

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 29, 2025

5:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Maxine Dibert  
Representative Ted Eischeid  
Representative Jubilee Underwood  
Representative Rebecca Schwanke  
Representative Bill Elam

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 69

"An Act relating to education funding; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 69

SHORT TITLE: EDUCATION FUNDING: INCREASE BSA

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HIMSCHOOT

01/24/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
01/27/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
01/27/25	(H)	Heard & Held
01/27/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
01/29/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
01/29/25	(H)	EDC AT 5:00 PM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MERIDETH MAPLE, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MELISSA BURNETT, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DR. LUKE MYNAR, Superintendent  
Fairbanks School District  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

EFROM FRAILICK, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

AMY LLOYD, Teacher  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

COLLIN FLYNN, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JASON FAGEL, Physical Therapist  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JAYDA CALL, Occupational Therapist  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

LAURA MULGREW, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

KATIE GREENE, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

KERRY IRONS, representing self  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MIKE MILLIGAN, representing self  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ERIKA BURR, Teacher  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JAMES ALDRIDGE, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

COOPER MOEN, Student  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DAVID GUTTENBURG, Member  
Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DANIKA HAMM, President  
Alaska Association of Student Governments  
Healy, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

CELESTE GROWDEN, President  
Alaska Black Caucus  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

LUKE ALMON, Principal  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

RHONDA PROWELL-KITTER, Teacher  
Aquarian Charter Schools  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

PATRICIA CONATSER, Member  
Craig Schoolboard  
Craig, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

CHRIS NOEL, Mayor  
Denali Borough  
Healy, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

SARAH LAGHLIN, Chair  
Alaska Nurses Association Legislative Committee  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JOHN HARGIS, Superintendent  
Lower Yukon School District  
Mountain Village, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JASMINE WOLFE, Student  
Sitka High School  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

OLIVIA SKAN, Southeast Regional Representative  
Alaska Association of Student Governments  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JAMIE EELLS, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

SUSAN BRANDT-FURGUSON, Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

KAT RICHARDS, School Nurse  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JEN REID, Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ERIC JORDAN, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

LYLE HILDE, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

RYAN MEYERS, Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

FREDERIQUE CHARBONNEAU, Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MEGGAN TURNER, Special Education Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

LORI CRUPE, School Psychologist  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DWAYNE HANSON, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

EMILY FERRY, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

CHARLES MCKEE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on HB 69.

SUSAN RITTER, Special Education Teacher  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

TRACY FISCHBACH, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

SCOTT CRASS, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

PATRICIA LEE, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ANDY HOLLMAN, President  
Anchorage School Board  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JENNA HAMM, Member  
Denali Borough Schoolboard  
Denali Park, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

LAEL OLDMIXON, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DANIELLE LOGAN, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JASON TAURIANIEN, representing self  
Nikiski, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

EDWARD RICHARDS, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ERIN MORROTI, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

COLLEEN HUMMEL, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

TABITHA VOELLER, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

RICKY LINDE, JR, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JUDITH ECKERT, Former Teacher

Homer School District

Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

CRAIG FREDEEN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BETH SHORT-ROADS, representing self

Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

PHYLLIS CLOUGH, representing self

Old Harbor, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

GARA BRIDWELL, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ASHLEY MINAEI, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

CHRISTINA RIED, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BEN MUSE, representing self

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

HAZEL CZEAMECKI, Second Grader

Bear Valley Elementary School

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

SARAH MCCONNELL, representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MARA KENDALL, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ERIC FILARDI, Principal  
Mendenhall River Community School  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

WINTER MARSHALL-ALLEN, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MARY FENNO, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

TESSA POLASEK, Student  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ARIEL STARBUCK, Teacher  
Sitka School District  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

KATE JOHNSON, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BERT HOUGHTALING, representing self  
Big Lake, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 69.

KRISTI DOWNING, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

AMY AINSLIE, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

EVELYN TREFON, representing self  
Newhalen, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BRIDGET HITCHCOCK, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ALEXANDER ROSALES, representing self  
Eagle River, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 69.

KEN HUCKABEE, representing self  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 69.

BRUCE OWENS, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 69.

JEANNE GERHARDT-CYRUS, representing self  
Kiana, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MOLLY HICKOX, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

VALERIE LUKIN, Teacher,  
Kodiak Island Borough School District  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JEANINE COSTELLO, representing self  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BRENT JOHNSON, representing self  
Clam Gulch, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

MARK SOMERVILLE, representing self  
Kenny Lake, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

BEVERLY O'DONNELL, representing self  
Salcha, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DENISE TEMPLETON, representing self  
North Pole, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 69.

KELLY KING, representing self  
Soldotna, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

PAUL RIOUX, Member  
Sitka Schoolboard  
Sitka, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JAN CAROLYN HARDY, State President  
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees  
Retirees  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

PATRICK MAYER, Superintendent  
Alaskan Gateway School District  
Tok, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

TERRI WALKER, Superintendent  
Northwest Arctic Borough School District  
Kotzebue, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

ZUZANNA BOBINSKI, representing self  
North Pole, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

DUNNINGTON BABB, Parent  
Aquarian Charter School  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

KELLY LESSONS, Member  
Anchorage Schoolboard  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

JESSE HENSEL, Teacher  
Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District,  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 69.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[5:00:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Representatives Story, Himschoot, Dibert, Schwanke, Underwood, and Eischeid were present at the call to order. Representative Elam arrived as the meeting was in progress.

### **HB 69-EDUCATION FUNDING: INCREASE BSA**

[5:01:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 69, "An Act relating to education funding; and providing for an effective date."

[5:02:40 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on HB 69.

[5:03:05 PM](#)

MERIDETH MAPLE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that Alaska's public schools "are not broken, they're starving" and explained how a flat funded base student allocation (BSA) has negatively affected public schools around Alaska. She said that a well-funded BSA would ensure that every student in Alaska is given a quality education and the tools they need to succeed.

[5:05:28 PM](#)

MELISSA BURNETT, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that HB 69 needs to be a bill that the governor is willing to sign and suggested adding performance-based funding incentives to the proposed legislation to make it a more attractive bill to the governor.

[5:07:41 PM](#)

LUKE MYNAR, PhD, Superintendent, Fairbanks School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the Fairbanks School District is facing a \$31 million deficit and is reaching a breaking point from "chronic underfunding." He said that the

cuts the Fairbanks schoolboard is having to make each year is contributing to young families having to leave the state year after year.

[5:10:07 PM](#)

EFROM FRAILICK, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that there are teachers and educators who care for their students, but the Alaska public education system is failing its children and communities. He said that the failing public school system is a product of the flat-funded BSA. He said that a better-funded BSA presented hope for his and other families in Alaska.

[5:12:s24 PM](#)

AMY LLOYD, Teacher, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. She emphasized to the committee members that they must "resist the urge from the governor" to not pass HB 69.

[5:13:24 PM](#)

COLLIN FLYNN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the continually flat-funded BSA is contributing to a declining environment for children and young people in Alaskan communities.

[5:14:56 PM](#)

JASON FAGEL, Physical Therapist, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the quality of education and the quality of available school staff is "declining before our very eyes" and emphasized that Alaska's outmigration could be stopped by well-funded BSA.

[5:16:09 PM](#)

JAYDA CALL, Occupational Therapist, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that students require access to a variety of resources and space to succeed in an education environment. She explained that it is impossible to maintain any resources or space for children in Alaska's education system without an increase to the BSA.

[5:18:35 PM](#)

LAURA MULGREW, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that her family initially chose to stay in Juneau because of its quality education system and emphasized that "we're losing our future" without adequate educational funding.

[5:19:55 PM](#)

KATIE GREENE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She shared an anecdote as a mother of students in the Juneau School District (JSD) and emphasized that her son who requires Individual Education Plan (IEP) assistance is not adequately being attended to due to the exacerbated effects of the BSA's current funding scenario.

[5:21:45 PM](#)

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. He shared the impacts of the JSD's recent restructuring and emphasized that an increased BSA would help to provide stability to the JSD for the first time in 10 years. He challenged the results of the commonly referenced Harvard study on charter schools in Alaska and said that it is "time to adequately support those who choose Alaska's public schools."

[5:24:07 PM](#)

KERRY IRONS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that a week prior from January 29, 2025, the Kodiak schoolboard made the decision to close a school in its school district. She said that it is unsustainable to move forward with a flat-funded BSA. She thanked the committee for its work in bringing forward HB 69.

[5:25:51 PM](#)

MIKE MILLIGAN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that he "can't help but wonder if we are inadvertently debating Alaska tax issues." He said that the Alaska State Legislature should increase the corporate income tax on the oil companies in the North Slope as a means to incur more funding for public education.

[5:28:25 PM](#)

ERIKA BURR, Teacher, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that a flat-funded BSA creates larger class sizes and doesn't allow her a

fair chance to connect with her students. She said that the increased class sizes lead to exhaustion and burnout, both of which contribute to outmigration of Alaskans, families, and teachers.

[5:30:57 PM](#)

JAMES ALDRIDGE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that he would like to see HB 69 passed at the "utmost speed."

[5:31:27 PM](#)

COOPER MOEN, Student, University of Alaska Fairbanks, testified in support of HB 69. He said that "it has broken his heart multiple times to see people lose educational opportunities." He urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[5:32:46 PM](#)

DAVID GUTTENBURG, Member, Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly, testified in support of HB 69. He shared that he was a retired member of the Alaska State Legislature and said that "every time you underfund education, you are inherently increasing the taxes on Alaskans." He said that schoolboards are already concerned with accountability and the improvement of student outcomes.

[5:35:37 PM](#)

DANIKA HAMM, President, Alaska Association of Student Governments, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG) is in "strong support" of an increase to the BSA and explained a series of impacts of a continually flat-funded BSA.

[5:37:54 PM](#)

CELESTE GROWDEN, President, Alaska Black Caucus, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the lack of adequate funding has forced school districts around Alaska to make "heart wrenching" decisions.

[5:40:33 PM](#)

LUKE ALMON, Principal, Anchorage School District, testified in support of HB 69. He explained that the continual use of one-time funding will create a cycle of administrators being forced

to hire and re-hire their staff on a regular basis. He said that he almost never has any candidates who are applying for open positions because he cannot offer competitive salaries to them.

[5:42:59 PM](#)

RHONDA PROWELL-KITTER, Teacher, Aquarian Charter Schools, testified in support of HB 69. She emphasized that all schools in Alaska are at risk of losing their reputation if they are not funded predictably and continually.

[5:45:20 PM](#)

PATRICIA CONATSER, Member, Craig Schoolboard, testified in support of HB 69. She said that it has been "very difficult" to see her school districts dwindle in size and scope. She emphasized that the Craig School District's deficit is still too large and must be alleviated by an increased BSA.

[5:47:51 PM](#)

CHRIS NOEL, Mayor, Denali Borough, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the Denali Borough passed a resolution in support of a significant BSA increase with inflationary adjustments.

[5:49:50 PM](#)

SARAH LAGHLIN, Chair, Legislative Committee, Alaska Nurses Association, testified in support of HB 69. She reminded the committee that school nurses are funded and supported by an increased BSA and urged members' support of HB 69.

[5:50:43 PM](#)

JOHN HARGIS, Superintendent, Lower Yukon School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that Alaska's poorly funded education system is contributing to Alaska's overall decline in economy and emphasized that inflation has outpaced the BSA's funding amount.

[5:52:35 PM](#)

JASMINE WOLFE, Student, Sitka High School, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she is afraid for the future of her school district and the future of her state due the Alaska State

Legislature treating children like a cost rather than an investment.

[5:54:21 PM](#)

OLIVIA SKAN, Southeast Regional Representative, Alaska Association of Student Governments, testified in support of HB 69. She shared a series of classes that are proposed to be cut in the coming school year and further shared a series of anecdotes in her experience being a student of Alaska's public school system.

[5:56:23 PM](#)

JAMIE EELLS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She explained that the current flat-funded BSA has contributed to larger class sizes, fewer school programs, and an overall more negative experience for students in public education. She said that small class sizes and social-emotional programs are vital to a student's success. She said that investing in children is an investment in Alaska's future.

[5:59:15 PM](#)

SUSAN BRANDT-FURGUSON, Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that Alaska's children are "missing out" under current funding levels. She emphasized the impacts of a flat-funded BSA and said that it is a matter of priority to fund the BSA.

[6:00:56 PM](#)

KAT RICHARDS, School Nurse, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that HB 69 is clear and concise in its goal to improve education and its outcomes in Alaska.

[6:05:41 PM](#)

JEN REID, Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that education in Alaska has not kept up with inflation like she and other Alaskans have had to in recent years and explained that spending more and making budgetary adjustments can feel scary even if they are necessary.

[6:07:00 PM](#)

ERIC JORDAN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that he was awed with the words of the other testifiers and urged the committee to override any possible veto of HB 69 from the governor.

[6:08:21 PM](#)

LYLE HILDE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the investment of the BSA in schoolchildren is extremely low compared to the positive outcome of the overall positive outcome of any investment in education.

[6:10:00 PM](#)

RYAN MEYERS, Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that the term "flat funding" is misleading because schools in Alaska are actively being underfunded year after year. He said that he was initially brought to Alaska because of the high teacher pay and explained that he has been thinking of leaving as of recent due to the decline in education funding.

[6:11:38 PM](#)

FREDERIQUE CHARBONNEAU, Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that all schoolchildren benefit from a well-rounded education and emphasized that a well-rounded education is not possible in the face of a declining funding scenario year after year. She thanked the committee for hearing HB 69 and working to fund the BSA.

[6:14:03 PM](#)

MEGGAN TURNER, Special Education Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she sees class sizes increasing, skilled staff being cut, and school programs being cut year after year and emphasized that there is no solution other than increasing the BSA.

[6:15:40 PM](#)

LORI CRUPE, School Psychologist, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that this was her third time testifying in support of an increase BSA and emphasized the negative impacts of a declining funding base.

[6:17:23 PM](#)

DWAYNE HANSON, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that Alaska's public education system has enabled him and his wife to have great careers and quoted former Governor Wally Hickel saying, "You can't cut your way to prosperity." He said he would be "amazed" if the Alaska State Legislature does not support HB 69.

[6:19:57 PM](#)

EMILY FERRY, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She shared an anecdote of her son succeeding in his robotics program due to the public education system that surrounds it. She said that she is nervous for the future of Alaska once its teachers who are enrolled in Tier I of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) retire and explained that the state is underfunding Alaska's schools and staff.

[6:22:19 PM](#)

CHARLES MCKEE, representing self, testified on HB 69. He said, "At least we have the jail system to rely on for revenue."

[6:24:52 PM](#)

SUSAN RITTER, testified in support of HB 69. She said that "time has run out and education must be funded on a consistent schedule". She said that HB 69 "is not asking for the moon"; it is asking for government officials to obey the constitution in its obligation to a good public education.

[6:27:16 PM](#)

TRACY FISCHBACH, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that there have been many opportunities for her family to leave the state, but they stayed for the quality of Alaska's public education system. She emphasized that she was unsure if she would make the same decision to stay today due to the states refusal to fund public education.

[6:29:35 PM](#)

SCOTT CRASS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that Alaska has a constitutional obligation to provide a quality public education and said that students need to be assured that they have the ability to learn and succeed in all educational environments. He said that students gain the

knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life when public schools are adequately funded.

[6:31:51 PM](#)

PATRICIA LEE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she would like to see HB 69 "veto-proofed and inflation-proofed." She said that she would like to see legislators who want to see proof of performance for an increased BSA take a 10th grade achievement test and publish their results.

[6:34:33 PM](#)

ANDY HOLLMAN, President, Anchorage School Board, testified in support of HB 69. He said that HB 69 would support struggling teachers and students at a "critical moment" in the fight for an equitable education system in Alaska.

[6:36:35 PM](#)

JENNA HAMM, Member, Denali Borough Schoolboard, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the Denali Borough School District isn't as hard hit by the underfunded BSA and recognized the impacts being faced by other districts in the state.

[6:39:23 PM](#)

LAEL OLDMIXON, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District has been forced to cut over 200 positions in the past decade due to an underfunded BSA. She said that Alaska's economy and workforce will suffer as long as public education is continually underfunded and urged the committee to support HB 69.

[6:42:04 PM](#)

DANIELLE LOGAN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that Fairbanks is in a crisis and shared her frustration for previous remarks about a school district's need for accountability. She asked where the accountability was "for Alaska's obligation to a fair public education" and challenged Governor Dunleavy's proposals on education in Alaska.

[6:44:03 PM](#)

JASON TAURIANIEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that Alaska is "in a dire situation" and emphasized that HB 69 is not a solution, rather it is an apology for the underfunding of public education in the previous years.

[6:46:10 PM](#)

EDWARD RICHARDS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that HB 69 would create a prosperous Alaska in the future by creating a more educated and well-prepared work force. He shared his enthusiasm to return to Alaska and work as a teacher and said that an increased BSA would incentivize him and other young families to return to Alaska.

[6:48:11 PM](#)

ERIN MORROTI, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She shared that in the last 10 years, the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District has cut over \$50 million in its operating budget which has led to 250 staff members being cut. She shared that the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District (FNBSD) has had to close four schools and is currently proposing a further closure of five more schools within the School District. She urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[6:51:44 PM](#)

COLLEEN HUMMEL, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the outmigration caused by a failing public education is far more expensive than whatever dollar figure is associated with an increased BSA.

[6:53:36 PM](#)

TABITHA VOELLER, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that a quarter of students she works with that require IEPs are not adequately attended to and shared anecdotes of the impacts of inadequate public school funding.

[6:55:47 PM](#)

RICKY LINDE, JR, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He shared his experience in working as a music teacher and spoke about how his position as the music teacher slowly devolved into an amalgamation of other roles throughout the school due to a staff shortage. He urged the committee to pass HB 69.

[6:58:17 PM](#)

JUDITH ECKERT, Former Teacher, Homer School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that there is a need for community & cultural education that might lead to students developing more critical thinking schools. She said that school districts are wasting money on digital and online curriculum.

[7:00:46 PM](#)

CRAIG FREDEEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He compared the cost-savings of a flat funded BSA to the cost-savings of deferred maintenance on an automobile. He said that Alaska is "on the verge of a constitutional crisis" and emphasized the need to increase the BSA immediately.

[7:02:57 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 7:02 p.m. to 7:08 p.m.

[7:08:30 PM](#)

BETH SHORT-ROADS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She challenged the legislators who oppose raising the BSA and asked if they truly believe that they are doing what is right for Alaska's schoolchildren.

[7:10:44 PM](#)

PHYLLIS CLOUGH, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that raising the BSA would give students around Alaska the resources they need to succeed in their learning environments.

[7:12:16 PM](#)

GARA BRIDWELL, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that several members of her family who are educators are considering leaving education or even leaving Alaska due to the routine underfunding of public education in Alaska.

[7:13:41 PM](#)

ASHLEY MINAEI, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that her family moved back to Alaska because she wanted to give her children a rich and fulfilling childhood like the

one that she had, with Alaska's public school system being a part of that. She explained that she has stopped trying to convince her friends to stay in Alaska in the face of its failing public school system.

[7:16:43 PM](#)

CHRISTINA RIED, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She explained that she is working on her Masters of Education with the intention of working and living in Fairbanks but is unsure of that future if the BSA and Alaska's public schools are continually underfunded.

[7:18:56 PM](#)

BEN MUSE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that Alaska cannot grow and thrive unless it can guarantee people a strong public education.

[7:20:03 PM](#)

HAZEL CZEAMECKI, Second Grader, Bear Valley Elementary School, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she was very proud that her school, Bear Valley Elementary, won a blue ribbon award for its excellence. She said that she has to wait in line to get help from her teacher. She said that it is commonplace for there to be no room on the rug when the teacher is teaching, and it can be hard to hear when she has to sit farther away. She very kindly asked the Alaska State Legislature to pass HB 69.

[7:22:20 PM](#)

SARAH MCCONNELL, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that Fairbanks will continue to decline in its growth if the BSA fails to be increased.

[7:24:44 PM](#)

MARA KENDALL, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she is unsure if it is even viable to live, work, and raise a family in Alaska if the BSA's current funding scenario continues.

[7:26:17 PM](#)

ERIC FILARDI, Principal, Mendenhall River Community School, testified in support of HB 69. He said that his school is

facing unprecedented challenges due to inadequate funding and said that certain positions were filled by emergency firefighters in the previous school year. He explained that the lack of a permanent BSA increase has created a cycle of instability in school district's budgetary processes.

[7:28:43 PM](#)

WINTER MARSHALL-ALLEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She echoed the previous student testifier's remarks and emphasized that she is having trouble meeting even the barest minimum legal requirements of her students that are on IEP's.

[7:30:53 PM](#)

MARY FENNO, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the BSA is the underpinning of Alaska's school districts and must be properly funded for the state to survive. She encouraged the legislators to stand up to Governor Dunleavy if he vetoes HB 69.

[7:33:14 PM](#)

TESSA POLASEK, Student, Juneau School District, testified in support of HB 69. She shared an anecdote that one of her teachers has to use a step stool just to speak to their oversized class. She said that an increased BSA would have a positive impact on Alaska.

[7:34:54 PM](#)

ARIEL STARBUCK, Teacher, Sitka School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said, "This is not about politics; this is about priorities." She said that the time to delay the raising of the BSA is no longer and encouraged the committee to pass HB 69.

[7:37:00 PM](#)

KATE JOHNSON, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she is tired of testifying year after year in support of public education and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[7:37:53 PM](#)

BERT HOUGHTALING, representing self, testified opposition to HB 69. He shared a series of numbers related to public education funding in Alaska and said to "never forget that the [funding] increases that the special interests are demanding here today have not improved the overall outcomes of our students." He said that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) policies have "only compounded the problems that the Alaska education system is having."

[7:40:20 PM](#)

KRISTI DOWNING, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that Fairbanks schools are currently facing unprecedented cuts to their budgets and emphasized that HB 69 would allow schools in Fairbanks and around Alaska to evolve and stay relevant in the face of declining funding and inflationary pressures.

[7:42:30 PM](#)

AMY AINSLIE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She echoed the comments of previous testifiers in support of HB 69 and urged the committee to pass HB 69.

[7:45:11 PM](#)

EVELYN TREFON, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She explained that her school district does not have music teachers, school nurses, or physical education teachers and has cut the length of their school year by 20 days to "make ends meet."

[7:47:42 PM](#)

BRIDGET HITCHCOCK, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She explained that the Sitka School District lost 18 teaching positions in the previous school year and emphasized the need for vital teaching positions to allow for students to flourish.

[7:49:56 PM](#)

ALEXANDER ROSALES, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 69. He shared a series of figures related to student performance and challenges the idea that an increase in the BSA would have a positive effect on students.

[7:51:54 PM](#)

KEN HUCKABEE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 69. He echoed the testimony of the person before him and said that the cost of living will become unaffordable if the Alaska State Legislature passes HB 69. He said that Alaska "does not have the money" for HB 69.

[7:54:07 PM](#)

BRUCE OWENS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 69. He said that Alaska ranks sixth in the nation for spending per student, yet ranks at the bottom of many educational performance charts. He said that Alaska "does not have the money" for HB 69.

[7:56:29 PM](#)

JEANNE GERHARDT-CYRUS, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that rural schools in Alaska face an impossible task of providing a quality education in the face of a consistently declining BSA. She explained a series of negative impacts that are a result of a flat-funded BSA and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[7:58:36 PM](#)

MOLLY HICKOX, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She painted a picture of how the elementary school she works at is negatively affected by a poorly funded BSA and emphasized the potential positive impacts of any increase in the BSA.

[8:00:57 PM](#)

VALERIE LUKIN, Teacher, Kodiak Island Borough School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that her local school district is facing major budget cuts in the coming year and shared that she witnessed schoolchildren walking into school crying because they were worried that their school might get closed. She said that there will be bigger class sizes and fewer teachers in the coming year if HB 69 doesn't become law.

[8:02:58 PM](#)

JEANINE COSTELLO, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the children of Alaska are its greatest asset and emphasized that those children put their trust into the

adults of Alaska to provide them a quality public education. She urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[8:04:56 PM](#)

BRENT JOHNSON, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He said that it is incredibly important that Alaska inspire its students to become future teachers and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[8:06:07 PM](#)

MARK SOMERVILLE, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. He shared a list of school expenditures that are challenging to address while operating with a consistently underfunded BSA.

[8:07:44 PM](#)

BEVERLY O'DONNELL, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She explained that her local school in Salcha was recently selected as one of five schools that are proposed to be closed in the coming school year in order to meet budgetary demands. She said that her school district jobs pay consistently 30 percent less an hour than private jobs and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[8:11:00 PM](#)

DENISE TEMPLETON, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 69. She said, "Parents are pulling students out of school because of books that a child should not read and because they aren't excelling in math, reading, and civics." She opined that [Alaska]n is not hurting from a lack of BSA, pointing out that the state spends the highest in the nation on the BSA while ranking 49th in academic performance.

[8:13:02 PM](#)

KELLY KING, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She said that she has supported thousands of students in Alaska who did not have access to stable housing and said that the number one indicator of someone's ability to break the cycle of houselessness is whether or not they obtain a high school diploma. She emphasized that students in her school district are able to break the cycle of houselessness through the public

school system and shared a series of positive impacts of an increase BSA.

[8:15:04 PM](#)

PAUL RIOUX, Member, Sitka Schoolboard, testified in support of HB 69. He said that an investment in education funding is an investment in the future of Alaska and said that there is a clear need for an increase in the BSA.

[8:16:28 PM](#)

JAN CAROLYN HARDY, State President, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Retirees, testified in support of HB 69. She emphasized the importance of viewing any investment in education as an investment in the future of Alaska. She thanked all of the young testifiers who put their voice forward during this committee meeting and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[8:18:21 PM](#)

PATRICK MAYER, Superintendent, Alaskan Gateway School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that inflation has had a tremendously negative impact on a BSA that has not been positively funded in over a decade. He pointed out that a short-funded BSA is largely to blame for Alaska's labor shortage and outmigration crisis. He said that Alaska "cannot cut its way to greatness" and urged the committee's support of HB 69.

[8:20:46 PM](#)

TERRI WALKER, Superintendent, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, testified in support of HB 69. She said that the only access to education in her community is the public school and stressed that every budget cut, staffing shortage, and outdated resource directly impacts each and every student and person in that school's community.

[8:23:22 PM](#)

ZUZANNA BOBINSKI, representing self, testified in support of HB 69. She expressed her support for HB 69.

[8:24:09 PM](#)

DUNNINGTON BABB, Parent, Aquarian Charter School, testified in support of HB 69. He echoed previous testifiers in support of the proposed legislation and added that charter schools are in just as great a need of an increase to the BSA as public schools.

[8:26:39 PM](#)

KELLY LESSONS, Member, Anchorage Schoolboard, testified in support of HB 69. She said that "time is of the essence" in the passage of HB 69 because the Anchorage School District and other school districts around Alaska are nearing the release of their preliminary budgets and could use the increased BSA to properly budget for the coming year.

[8:28:57 PM](#)

JESSE HENSEL, Teacher, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, testified in support of HB 69. He said that he is potentially facing a closure of the school that he works in if HB 69 were to fail to become law.

[8:30:37 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 69.

[8:31:41 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that HB 69 was held over.

[8:31:43 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.