

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 21, 2018
8:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair
Representative Justin Parish, Vice Chair
Representative Jennifer Johnston
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative David Talerico

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Lora Reinbold (alternate)
Representative Geran Tarr (alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 212

"An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; and relating to the regional educational attendance area and small municipal school district fund."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 339

"An Act relating to the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 212

SHORT TITLE: REAA & SMALL MUNI SCHOOL DISTRICT FUND

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) FOSTER

04/05/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/05/17	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/09/18	(H)	BILL REPRINTED 2/9/18
02/21/18	(H)	EDC AT 8:30 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 339

SHORT TITLE: INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

SPONSOR (s) : REPRESENTATIVE (s) GARA

02/09/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/09/18	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/16/18	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/16/18	(H)	Heard & Held
02/16/18	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
02/21/18	(H)	EDC AT 8:30 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE NEAL FOSTER
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor introduced HB 212.

JANE PIERSON, Staff
Representative Neal Foster
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 212, on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative Neal Foster.

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent
Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD);
Board Member, Coalition for Education Equity (CEE)
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 212.

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD; Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA);
Representative, Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA),
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 212.

SARAH SLEDGE, Executive Director
Coalition of Education Equity (CEE)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 212.

SIERRA LLOYD, Student
Juneau Douglas High School (JDHS)
Juneau School District (JSD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

DAVID PIAZZA, Superintendent
Southwest Region School District (SWRS)
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

DEENA BISHOP, PhD; Superintendent
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

DAVID NEES
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

TED MARTIN
Cooper Landing, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified against HB 339.

BRIAN SINGLETON, Principal
Begich Middle School
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

MR. JAMES DOEPKEN
Seward, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

REBECCA BERNARD
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

DAVID BOYLE, Senior Policy Fellow
Alaska Policy Forum
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 339.

ANDY HOLLEMAN, Member
Anchorage School Board (ASB)
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 339.

MIKE BRONSON, Member
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
(NAACP)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

JOSH KEATON, Vice-President
Juneau School Board (JSB)
Juneau School District (JSD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

WILLIAM HARRINGTON
Spenard, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified against HB 339.

ROXANNE BROWER, President
Board of Education
North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD)
Barrow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent
North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD)
Barrow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

JENNIFER SCHMITZ, Principal
Scenic Park School
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

DOUGLAS GRAY, Principal
Lake Otis Elementary School
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 339.

LISA PRINCE, Principal
Eagle River Elementary School
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 339.

TIM PARKER, President
NEA Alaska;
Teacher, Lathrop High School
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

AMY JO MEINERS, Teacher
Riverbend Elementary School; Auke Bay Elementary School
Juneau School District (JSD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD; Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA);
Representative: Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA),
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

SUNNA SCNAME, Student
Montessori Borealis Elementary School
Juneau School District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

EMILY FERRY
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of 339.

KATHY TRAN, Student;
Student Body President
Thunder Mountain High School
Juneau School District (JSD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of 339.

MICHELLE STRICKLER
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

ELLA LUBIN, Student
Sitka High School (SHS)
Sitka School District (SSD)
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

ROGER SCHMIDT
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

JENNIFER SAMPSON
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

JOSIAH SAMPSON, Student
Tanana Middle School
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Fairbanks, Alaska, testifies in support of HB 339.

DEENA MITCHELL, Member
Great Alaska Schools (GAS)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

SANDY DAWS, Purchasing Supervisor
Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD)
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 339.

BRENDA TAYLOR, Teacher
Juneau Community Charter School (JCCS)
Juneau School District (JSD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support HB 339.

DEMETRY SHANE
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 339.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:30:45 AM](#)

CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Parish, Johnston, and Talerico were present at the call to order. Representative Kopp arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 212-REAA & SMALL MUNI SCHOOL DISTRICT FUND

[8:31:20 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 212, "An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; and relating to the regional

educational attendance area and small municipal school district fund."

[8:32:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NEAL FOSTER, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as prime sponsor, stated that this bill would expand the Regional Education Attendance Area and Small Municipal School District Fund to include major maintenance. Currently it only provides funds for new school construction. This bill would help reduce deterioration of schools and save the state millions of dollars for full school replacement costs since preventative maintenance would be done. He indicated that the Coalition for Education Equity is comprised of several rural school districts. The CEE has been heavily involved with the Kasayulie case.

[8:33:43 AM](#)

JANE PIERSON, Staff, Representative Neal Foster, Alaska State Legislature, stated that HB 212 would expand the use of funds in the Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) and small municipal school district fund to include major maintenance in addition to new school construction.

MS. PIERSON explained that the bill had three sections, as follows: Section 1 would add a new subsection (f) to AS 14.11.013, which would add the requirement that the Department of Education create two lists to be updated annually for the capital improvement grant schedule. One list would be for projects funded for the REAA fund and the second list for all other projects. Section 2 of the bill would amend AS 14.11.030(a) to allow costs for major maintenance to be to an allowable use in the REAA fund. Section 3 of the bill would amend AS 14.11.035, Report on school construction and major maintenance funding, which would remove outdated references, clarify the timeframe on annual submission and would include major maintenance funding under HB 212 to the report.

[8:34:36 AM](#)

MS. PIERSON explained that the school construction and maintenance grant programs were the only significant programs that provide funding for new construction renovation or major maintenance for schools in our communities without bonding capacity. A healthy continued grant program for construction when needed and ongoing major maintenance would provide a vetted solution for the funding of high priority major maintenance

needs, including boilers, roofs, and other important systems for our schools. The program has been a major success. The REAA and small school district funds are available for funding projects and school construction grants (indis.) have greatly reduced the number of schools on the list.

MS. PIERSON said that since 2014, when the legislature passed Senate Bill 64 placing a moratorium on approving projects that are funded by debt reimbursement authorized by local voters until July 1, 2020, there has been an increase in applications vying for legislative funding on the major maintenance grant funding list. Therefore HB 212 was good for rural Alaska as well as urban Alaska, she said. By adding major maintenance to the REAA and small district fund, other non-REAA projects can rise more quickly to the top of the major maintenance list.

[8:36:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP asked for further clarification on the priority list, specifically how the priorities would be weighed.

MS. PIERSON answered that she conferred with the department who indicated that two lists would be created. One list would contain projects for REAA and small school districts and the second list would list all the rest of the projects. These projects would continue to be prioritized in the same way they currently are; however, this new list would include major maintenance and new school construction. She further explained that the same rating system currently being used will be used, including that it would maintain the same appeals process and reconsideration process currently in statute.

[8:37:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP related his understanding that it sounded like that this would be done by regulation.

MS. PIERSON answered yes; that the department said it can do so without any additional cost.

[8:37:35 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked for further clarification on other things included in major maintenance.

MS. PIERSON answered that major maintenance would also include bringing things into compliance with building codes and it will

save the state money in the long run by keeping these schools viable and continuing to create educational opportunities in these small communities and help foster healthy rural communities in Alaska.

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether this would be limited to the 23 districts listed in attachment 1.

MS. PIERSON agreed.

[8:39:01 AM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD), said he appreciated the opportunity to speak in support of HB 212. He stated that he has been at the AGSD for over 20 years and he has been the superintendent for the past 20 months. The school has been using local wood sources to heat and power some of the schools. The district has done considerable work on energy efficiency, including converting the school lighting system to LEDs. He related that the AGSD has been pursuing any available federal funds that will help expand those savings to better serve students.

MR. MACMANUS highlighted one issue, which has been the district's inability to gain major maintenance funding using the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list. His district has not received CIP funding since 2009. He said the AGSD and the Coalition for Education Equity strongly support the idea of allowing flexibility to use school construction funds for major maintenance. He said he hoped that HB 212 would assist and meet the district's needs for maintenance projects. He acknowledged that these projects have been deferred. The AGSD has wanted to move its maintenance projects forward, such as a sprinkler system at the Tok school that has been out of compliance and costs \$50 thousand to maintain each year. He related that classes have to move out of some classrooms due to broken or leaking pipes. Last year, this critical project moved up from number 47 to number 14 on the CIP list. Replacement of this system would cost \$1.2 million dollars, which exceeded the amount the school district could afford to do on its own. He characterized this project as one glaring example, noting that all of the schools were aging. He said that the oldest school, Northway School, was 40 years old, noting the sewer system kept freezing due to floor shifts since the building sits on permafrost. He said that funds for major maintenance are being diverted from the primary mission of educating students. The district constantly must evaluate how to provide education for

its students. He offered his support and the support of both organizations for the bill.

[8:43:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked how many people the district serves.

MR. MACMANUS answered that the district serves 400 students over 26,000 square miles ranging from Eagle Village to Mentasta. He stated that the district has two fulltime maintenance staff.

[8:43:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON related her understanding that he has two fulltime maintenance staff. She asked whether he has considered using local village resources for some of the maintenance.

MR. MACMANUS answered that whenever possible he uses local support; however, it has been difficult to find qualified people in some of the small communities that can manage the complicated facilities. Some of the work must be done by those qualified to do it but whenever possible the district uses local support.

[8:44:32 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether the Alaska Gateway School District in the unorganized borough.

MR. MACMANUS answered yes.

CHAIR DRUMMOND answered that the community does not have any local property taxes or sales taxes.

MR. MACMANUS agreed.

[8:45:20 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD; Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA); Representative, Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA), Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), stated that the ACSA was the umbrella organization for all professional educators, including the Alaska Superintendents Association, the Alaska Association of Secondary Principals, the Alaska Association of Elementary

Principals, and the Alaska School Business Officials. She stated these organizations are in support of HB 212.

[8:46:16 AM](#)

DR. PARADY thanked members for the important work on many challenges facing Alaska today and especially appreciate their support of tools that support the school districts. She said that her organizations support HB 212 since it would allow access to funds to sustain major maintenance, which helps to delay replacement capital costs. This bill does so by allowing REAAs and small municipal school districts to fund major maintenance in addition to school construction under the REAA and small municipal funds. For these reasons, and in recognition of the vital importance of major maintenance to schools across the state, the organizations she represents support the bill. She focused on the REAAs across the state and in small municipal districts without the ability to access other support. She stated that the organizations strongly support HB 212 as it provides useful flexibility. She characterized it as another tool in the toolbox during a time that the state has been struggling. She thanked members for their work.

[8:47:47 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:47 p.m. to 4:49 p.m.

[8:49:24 AM](#)

SARAH SLEDGE, Executive Director, Coalition of Education Equity (CEE), stated that the CEE was a statewide organization representing Alaska school districts, organizations, and individuals who are concerned about the quality and breadth of educational opportunities available to Alaska's children. Her organization was formerly known as the Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC), an organization that advocated for reform at the legislative level while pursuing the Kasayulie and Moore lawsuits, which were settled in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

[8:50:00 AM](#)

MS. SLEDGE asked the committee to consider the Kasayulie lawsuit, which was filed in 1997 regarding the method of funding capital projects for education. At the time the lawsuit was filed, many of the physical facilities of plaintiffs' school districts were in dire need of replacement or in need of major

maintenance exhibiting widespread deterioration, physical dangers, structural deficiencies, inability to satisfy relevant code requirements and a lack of sufficient instructional space.

[8:50:33 AM](#)

MS. SLEDGE stated that as REAAs, these school districts do not have the legal authority to raise capital funds through a local capital tax levy or bond issue. At the same time, most municipal school districts have bonding capacity sufficient to raise capital funds and access to state funding for capital projects through the state's debt reimbursement program. This resulted in disparities between facilities in plaintiffs' school districts and those in districts with the ability to pass local bond issues to raise the necessary capital for facilities funding, major maintenance and renovation.

[8:51:12 AM](#)

MS. SLEDGE related that in 1999, the court found that the state's history and practice of funding of rural school facilities violated its obligations under the education and equal protection clauses of the Alaska Constitution and Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act. She stated that CEAAC and the State of Alaska (SOA) reached a settlement in the lawsuit in 2011. Prior to the settlement, CEAAC worked with legislators in 2010 on passage of Senate Bill 237, which directed 24 percent of funds allocated to bond debt reimbursement to REAA schools on the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) CIP list. This established a systematic mechanism for identifying funding amounts for rural school construction, which was expanded to include small municipal districts in 2013. She mentioned that when Senate Bill 237 was drafted there was discussion on including language in the bill that would permit the fund to be used for school construction and major maintenance projects; however, the need for school construction was great and it was given priority.

[8:52:20 AM](#)

MS. SLEDGE said that while several school construction projects remain on the CIP list, many have been completed and a significant backlog of major maintenance exists in REAA and small municipal school districts. As a result, the situation of deteriorating school facilities has created unsafe or uncomfortable environments that interfere with or impede student learning or create increased costs for maintenance. She

expressed the CEE's concern that continued deferment of major maintenance will necessitate a larger number of school construction projects in the future at great cost to Alaska. This bill would seek to allow the REAA and small municipal school district fund to be used for major maintenance in addition to school construction. She said, "We believe this follows the intent of the Kasayulie case, seeking to achieve parity in funding between areas with bonding capacity and those that do not." She offered the CEE's support for HB 212.

[8:53:23 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 212 would be held over.

HB 339-INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

[8:53:42 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 339, "An Act relating to the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date."

[8:54:07 AM](#)

SIERRA LLOYD, Student, Juneau Douglas High School (JDHS), Juneau School District, stated her support for HB 339, relating to the base student allocation (BSA). She stated that the school boards have been begging for funding for important programs, such as Tlingit Language Learning, gifted programs and maintaining reasonable class sizes. Raising the BSA could very well save these valuable resources for students who need them. She stated that she was a sophomore representative in the JDHS student council. She knows she speaks for many of the student body when she says that education should be the number one priority in our state.

MS. LLOYD predicted that for every dollar that the legislature thinks it would save by denying it to future Alaskan voters would result in the state spending double on social services, correctional facility workers and homeless shelters in the future. Please do not sacrifice our futures in an attempt to dig the state out of this monetary hole, she said. She offered her belief that members know how important a strong education system is for the welfare of all Alaskans. "Please do the right thing," she said. She thanked members for the opportunity to testify.

[8:55:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked Ms. Lloyd to submit her testimony in written form.

[8:56:09 AM](#)

DAVID PIAZZA, Superintendent, Southwest Region School District (SWRS), stated that the district would like to thank the legislature for its continued support of the public educational system and the opportunity to speak with you today.

MR. PIAZZA stated that Alaska's students represent the future of our great state as our greatest natural resource and require the support necessary to grow into the leaders and work force that will keep Alaska prosperous for years to come. The SWRS continues to experience substantial cost increases to health insurance, supplies, and transportation of goods to our schools and foresees a renewed upward swing in fuel oil costs and other utilities this spring. This past year's insurance renewal included a 13 percent increase, which continued a trend of significant annual increases. These changes directly impact the district finances and reduce funds available to support instructional programs for students.

[8:57:29 AM](#)

MR. PIAZZA stated that the district supports measures by the legislature to secure funding early and at adequate levels to help local schools as well as the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), to plan effectively and efficiently and to meet student educational needs. The district supports HB 339. He thanked members for their attention in this matter.

[8:58:16 AM](#)

DEENA BISHOP, PhD; Superintendent, Anchorage School District (ASD) related her understanding that many people wished to testify today. She said that the ASD provided a letter of support; however, she would like to add additional comments today. She thanked members for presenting this proposed increase to a government program when most discussions were about shrinking government.

DR. BISHOP said that Alaskans might not understand what shrinking government means for K-12 education and for our universities. She remarked that she has been a fiscal

conservative in her home and in her profession. She buys second-hand clothing and used cars. She indicated that most people understand that Alaska's future depends on the success of our youth, yet the state continued to shrink government while the long-term effects will result in losses to our economy, our health, and losses to our state. Smart companies invest in their future and pay for innovation and development. Sadly, Alaska's state government has not done this for education in recent years. Shrinking government means our students have less counselors in their schools, fewer teachers in their classrooms, and little investment in the 21st century learning these students need to move Alaska into the future. She concluded by saying she believes in servant leadership and the ASD provides high-quality instruction for its students, absolutely transparent accountability for student progress and achievement, efficient use of funds in all operations and positive "customer service" for its students, staff, parents, and community. She stated, "Please know that this fiscal conservative believes in investing in Alaska's children." She asked members to please support HB 339 for every student in our state, from preschool through post-secondary education. This [bill] represents the hope for our students and the hope for our future, she said.

[9:00:24 AM](#)

DAVID NEES stated he was testifying on behalf of himself. He said he serves as a staff research associate for the for Alaska Policy Forum. He suggested that the main problem with the proposed \$100 increase to the BSA was that it would be dispersed in an inequitable manner through the [foundation] formula. He explained, after reviewing the allocation of state education funding, that he found the big five school districts receive 68 percent of the state's education funds, yet they have 51 percent of the state's students.

MR. NEES said that the small communities were not receiving an equal amount of funding. He said it was very difficult to do this if one were to change the first part of the formula. He acknowledged that Alaska spends a lot for education, yet the results were not good. He suggested using the \$100 increase to the BSA as a function of a reward system by saying the school districts that perform would receive more of the proposed \$100 increase to the BSA for schools that perform. He reiterated that the big five school districts, which were Juneau, Anchorage, Mat-Su [Matanuska-Susitna], Kenai, and Fairbanks school districts would receive 68 percent or \$68 of the proposed \$100 increase to the BSA. Although this would help the larger

school districts, it also would short change the smaller school districts. He offered his belief that it was important to be careful that when the [legislature] front loads something at the beginning of the equation that what comes out at the end of the equation was what one hoped to get. He concluded by stating if the [legislature] wants the funding to go directly to the school districts that the funding needs to happen outside the formula and not as an increase to the BSA.

[9:02:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP thanked him for his testimony. He related his understanding that Mr. Nees's point was that the way the foundation formula was structured created a bias that was heavily weighted towards the big five school districts. He further understood that if \$100 comes in at the front end of the foundation formula, the \$68 for each student in the big five school districts would mean \$32 remained for each school district in rural Alaska. He asked for further clarification on whether that was his position.

CHAIR DRUMMOND indicated Mr. Nees had already signed off the teleconference.

[9:03:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON offered her belief that Mr. Nees was saying that 68 percent, not \$68 and that the student population was under 60 percent but the funding for the big five school districts was over 60 percent.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP said that Mr. Nees also used the \$68 figure as well. He thought Representative Johnston was correct, but he also indicated that only 51 percent of the students resided in the big five school districts, but these districts received 68 percent of the funding.

CHAIR DRUMMOND said she must correct those figures. She reported that 130,000 students reside in Alaska and the five big school districts have approximately 83 percent of the students. She said Mr. Nees's figures were inaccurate.

[9:04:18 AM](#)

TED MARTIN stated he just read the sponsor statement, which stated that approximately \$25 million was cut in 2015, but because of inflation it was more like \$90 million [in cuts]. He

argued that the inflation rate does not run so high as to create a shortage of \$90 million. He wondered how many of the school district really cut their teachers. It seemed to him that each year the legislature brings up a bill at the last minute to receive funding "to the cap."

MR. MARTIN stated that Alaska's schools, according to this year's NCTQ [National Council on Teacher Quality] report, that our achievement level was a "D or D-." He cautioned against rewarding people for failing. He said that this \$100 does not even equate to any reasonable inflation.

[9:05:55 AM](#)

MR. MARTIN encouraged members to "look at the numbers." He offered his belief that the person who put together the sponsor's statement was either not telling the truth or does not understand third grade math. He said he hated to be so critical, but he is 63 years old with a 25-year-old grandson. His entire family pays for these schools and none of them have any children. He indicated he was not complaining, noting he received a good education in the 1970s, attending a two-room schoolhouse. He said he was a successful businessman today. He stated that he did not have a swimming pool or track. He urged members to "tighten our belt" and to get results from teachers and provide adequate testing to demonstrate results. He said, "So, no; the \$100 increase in my mind is not warranted. So please, do not pass this bill. Go back to the drawing board and use what you've got. And you create a better system for our children. A D- is not a passing grade in my mind. It never was; never will be." He thanked members for the opportunity to testify. He offered his belief that his education was just as good as those schools that have amenities such as a pool, track, or football team. He concluded by saying he did not support HB 339.

CHAIR DRUMMOND thanked him for his testimony.

[9:07:48 AM](#)

BRIAN SINGLETON, Principal, Begich Middle School, Anchorage School District (ASD), stated that this was his 18th year as an educator and his 13th year as a principal. He asked to testify about safety in our schools. He said building safety at Begich Middle School, with over 1,000 students in 6th-8th grade was his biggest concern. He expressed concern that since January, the United States has had 18 school shootings, yet one of the cuts

at his school was for school security. He said that schools were getting less instead of more funding for school safety.

MR. SINGLETON offered his belief that teachers were asked to do more although students were performing well despite some of the misunderstandings over results. The ASD graduation rates have improved. The district does not have sufficient funds to upgrade the school security system. He stated that his school needed a "buzz in" system to ensure that school officials know who enters the building. He acknowledged that sometimes the public only considered subjects like reading and math; however, he thinks about school safety before considering classroom work. As funding does not keep up with rising costs, it compromises school safety. He said students at the Anchorage schools speak over 96 different languages and a University of Alaska study indicated that the Begich Middle School was number one or two in the United States in terms of diversity. Keeping students safe represented his highest priority, he said.

[9:10:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked how old the Begich Middle School in Anchorage was now.

MR. SINGLETON answered that it was 11 years old.

[9:10:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON related her understanding that when the Begich Middle School was first constructed it did not have a security system installed.

MR. SINGLETON answered that the school has cameras, but the building does not have any "buzz in" doors or collection areas. He stated that it was possible to upgrade the security system.

[9:11:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON was unsure but recalled that some of the bonding was to provide funds for security.

MR. SINGLETON responded that there are approximately 65 elementary schools in Anchorage. He stated that his school had significant needs due to the size and the number of buildings that needed to be kept secure. He acknowledged that funding for door construction was available, but it was only one piece of achieving secure buildings.

9:12:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked whether Begich Middle School was on this year's bonding proposal.

MR. SINGLETON answered no; not to my knowledge.

9:12:45 AM

MR. JAMES DOEPKEN stated that he was the parent of students in elementary school, that he coaches music at the high school, and his wife was a librarian and works with students who need additional assistance. He said he has volunteered in many schools in Anchorage, Girdwood, and Seward. He asked to testify in support of HB 339 because he has concerns about how the lack of funding will affect programs that "fill the gaps" for kids that might "slip through them." He supported HB 339 to offset inflation. He offered that he has seen too many students who rely on the school as their lifeline and without adequate funding, these kids might "fall through the cracks." He and his wife have worked with some of these children. Although it said it might sound trite, he asked members to remember the children and do it for the kids.

9:14:27 AM

REBECCA BERNARD thanked members for holding the hearing. She stated that she was the mother of two children who attend public school in Anchorage and a longtime supporter of education. She testified in support of HB 339 and urged members to pass the bill along for a vote on the floor. Ideally, she would like to see funding that kept up with the rising costs schools must cope with each year; funding that would keep up with inflation.

MS. BERNARD said that she would like to see students thrive in schools that were securely funded; ones that did not need to make cuts to staff, programs, and services each year. She would like to see schools with their dedicated teachers and staff know early on the amount of their school funding instead of scrambling at the end of the school year to match their budgets to reflect legislative appropriations. She said she was encouraged that the committee was considering this bill early on in the legislative session. She stated that our students needed and deserved to have funding stability in their schools, similar to how businesses operate. She offered that investing in schools was the key to our students' and to the future of all of

us who live in Alaska because these kids will run things and take care of us when we can no longer do so. She said, "So, let's invest in kids. Let's invest in our own future. Let's invest in our schools and keep the funding up with inflation." She thanked members for their time.

[9:16:57 AM](#)

DAVID BOYLE, Senior Policy Fellow, Alaska Policy Forum, stated his opposition to HB 339 to increase the BSA as it was now written. He stated that the bill does not have any accountability for results in student achievement. He offered his belief that the goal of everyone in Alaska was to improve student achievement and provide them with best education possible. He related that the state has had terrible results for the NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] scores.

MR. BOYLE referred to slide 9 of the PowerPoint in members' packets [not specifically identified]. He said that it only considered the general operating budget, but not transportation, school bond debt reimbursement, or other funding streams such as quality schools. He asked members to look at the entire budget. The education system has indicated that teachers would receive "pink slip," which no one wants. He said it was not necessary but represents a strategy to get the attention of parents, Alaskans, and legislators.

MR. BOYLE provided data from the CAFR [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report], which he said was not anecdotal nor did it contain opinions as with the previous document, the PowerPoint. He said there were no pinks given in the ASD to 268 food service workers, 354 custodians, 147 principals and assistant principals, 95 IT [Information Technology] staff, 200 maintenance staff, and 141 transportation employees. He asked members for the reason. He said slide 9 showed 394 FTE [fulltime equivalent] positions, which were positions, not people. He said one slide showed that classroom sizes have increased. He stated that was incorrect. According to the ASD CAFR, classroom sizes have not increased, with the average student to teacher ratio at 16-1. He said that slide 10 indicate that fixed costs have skyrocketed, which they have, but these represent variable costs since they are negotiable costs with collective bargaining units.

[9:19:49 AM](#)

MR. BOYLE reported that Anchorage taxpayers paid about \$21,000 per NEA member for health care. He said one member of this committee voted against reducing health care costs when that member opposed combining all school districts into one health care consortium. He stated that only the ASD opposed this and he asked for the reason, then answered that the legislature would fund more dollars. He asked members to look at the facts in the CAFR and not at opinions or anecdotes.

CHAIR DRUMMOND advised the public that anyone could submit their testimony in writing. She was unsure of the specific PowerPoint, Mr. Boyle had referenced.

[9:20:55 AM](#)

ANDY HOLLEMAN, Member, Anchorage School Board (ASB), Anchorage School District (ASD), stated that over the past ten years, the district has pared down staff to the point that programs, such as gifted programs, counselors, security, music, and art can barely function. These programs help keep the schools connected to students. In the aftermath of what has happened in our country, people understand the critical nature of that connection, he said.

MR. HOLLEMAN predicted that continuing with "flat funding" and cutting staff would result in dropping the connections to students. The most dangerous students with critical needs were the ones that schools lose the connection with first. He lamented that time did not allow him to discuss the success in the schools but that schools have a lot more to do and they need more staff to do it. He indicated that members who were familiar with the mechanics of issuing "pink slips" could explain the process to those who were not familiar with the budget cycle. He characterized the idea of using "pink slips" as a grandstanding exercise was preposterous and untrue. He stated that using the accounting number for the FTEs to reflect what was happening in the classroom was a misrepresentation.

[9:23:03 AM](#)

MIKE BRONSON, Member, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), stated that he was affiliated with the NAACP in Anchorage. He said several of his daughters graduated from West High School recently. He offered the NAACP's support for HB 339 and the base student allocation (BSA) increase of \$100.

[9:23:41 AM](#)

MR. BRONSON agreed that the public does expect the legislature to hold the schools accountable for results. He echoed Mr. Holleman of the importance of the teacher to student ratio. He referred to the science emphasis at the Central Middle School, noting that many military kids need more assistance and struggle to learn multiplication tables typically mastered by the fourth grade. He said that two years ago classes were overflowing and this year the ASB would be voting to reduce teacher numbers, which would increase class sizes. One consequence would be that students who were already behind may never catch up in middle school or in high school.

[9:25:31 AM](#)

JOSH KEATON, Vice-President, Juneau School Board (JSB), Juneau School District (JSD), stated he was a parent of two children in the Juneau School District (JSD). He serves on multiple committees and volunteers in the schools. He offered the JSB's support, as well as his personal support for HB 339, which would increase the base student allocation (BSA). He has heard testimony today about celebrating some of the successes or lack thereof in the schools. He said, "We're doing amazing work here in Juneau; however, we're doing this at a time we've - in the past five years - have cut over \$10 million in budget and have lost over 90 staff members." He characterized the current situation as being in the position of having to make an impossible choice. The JSD has a \$3 million budget shortfall, which meant the JSB must decide if it can fund high school librarians or counselors, or whether to raise kindergarten class sizes to an unmanageable 30 students. He asked members for any support that they can give to help. He said that the JSD was doing amazing work. He recalled earlier testimony from members of the community but added that this \$100 BSA increase would go a long way to help with inflation costs. He asked members for additional support for our schools.

[9:27:16 AM](#)

WILLIAM HARRINGTON stated that the big question was results and student achievement. He did not believe that we were getting what we were paying for. He advocated for education that resulted in usable job skills and not just college preparation. He suggested the community face the realities of single-family homes. He advocated for the basic ability of financial responsibility. He acknowledged that oil revenues had provided

for education. He agreed with the previous testifier who stated that he received a good education without some of the amenities, which were nice, but the lack of academic and real-life learning was a glaring fault of the highly paid administrators over a long period of time. He accused administrators of using kids as pawns while they did mediocre jobs but received great benefits. He and his family support education but he did not think the schools were achieving results. When oil was \$100 [per barrel] the school districts should have asked for more funding but right now we just need to concentrate on education that provides usable job skills and teaches consequences they will need to face when they finish school, whether they graduate or not.

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked testifiers to comment on HB 339, which is for the \$100 increase to the BSA.

[9:29:13 AM](#)

ROXANNE BROWER, President, Board of Education, North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD), spoke in support of HB 339. She stated that school districts face increasing costs in delivering education each year. In order to maintain adequate, quality instruction and programs that align with each school district's vision, adequate funding was necessary. She reported that the graduation rate grew from 76.1 in 2016 to 78.2 in 2017.

MS. BROWER related that an investment in education was an investment in Alaska. She said that economic benefits come to the communities through employment of school staff and programs. More importantly investing in education for Alaska's children was one of the surest ways to sustain our economy. Educating children reduces the numbers of adults in need of assistance and social programs.

[9:30:53 AM](#)

MS. BROWER said that the rural caucus and the NSBSD supports funding behavioral health services in all of Alaska's schools. She characterized behavioral health needs as one of the most urgent needs for our students.

MS. BROWER reported that the NSBSD's student graduation rate rose from 58.48 percent in 2016 to 78.38 percent in 2017. The NSBSD has been creating personalized relevant learning and expanding its career technology education program and case-based learning opportunities for all students. Given the chance to sustain adequate education funding, the NSBSD would continue to

produce results for its students. She stated that the NSBSD needed sustainable and adequate funds to recruit and retain its teachers who are using the Inupiaq learning framework for their students and seeing results.

MS. BROWER stated that the \$100 increase to the base student allocation (BSA) would provide the school district with a modest increase to keep up with increased costs and help sustain its educational workforce. Alaska needs to provide more for its children. The NSBSD has been doing its part to educate children.

[9:32:20 AM](#)

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD), stated that the school board president just spoke. He reiterated the NSBSD's student graduation rate rose from 58.48 percent in 2016 to 78.38 percent in 2017. He said it was important to see these results and know the NSBSD celebrates the outcome. He said that this happened because of innovation and using funding appropriately. He said without the \$100 increase to the base student allocation (BSA) there would be a reduction to the educational force. He said that you cannot keep buying the same things with the same amount of money year after year. He stated that the NSBSD would continue facing losing employees. The mental health counseling services provide help to students who have challenging circumstances or are in trouble. He emphasized the need to retain counselors and have those connective services for students. He urged members to please consider the increase of \$100 for the BSA so the school district can maintain the school district's momentum and the school district's work force. He thanked members for their service.

[9:34:32 AM](#)

JENNIFER SCHMITZ, Principal, Scenic Park School, Anchorage School District (ASD) stated she was a lifelong Alaskan and that she was her in her 7th year at Scenic Park School and her 12th year as a principal. She related that 385 students were at Scenic Park School when she started, currently 470 students are enrolled, and she expects approximately 20 more next year. Although she has 100 more students now, she has seven fewer fulltime staff members, including a counselor, a Cook Inlet Tribal teacher, and extended learning staff. She highlighted the importance of having support staff in the building. She related that some of her students have one or more parents who

are incarcerated, students who are considered homeless, and dozens in foster care. She stated one of her students has been in three foster homes and she now goes to the shelter to be with her mom at night. The Office of Children's Services visits her school weekly to interview and check on students who have suffered neglect and abuse.

[9:36:03 AM](#)

MS. SCHMITZ lamented that she does not have a way to help these students. On top of trying to help each student reach academic milestones, she and her teachers are also tasked with supporting students whose families undergo some incredibly tough situations. She said that they were not trained for this nor do they have the resources to do so. Many students need mental health support and with flat-funding in education the school has lost significant support it once had. She expressed that obtaining additional funds to the BSA would help provide students with the necessary support. More and more has been required of classroom teachers and because this was their chosen path, these teachers do their very best to be everything to their students. She said, "It isn't enough." Teachers have been taking on more and more with curriculum, individual learning plans for students, and interventions to meet student needs on top of the emotional support they must give. She stated that this was her 27th year at the ASD and she would like to say that her young teachers would stay as long but she believed that too much was being asked of them. She concluded by saying, "We need more supports in our schools."

DOUGLAS GRAY, Principal, Lake Otis Elementary School, Anchorage School District (ASD), provided his background, noting that he started his career as a special education teacher in Tokiak and he has worked in various locations and positions throughout Alaska. He reported that the BSA has not been increased in over four years but as the cost of living increases so does the cost of education.

[9:37:28 AM](#)

MR. GRAY highlighted that one model for research practices schools are looking at was the Multiple Tiers of Systems of Support (MTSS), which relies on the use of support staff to support students who are not making the growth of achievement the school would like to see. He explained that the school has lots of measures that the school uses to assess student progress. He stated that the school now needs the systems in

place to provide support for those students. The school tests students' numerous times throughout the year so the data exists but the school needs funds in order to do so.

[9:38:17 AM](#)

LISA PRINCE, Principal, Eagle River Elementary School, Anchorage School District (ASD), stated that she has previously served as principal of elementary and middle schools and was a high school administrator. She said that students who are loved at home come to learn and students who are not come to school to be loved. She related that she has found the need to provide social support for children has increased. Children cannot learn when they are crying, when they have not been fed, or when they do not have a place to stay. Children also cannot learn when they are testing positive for meth because drugs are present in their homes.

MS. PRINCE related a scenario in which she had to fix a leaking urinal that was vandalized at the same time robbers were headed towards Eagle River from Anchorage. Although some of the video surveillance cameras were broken the school managed to keep students safe. She then had to conduct Alice training drills to prepare for intruders. She said one student was afraid to come into the school because of concerns about personal safety at school. These were the things that students face. She acknowledged that her school has been able to get results and be creative with funding. She said she personally paid teachers to tutor kids after school because the school did not have the funding. She reported that at Bartlett High School passing rates improved and the graduation rate approved. As a single parent, she still budgets \$150 per month from her personal budget for students' expenses, including paying to fix cavities and starting clothing closets at school. This year she asked her supervisor if it was possible to keep the United Way food bank at their school. She thanked members for the opportunity to support schools.

[9:40:42 AM](#)

TIM PARKER, President, NEA Alaska; Teacher, Lathrop High School, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, asked to speak about student learning, which he said was really the favorite thing of nearly every educator in the state. He said that educators care about student learning, that it is their focus and what they want to see happen in every classroom for every day.

MR. PARKER, on behalf of the 13,000 NEA members, offered support for HB 339, relating to base student allocation (BSA) increases. He advised members that many educators cannot testify today because they are working in the 500 schools around the state making sure student learning happens. He stated that inflation is real and math teachers could help with the figures.

MR. PARKER, referred to the proposed \$100 base student allocation (BSA). He offered his belief that the best way to view it is from student's perspective. He said he has taught at Lathrop High School for 20 years. The first point of contact was when students arrive; however, due to budget cuts it has been difficult to hire bus drivers and provide bus services. Since custodial staff has been cut, he reported that the schools are not as clean as they once were. Class sizes are up, in fact, a couple of years he was teaching a class of 35, which is not a reasonable class size, he said.

[9:42:47 AM](#)

MR. PARKER asked members to think about it from the student's perspective about what is happening, which is that he/she cannot get the personal help that they need. He said that is what increasing the BSA represents. When students raise their hands and ask their teachers for more information can they ask their questions and get more information when they need it.

[9:43:06 AM](#)

AMY JO MEINERS, Teacher, Riverbend Elementary School; Auke Bay Elementary School, Juneau School District (JSD), stated that she was recognized as the 2016 Alaska Teacher of the Year. She stated that she was in her 29th year of teaching in Juneau. She was raised in Juneau and attended Juneau schools. She has also had three children who have gone through the Juneau school system.

MS. MEINERS said she came today wearing a T-shirt "Amy Strong" in honor of a former student, Amy Henderson, who recently died. Amy leaves behind two students. She compared the services that the school district provided 28 years ago when Amy was in first grade compared to what the school district provides for Amy's two children. The school district had a superintendent and an assistant superintendent, as well as someone in charge of curriculum, and someone in charge of professional learning. The

schools had fulltime counselors, physical education teachers, nurses, and librarians.

MS. MEINERS said that today many of those positions are gone, she said. She has been "on the chopping block" since 2008, but the legislature will not see her as a "pink slip," however, her K-2 services have been completely eliminated. She now serves two elementary schools. In the proposed budget she has been scheduled to serve six elementary schools next year.

MS. MEINERS recognized that relationships matter and are pivotal to student learning; however, she was unsure how she could do so effectively. If the committee considers the cuts and budget for services, the committee would see a huge impact.

[9:45:06 AM](#)

MS. MEINERS said that since her former student's time, the standards have increased. Those first set of students are now in 4th grade and the school district was just beginning to see the statewide data results under the new standards. The state has worked on a teacher evaluation system that has had a great impact on effective learning, so some things have improved. In addition, attendance rates have improved, and Thunder Mountain had a 100 percent graduation rate for Alaska Natives last year. She acknowledged that improvements were happening; however, the cuts have been drastic. She reported that the school district has cut \$11 million since 2011 and she anticipate an additional \$3 million next year.

[9:45:45 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD; Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA); Representative, Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) & Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), stated that she represents superintendents, elementary and secondary principals, school business officials, and school administrators across Alaska.

[9:45:58 AM](#)

MS. PARADY offered her belief that members have received a copy of their position statements. She read, "The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the true cost of an adequate education in all districts." She emphasized that HB 339 goes directly to the point of funding the true costs. She suggested that testimony

today has indicated that probably has not been happening in many cases throughout Alaska.

9:46:35 AM

MS. PARADY said this bill was short and to the point; increase the base student allocation (BSA) by \$100. She said that her organizations support this. The questions within the bill were complex since it goes right at the heart of the priorities of the state, she said. It was counter intuitive since it proposes to increase funding for education at a time of ongoing budget shortfalls. She emphasized her organizations' position that this represents an investment for the future of our students and of our state. It really can be argued that funding for education is the primary constitutional duty, she said.

9:47:08 AM

MS. PARADY said the central question before the committee was whether the legislature has provided the resources that students in our state need. She encouraged members to listen to the educators who are testifying today. She said, "We are doing the best we can. As you know from basic economics, "flat funding" is in plain truth a cut." She asked members to consider health care and all the costs districts face. She said these cuts have hollowed out our capacity to sustain schools. The school districts and schools have been resourceful and have kept cuts away from classrooms to the greatest degree possible. However, the state cannot continue to run schools without quality educators, teacher's aides, maintenance staff, secretaries, administrators and bus drivers. All of these positions are necessary to support teachers and students. Direct cuts, or funding below inflation, has resulted in increased class sizes, reduced course offerings and programs, and less support for students all across the state. She argued that we are not talking about trimming the fat but about the core of what educators provide. She concluded with her organizations' support for this bill. She thanked the committee for their consideration of HB 339.

9:48:25 AM

SUNNA SCNAME, Student, Montessori Borealis Elementary School, Juneau School District (JSD), stated she and her brother Caleb attend Montessori Borealis Elementary School. She said, "We would like the bill to pass, because if it didn't pass, we would have to lose a teacher from our school. And it would make the

classrooms more cramped, and louder, and harder to focus. And we wouldn't be able to have as many lessons. Thank you."

9:50:29 AM

EMILY FERRY stated that she was Caleb and Sunna Scname's mom. She said she was a member of the Montessori Borealis Site Council and she also was involved with the Great Alaska Schools volunteers. She offered her support for HB 339, to help inflation-proof education funding. She expressed frustration hearing testifiers describe how teachers must do more with less every year. The parents, teachers, and support staff at the Montessori Borealis Elementary School, where her children attend school, have all "dug in" to make that school the best it can be, she said. She indicated the school was slated for a capital projects renovation; however, those projects were frozen several years ago. She characterized the school building as "ancient." The parents worked with the school district and raised our own funds replace the old carpet. Parents, volunteers, and teachers have painted the hallways "making that school shine" because they did not get the renovation funds. She offered her belief that the funding for teachers was down to "bare bones." She thanked the committee for considering how to help fund education.

9:51:53 AM

KATHY TRAN, Student; Student Body President, Thunder Mountain High School (TMHS), Juneau School District, stated that she was representing herself and student government. She offered her support for HB 339, increasing the base student allocation (BSA). She reported that she submitted 21 letters of testimony to the committee.

MS. TRAN offered to share her story as a first-generation Vietnamese American. She stated that growing up she learned two languages simultaneously. She acknowledged that she struggled with reading and writing. She was lower than the rest of her peers and she felt like learning to read and write was an unattainable goal. Through the help she received from the school district she learned to read and write beyond her grade level. She highlighted that her little brother who attends kindergarten, speaks mostly English. In preschool he spoke Vietnamese, so his parents were advised to speak less Vietnamese to him. She offered her belief that her little brother has not been receiving the support that she did. She asked committee members to support HB 339. She characterized education as in

investment not a cost. She said it was an investment in Alaska's children and the future of Alaska. She thanked the committee for their time.

[9:54:16 AM](#)

MICHELLE STRICKLER stated that she was a parent of five children who have all attended schools in the JSD. She stated that she has been active in the Site Council and has been for many years. She expressed her gratitude to committee members, the legislature, and the school board for their work to address the challenges. She offered her support for HB 339 for the 1.7 percent increase [to the base student allocation (BSA)] that has not happened over several years. As a business owner in this community, she was constantly reviewing business costs and she has raised her rates more than 1.7 percent this year.

MS. STRICKLER said she also helps run her husband's medical practice. She suggested that medical practitioners have likely raised their rates more than 1.7 percent this year, just to keep up with the cost of doing business.

[9:55:23 AM](#)

MS. STRICKLER viewed education as a business and as a recruitment tool to recruit members to our communities. She argued that if we care about our economy in Alaska, education was a top recruiting tool to bring staff and physicians to our community. She would like to be able to tell them that their children would receive an excellent education. She said that the base student allocation (BSA) increase of \$100 would allow teachers to do excellent work and keeps them out of ongoing financial discussions. She estimated she personally has spent more than 30 hours poring over financial statements, trying to find ways to scrape \$3 million for Juneau's school district budget. She said when she observes teachers testifying instead of being in the classroom, she realizes that we have a broken system. She argued that we know education needs to be funded and should reflect the actual cost of education. She wanted members to let our teachers and staff return to the hard work of making positive changes in our schools. She thanked the committee for their time.

[9:56:48 AM](#)

ELLA LUBIN, Student, Sitka High School (SHS), Sitka School District (SSD), stated that she was currently a junior at Sitka

High School. She said that during this time of fiscal uncertainty that the legislature has sought solutions; however, she said that cutting education funding is not the solution. She said that HB 339 would support public education in Alaska and provide the solution to a successful future for our state. In the years to come, young people would be making important decisions for our state. She stressed that it was in Alaska's best interest to provide them with the education and tools they will need.

[9:57:32 AM](#)

MS. LUBIN stated that flat funding would leave the Sitka School District (SSD) with a \$2.3 million deficit, which equates to about 10-12 lost teaching positions. She said that this scared her as she could imagine class sizes growing and the range of courses being offered being reduced. As a student, she offered her belief that all Alaskan students deserve the opportunity to grow and flourish. They cannot do this if materials, teachers, and facilities are not available to them, she said. She emphasized that our state needs this bill to pass to make sure that Alaska's most valuable resource, its students, can continue to be supported and encouraged to challenge themselves and learn. She thanked the committee for listening and for their time.

[9:58:21 AM](#)

ROGER SCHMIDT stated he was the father of two girls who attend the Sitka School District (SSD). He offered his support for HB 339. He related that he grew up in Sitka and attended the schools. As Ella mentioned, the Sitka School District (SSD) advised it has a \$2.3 million deficit. He stated that over the last few years the school district has been forced to make cuts due to declining revenues and rising costs. The school district has had to keep making cuts and the teachers have less resources to teach with, along with larger classes. He reported that teaching positions and programs have been eliminated. Each year the students have less opportunities and resources, he said. Obviously as the schools continue to decline, people leave the community and move out of Alaska. He asked to echo what Ella said, that the education of children in Alaska was our most valuable resource. He said funding education was the most important investment that we can make toward the state's future. He urged members to support HB 339.

[9:59:49 AM](#)

JENNIFER SAMPSON stated she is the mother of three children in school in Fairbanks, a member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and a concerned parent. She offered her support for HB 339. She urged members to support the bill.

MS. SAMPSON expressed concern that the base student allocation (BSA) has not kept up with inflation, which was not okay. She said it cripples schools. She emphasized that schools were expected to do more with less and less. She stressed that we must support schools in their endeavor to produce educated members of society. We must make education a priority. She stated that her daughter's class size was expected to grow beyond the 29 current students. She questioned how children could get any attention under those circumstances. She knows her children's peers and teachers. She has observed their struggles, lack of supplies, and not enough individual attention from teachers. She offered her belief that school provides the means for children to succeed in life. We need to ensure that our children's education is the best it can possibly be because they are the future: your future, my future. She urged members to please invest in our future and support HB 339.

[10:01:22 AM](#)

JOSIAH SAMPSON, Student, Tanana Middle School, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) stated that he attends Tanana Middle School. He said that the classes are already big so increasing class sizes and cutting teachers would mean that students will not be able to get the help they need. He stated that if the legislature increased funding for schools, more teachers will be able to help students and improve their education. He thanked the committee.

[10:02:12 AM](#)

DEENA MITCHELL, Member, Great Alaska Schools, stated she was a member of the statewide, non-partisan advocacy group. She said there was little she could add to the eloquent testimony given today.

MS. MITCHELL characterized it as heartbreaking to sit through the ASD's Board meeting and listen to the superintendent outline options for the \$13 million in cuts due to flat funding this year. She said students talked about how damaging it was not to have counselors to talk to about problems. She heard about the counselor positions that have been lost and the workload for the

remaining ones, some of whom have class loads of 700 or more students. She spoke about how nurses must take the place of some counselors in schools, such that some schools need to share nurses. She offered her belief that we are selling our children short. She said it was not just her concern for every child but for the future of Alaska because she loves this state and she wants Alaska to have vibrant teachers. The only way to do that was to provide support for children, noting that much of those connections gets made through counselors in schools and through the personal connections.

[10:03:27 AM](#)

MS. MITCHELL said teachers who have large class sizes and are beginning to break under the load cannot make those personal one-on-one connections that we know have the ability to save lives. She applauded members for introducing this bill, noting that while it does not come close to meeting the needs that we have, it was a step in the right direction. Every child deserves to have the same opportunities as those who came before them or after them. She thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify.

[10:04:07 AM](#)

SANDY DAWS, Purchasing Supervisor, Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD), stated that in the past year the KIBSD has seen a large reduction in its staff. From FY 17 to now, KIBSD has had to cut 18 teaching positions, reduce hours for classified staff, cut staff travel, classroom, maintenance and curriculum supplies, and reduced professional development for the entire staff.

MS. DAWS stated that these cuts amounted to \$2.1 million budget cut. The FY 19 preliminary budget requested \$1.5 million from the Kodiak Island Borough. This would place the KIB's contribution at 96 percent to the cap. She wondered what was going to happen next year. She acknowledged that we need a long-term early planning solution from the state. She offered her belief that increasing the base student allocation (BSA) was a place to start. She cautioned that not receiving additional funding from the state or borough would result in cutting an additional nine teachers and seven classified positions, which would translate into larger class sizes and fewer options for students. In addition, the school district would need to reduce funding for renewal and replacement of facilities and endure deeper cuts in the curriculum replacement. She said that the

key to student success was quality and high content with diverse learning interest. Flat funding does not keep up with inflation, teacher salary, or raises.

[10:05:21 AM](#)

MS. DAWS said that the KIBSD has been working hard to reduce these costs. She related that 80 percent of the school district's staff were on a high-deductible health care plan. By June 30, 2020 the entire district will be on the high-deductible health care plan. The district has been exploring options to stabilize their technology purchases by leasing and spreading out costs over a four-year period. She asked members to please help them find solutions. She offered the KIBSD's support for HB 339.

[10:06:24 AM](#)

BRENDA TAYLOR, Teacher, Juneau Community Charter School, Juneau School District (JSD) stated her students were currently taking a test and she had someone else supervise them so she could testify today. She recalled a question the committee had at an earlier hearing on online learning. She explained that her son is a high school junior and has taken four online classes. She said in one course, an online world history course, he was taking a test and encountered things he knew were wrong; however, online courses do not provide a means for students to interact and point out errors. She wondered how students could make ethical decisions when faced with having to take screen shots of the exam to prove the errors in the test, when photographing an exam could be viewed as unethical. She offered her belief that the turnaround time for scoring of online courses was also rather long. She said her son experienced a lot of frustration with his online courses.

MS. TAYLOR stated her son took an online health class. She asked members to consider Alaska's issues related to domestic abuse, suicide, and alcoholism. She questioned how students would learn how say no in an online class; however, classroom teachers would be available to assist students who faced sensitive situations at home or in their lives.

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked her to submit written testimony describing other scenarios.

[10:08:42 AM](#)

DEMETRY SHANE said his six children attend school in Anchorage in various schools, four of whom previously were in foster care. He related that two of his children have learning disabilities and his children's teachers do their best to ensure that their needs are met. He stated that his children need more resources at times. He expressed concern that his son was in a classroom of 35 kids and that teacher must use a microphone in order for the children to hear her. As an immigrant he sometimes hangs out with a group of other immigrants and when teachers are asking parents for school supplies, his immigrant friends wonder what country they live in. They question why teachers must beg for school supplies when they live in the richest country on earth. He commented that it is absolutely shameful. He said we all should be ashamed of this; our teachers deserve better and our children deserve better.

[10:10:29 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 339 would be held over.

[10:10:56 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.