decision. Still, she felt that it was the best decision for our family and for our individual needs.

For those first years, homeschooling was a somewhat lonely experience without any support or resources and what oversight there was came from a detached committee without any idea of the unique needs of homeschoolers. We were the only homeschooling family that we knew of in our town of Bethel, AK, but still we carried on.

All that changed in 1997 with the founding of IDEA (Interior Distance Education of Alaska). The Galena School District recognized the needs of homeschools and created an innovative model with the creation of the correspondence program. And my mother was one of the first in line to enroll.

Upon enrolling in the IDEA correspondence school, our educational journey changed significantly for the better. Now, we had classmates and access to funding, resources, and materials that were otherwise unavailable. And for my mom, she had the support of fellow educators and was able to ask questions, get recommendations, create individualized learning plans to meet our individual needs, and felt a strong sense of community and awareness that she wasn't alone in this homeschooling journey. And perhaps most importantly, she was now able to provide opportunities that otherwise would have been completely out of our reach.

I am proud to say that I graduated early, at the age of 17, while dual-enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Kuskokwim Campus, and then graduated the following year with an Associate Degree in Information Technology. During my academic career, I was able to participate in so many opportunities outside of our small village. Bethel, while a great place to grow up, has limited options, but being a part of an active, funded correspondence program made my world much, much larger.

When it came time to make those same educational decisions for our children, we knew that the desire to homeschool was planted firmly within our hearts and so we enrolled our son in IDEA, as a second-generation student. And eventually, our daughters as well when they came of age. Since the time of Micah's enrollment in the correspondence program, great improvements had been made, chiefly the expansion of the allotment and the addition of the carryover fund. These additions built on the already wildly successful model and opened even more doors for our children.

We have now been enrolled with IDEA for nine years. Our son will be entering ninth grade, high school, in the fall, while our daughters will be entering 6th grade and 2nd grade. We're active in clubs, trips, and shows and participate in just about everything that comes out in the Monday announcement email each week. Just because we homeschool doesn't mean that we want to be isolated. Instead, homeschooling allows for a very connected experience with unmatched opportunities. If you were to look at our monthly calendar, you'd find appointments listed for LEGO Club, Gym, Pickleball, Swim Meet, Mom's Night Out, Dr Suess Storytime, Piano Lessons, Art Show, Middle School Social Club, Speech Class, and a Field Trip to the Performing Arts Center. I, Megan Peter, volunteer as the leader for the LEGO STEM Club out of the Wasilla office, a position I've held since 2016. We have a rich, full life teeming with learning

opportunities, activities, and enrichment. Our children love being homeschooled and love that the place they call home makes all of this possible.

I, Megan Peter, know first-hand about what it means to homeschool without support. Starting in the 5th grade, I was homeschooled independently. My home state of Georgia did not recognize “umbrella schools” (i.e. correspondence schools) so we were on our own in every way possible. While my parents earnestly believed in the benefits of homeschooling and having that direct impact on the quality and content of your child’s education, we could only do so much. I was well-socialized thanks to a weekly meetup with other homeschoolers, but the lack of state support heavily impacted the quantity of education. Every club I attempted to attend eventually dissolved due to lack of support and an exhausted volunteer leader. Classes offered by businesses or educational institutions were nonexistent. And homeschoolers were shunned by the local school district and unable to participate in sports. Later on, I was able to attend classes offered in our neighboring state of Tennessee, which was much more homeschooling-friendly, each one an opportunity not found anywhere near my own locale.

Most notably, my education was constrained by our limited finances. We didn’t have much so every school book meant a sacrifice somewhere else. We didn’t go on vacations, we went on field trips. And while I wouldn’t trade being homeschooled for anything, and am very thankful for the sacrifice of my parents, I am keenly aware of both sides of the coin- the benefits and the lack thereof.

When Micah and I compare homeschooling experiences, I am in awe of how supportive the state of Alaska is of homeschoolers. Parents are able to have the freedom to choose the best education for their children without the limitation of location or resources or finances. The student in rural Alaska can have the same quality education as a child in Anchorage thanks to the correspondence program. The single-income family on a limited budget can provide the same quality education as the family making \$200k thanks to the correspondence program. The level of resources, support, and community provided by Alaskan correspondence programs is unmatched in our nation. It is an achievement to be proud of and a testament to our Alaskan ingenuity and determination, and not one that should be disregarded.

As Alaskans we have the choice to either homeschool independently or to enroll in a correspondence program. Thousands of families each year choose the latter, amounting to 22,000 students, over 17% of the entire Alaskan student body. This innovative hybrid of homeschooling and public school allows families to have both the freedom of education along with the support and resources of a school system. While students don’t attend a neighborhood “brick and mortar” school, each correspondence school is under the direct heading of a local school district, thereby granting to each homeschooler all the same rights and privileges of their public school counterparts. The only difference is sometimes the “math in their pajamas” adage is true.

School districts receive an allotment for each student enrolled as part of their operating budget. Correspondence schools allocate a portion of this to each student, based on each school’s overhead, which means it varies from school to school. Each school is then expected to operate within the confines of the Alaska Constitution and allow use of said allotment accordingly. Students in a public schools have access to so many different opportunities, all provided by the school district, and we just ask that our students in a correspondence school be allowed the same opportunities and access.

As part of the agreement upon enrolling in the correspondence school, parents commit to providing a quality education in line with state standards. Each student is assigned a certified contact teacher who together with the parents develop an ILP (Individual Learning Plan), of which four or more classes must be secular, non-religious materials, and two of which must be

one of the core subject areas. Anything outside of this purview must be provided for by the family personally.

For our family, we choose to have some of their classes be through a religious curriculum. We pay for each of these out-of-pocket and gladly align to the standard standards for the rest of our ILP, checking off each box as required. The allotment allows for so many opportunities that we would be unable to provide on our own. Our children are able to take piano lessons to the tune (pun intended) of \$360 a month, which would be a heavy personal sacrifice on our part. Beyond that, there are art lessons and supplies for my daughters, both of whom participated in the recent Art Show at IDEA, and in which my younger daughter received the top award for her age bracket. Over the years, the allotment has paid for Gear Up Technology Camp, computers for their schoolwork, so many dozens and dozens of notebooks, field trips to the Anchorage Museum, the Alaska Zoo, and even a whale watching tour out of Seward.

And just as the allotment has provide countless opportunities for Alaskan students, it in turn has provided a huge economic boon to our Alaskan economy. The allotment trickles down from homeschooling parents to thousands of small businesses and providers. We would challenge anyone to show a more supportive educational community than that of homeschoolers. As parents, we are directly involved in our children's education and as such appreciate the individual attention that comes from purchasing through local small businesses and enrolling in services from local providers. Our piano teacher mentioned above depends on homeschoolers, amounting to 3:4 of her provided services. Taking away or limiting the allotment would take away the majority of her livelihood, and she is just one of many who would be impacted.

Likewise, removing the allotment carryover would be essentially robbing students. We have consistently used only 70% of our allotment each year so that the remaining portion could go to our carryover account to be utilized once our children reach high school. Just as their clothing and food expenses increase once they become teenagers, so do their educational expenses. This year our son is entering the 9th grade and already the expenses are stacking up, but knowing that the allotment carryover is there allows us to breathe easier knowing that his education won't be restricted due to our limited resources. Removing the allotment carryover would undermine the efforts of thousands of families who have been planning and saving for the future for their children's entire academic life, taking away the very resources that rightfully belong to those students. Furthermore, it's next to impossible to use every last penny of the allotment each year and the carryover allows the unused portion to be saved and used at a later date. Moving to a "use it or lose it" mentality helps no one and instead promotes eventual waste, which means the one that loses, is the student.

We are at a crossroads of epic proportions and in danger of gross overreach. The original issue at hand dealt solely with potential misuse of the allotment in contradiction of the Alaska Constitution. Now, instead of focusing on that issue and reacting accordingly, the entire correspondence program is being threatened. 22,000 students no longer know if they'll being able to take music lessons next year. And thousands of families are understandably frightened, confused, and frustrated to suddenly be thrust into the middle of such controversy and potentially stripping them of the right of choice and subjecting students to unnecessary oversight.

Parents are daily in the trenches with their children and know better than anyone their strengths and weaknesses. A child weak in math may be behind the "state standard" and would fail testing, but the parent is already aware and taking strides to learn at the child's own pace. All testing would do is make the child feel like a failure. What's more, the results of said testing are not available for months or in recent cases, years, after the testing, so it is of no benefit to the parent when planning the ILP for the coming school year. Some parents, like ourselves, choose

to voluntarily participate in the testing to familiarize my children with that setting and better prepare them should they choose to pursue a higher education. But it is our choice for them, and not an unnecessary and redundant requirement.

SB 266 cannot be allowed to pass as it is an affront to everything the correspondence school program stands for. It takes away the freedom of education, the parent's right to make the best choice for their own children, compromises the ILP, severely restricts the allotment and thus educational opportunities, and strips the carryover allotment that has been utilized for over a decade. It is futile in its attempt to solve the problem, instead only adding more problems and controversy to the situation, and goes far above and beyond the intention of the Alaska Constitution to the detriment of nearly a 5th of Alaskan students.

CS HB 400 has been newly replaced and the updated bill directly addresses many of the concerns listed above. Parental choice and authority in regards to testing is preserved. The carryover allotment is preserved, thus protecting the efforts of thousands of families and allowing for the continued growth of opportunities. The ILP and allotment would continue hand-in-hand, ensuring that correspondence students receive what is rightful theirs as Alaskan students. And thousands of small businesses and providers would be able to continue operation, strengthening our Alaskan economy. The bill does encourage the modification of spending regulations to better coincide with the constitution, which we are in supportive of to make sure all correspondence schools are following the rules in entirety and in unity. Lastly, it allows for the future modification of said regulations without having to go through the entire bill process again, which means a more effective and efficient government. It is a good starting point and we are encouraged by the prognosis.

In closing, the taking away or limiting of the student allotment would severely and irrevocably harm the quality and quantity of our children's education as well as endanger the livelihood of thousands of small businesses and providers all across Alaska. Enacting unnecessary regulations and oversight would do nothing to improve the quality of education and would only burden students and families. We greatly urge you to consider the matter at hand and choose the option that preserves this hard-won model and allows for the continuance of the correspondence program.

Thank you for your time and efforts,

Micah & Megan Peter
Wasilla, Alaska
Homeschooling since 2015
Three students enrolled in IDEA
Micah.peter.mst@gmail.com
Meganmarlene@gmail.com