

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 27, 2025
1:08 p.m.

1:08:22 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Senator Merrick called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Mike Cronk
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Kelly Merrick

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair
Senator James Kaufman

ALSO PRESENT

Lon Garrison, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, Juneau; Tom Klaameyer, President, NEA Alaska, Anchorage; Rod Arno, Friends of West Susitna, Palmer; Katie Judge, Self, Anchorage.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Donalee Jardin, Self, Anchorage; Jay Bechtol, self, Homer; Shawn Grimes, self, Homer; Sean Case, Chief, Anchorage Police Department, Board Member, Blood Bank Alaska, Anchorage; Charles Coulson, Board of Directors, Blood Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Matt Hemmer, Self, Anchorage; Michele Girault, Executive Director, Hope Community Resources, Anchorage; Trevor Storrs, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alaska Children's Trust, Anchorage; Richelle Johnson, Blood Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Donald McClintock, Chairman, Blood Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Amy Rayess, Self, Anchorage; Pollybeth Odom, Self, Matsu; Rachael Posey, Self, Anchorage; Amy Simpson, Executive Director, Programs for Infants and Children, Anchorage; Stephanie Berglund, Chief Executive Officer, Thread Alaska,

Anchorage; Sarah Lewis, Self, Fairbanks; Julia Luey, President/CEO, Volunteers of America, Anchorage; Amanda Garcia, Co-Owner, Salmonberry Tours, Anchorage; Maeve Spiegler, Self, Kenai; Barb Dahl, Self, Kenai; Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director, Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education, Anchor Point; Amber Chapin, Self, Anchorage; Joanna Cahoon, Self, Anchorage; Cindy Harris, Board Member, Alzheimer Association Alaska Chapter, Soldotna; Ben Boettger, Cook Inlet Keeper, Soldotna; James Patkotak, Self, Utqiagvik; Silas Wade, Denali Family Services, Anchorage; Dan Tucker, Self, Wasilla; Christy Gomez, Self, Tyonek; Dan Bigley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Denali Family Services, Anchorage; Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Self, Kiana; Ron Meehan, Director of Government Affairs, Food Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Cody Chipp, Self, Anchorage; Ladawn Druce, Self, Sterling; Niamh Dardis, Director, Reach Infant Learning Program, Juneau; Brandy Harty, Self, Fairbanks; Rachel Blakeslee, Self, Anchorage; Jessica Noble, Self, Anchorage; Chris Schutte, Self, Anchorage; Bridger Reed-Lewis, Self, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

SB 56 APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET; CAP; SUPP

SB 56 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 57 APPROP: CAPITAL/SUPPLEMENTAL/FUNDS

SB 57 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 58 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

SB 58 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 59 APPROP: SUPPLEMENTAL; FUND CAP

SB 59 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY: ANCHORAGE, MATANUSKA-SUSITNA VALLEY,
KENAI PENINSULA

Senator Merrick discussed the agenda.

#sb56

#sb57

#sb58

#sb59

SENATE BILL NO. 56

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making reappropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 57

"An Act making appropriations, including capital appropriations and other appropriations; making reappropriations; making appropriations to capitalize funds; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 58

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

SENATE BILL NO. 59

"An Act making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations to capitalize funds; and providing for an effective date."

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: ANCHORAGE, MATANUSKA-SUSITNA VALLEY, KENAI PENINSULA

[1:09:21 PM](#)

LON GARRISON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS, JUNEAU, testified in support of increased public education funding. He explained that Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) was a statewide institution representing the interests of 53 school districts across

the state. He relayed that one of the top three priorities was to increase sufficient and sustained public education funding. He cited that in the previous fall, the Legislative Finance Division (LFD) had estimated that an inflation adjusted Base Student Allocation (BSA) for FY 25 would be \$1,808 higher than the current amount. He acknowledged that the amount was much higher and unlikely to be considered in the current year. He asserted that there was a clear link between school funding and student outcomes. He made note of school districts cutting programs, increasing class sizes, reducing teachers, and decreasing extra-curricular opportunities. He mentioned the challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. He mentioned a lack of resources in counseling, tutoring, and student support services.

[1:12:05 PM](#)

TOM KLAAMEYER, PRESIDENT, NEA ALASKA, ANCHORAGE, spoke in support of increased funding for education. He thought the state's public schools were in crisis and experiencing the most challenging conditions he had seen in his almost 30-year career in education. He contended the districts all over the state were closing schools, which could cause great harm to communities, particularly in rural areas. He mentioned reduced student support, eliminated programs, and increased class sizes. He cited that military leadership had indicated that Alaska had started to gain a reputation with military families as a less desirable assignment because of a diminishment of the public school system. He mentioned he was a teacher and United States Air Force veteran. He understood that the state was facing a significant fiscal challenge. He mentioned the need for funding for school major maintenance and pupil transportation.

[1:14:26 PM](#)

ROD ARNO, FRIENDS OF WEST SUSITNA, PALMER, testified in support of the governor's proposed budget of \$2.5 million for the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) to continue working on permitting for a road. He relayed that he had represented outdoors people of the state for the previous three and a half decades. He was on the board for the Friends of West Susitna, which had worked closely with AIDEA as well as with former Governor Sean Parnell for getting access to the West Susitna. The group

had worked with AIDEA on a multi-use road for all Alaskans. He thought there was an opportunity for the state to have a road on state lands without federal oversight beyond the environmental study.

[1:16:09 PM](#)

DONALEE JARDIN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of increased BSA funding. She contended that children were the state's future work force, and that the community and the state all benefited from educated children. She emphasized that the state must follow the constitution and provide adequate funding.

[1:17:05 PM](#)

JAY BECHTOL, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for behavioral health services. He worked with South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services. He mentioned the state's high youth suicide rate. He thought there was a mental health crisis and that state funding had not kept pace with the cost of providing mental health services. His agency provided services to about 400 clients annually, and 250 individuals from the community. He cited that while expenses had gone up by about 8 percent, revenue had only increased about 3 percent.

[1:18:48 PM](#)

SHAWN GRIMES, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of \$300,000 in funding for planning and design for erosion mediation in the City of Homer's FY 26 capital request. He owned and operated The Tackle Shack on Homer Spit Road. He discussed a storm which had caused damage to his property. He cited dropping of the beach level by four feet due to rapid and ongoing erosion. He had personally invested \$70,000 into reinforcing the shoreline and foundation improvements. He was concerned about the immediate wellbeing of his livelihood and assets. He shared concerns about the local economy, beach access, and overall quality of life. He mentioned thousands of visitors per year, which was part of Homer's economy.

[1:21:28 PM](#)

SEAN CASE, CHIEF, ANCHORAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT, BOARD MEMBER, BLOOD BANK ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference),

spoke in support of the capital budget that included the remaining \$500,000 for completion of the donor testing lab for the Blood Bank of Alaska (BBA). He contended that the blood bank played a crucial role in the emergency response system and saved lives. He mentioned the importance of the security of the blood supply in the state. He described using blood testing resources out of state and the challenges. He emphasized that the donor testing lab would promote self-sufficiency for the state. He mentioned the access challenges in rural areas.

[1:23:04 PM](#)

CHARLES COULSON, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BLOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$500,000 in funding for BBA. He relayed that BBA was very close to getting donor testing functional in the state, and the last \$500,000 was needed to complete the project and addressed what he considered the largest risk to the state's blood supply.

[1:24:27 PM](#)

MATT HEMMER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of increased funding for public schools. He supported increased funding as a matter of fiscal responsibility and public safety. He thought the state was in a "pay now or pay later" situation and posited that it cost far less to educate a child than to imprison an adult. He thought the state faced a serious workforce shortage. He mentioned that teacher vacancies were rising. He cited that 24 percent of the state's workforce was filled by non-residents. He thought education supported a home-grown workforce as well as the economy. He thought good schools attracted and retained families. He mentioned the state's shrinking population. He mentioned the constitutional obligation for the state to support public schools. He cited that 77 percent of Alaskan supported increased education funding.

[1:26:48 PM](#)

MICHELE GIRAULT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOPE COMMUNITY RESOURCES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported \$75,000 in funding for the Deaf Navigator Program, and an increase of \$5 million for the Infant Learning Program. She relayed that Hope Community Resources provided support to

individuals with disabilities. She relayed that she was the board chair for the Key Coalition of Alaska. She discussed the Deaf Navigator Program, which had never received a funding increase since its inception. She noted that Alaska had the most restrictive eligibility criteria for early intervention services. She noted that Medicaid services were continually "on the chopping block," and it was important to invest in early intervention services in order to see a decrease in demand as children grew. She referenced data related to early interventions.

[1:29:11 PM](#)

TREVOR STORRS, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported fully funding Alaska's Head Start programs. He explained that the Alaska Children's Trust focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. He cited that Alaska had one of the highest rates of child maltreatment in the nation. He supported increased funding for early intervention services through the Alaska Infant Learning Program, additional \$7.5 million in the base for the Childcare Grant Program, additional \$5 million for child advocacy centers, and a permanent increase to the BSA.

[1:30:39 PM](#)

RICHELLE JOHNSON, BLOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a \$500,000 appropriation for BBA to complete the donor testing lab. She recounted that in 2022 and 2024 the blood bank had received two appropriations that totaled approximately \$35 million. She thought it had been clear that the need for the blood bank to have its own donor testing in the state had grown over the previous several years. She thought having testing of the state's blood supply hosted out of state was one of the weak points of the organization's operational resiliency. She mentioned difficulties with airport closures, severe weather, and a recent ransomware attack causing serious delays in donor testing. She noted that BBA was the sole blood and blood product provider in the state.

[1:33:06 PM](#)

DONALD MCCLINTOCK, CHAIRMAN, BLOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support

\$500,000 for BBA to finish its facility. He mentioned the comments of previous testifiers. He mentioned serving rural Alaska.

[1:34:51 PM](#)

AMY RAYESS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of an increase to the BSA of at least \$1,000. She had three children in the Anchorage School District (ASD). She stressed the importance of public education.

[1:35:37 PM](#)

POLLYBETH ODOM, SELF, MATSU (via teleconference), spoke in support of increased funding for behavioral health services, specifically for \$30,000. She asserted that the state had violated Regulation 7 AAC 145.580 with delays of over 2.5 years which had caused loss of revenue for providers.

[1:36:56 PM](#)

RACHAEL POSEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of education funding. She thought districts were in crisis. She had two students in ASD. She mentioned education funding not keeping up with inflation. She mentioned ballooning class sizes and the loss of extra-curricular activities. She knew multiple families that had left the state over concerns with the quality of education. She urged the legislature to increase the BSA by at least \$1,000. She thought the investment would serve all Alaskans and support the economy.

[1:38:30 PM](#)

AMY SIMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROGRAMS FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported expanded Alaska Infant Learning Program eligibility for children with developmental delays to get help earlier to improve educational trajectories. She was a member of the Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group, the Alaska Interagency Coordinating Council, and the Alaska Infant Learning Providers Association. She cited a study that indicated that 46 percent of children that received early intervention services did not need costly special education services beyond kindergarten.

Ms. Simpson cited that currently, children in Alaska were eligible to receive services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with a 50 percent delay. She supported a change to a 25 percent delay for eligibility and estimated an increase of 77 percent in eligible children. The increase would result in a need for a 77 percent increase in ILP funding, which equated to approximately \$5.7 million. She believed the investment would save about \$34 million in annual special education costs to the state.

[1:40:44 PM](#)

STEPHANIE BERGLUND, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THREAD ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a minimum of \$20 million for operational grants for childcare programs and early educator retention. She was a member of Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group. She cited that there were currently over 23,000 children without access to quality childcare and early childhood education services so parents could work. She emphasized that childcare was necessary infrastructure. She contended that childcare continued to be a crisis across the state and needed to be stabilized and expanded across the state. She mentioned the closure of the last childcare center that offered infant care in Eagle River. She stressed the importance of early learning and its effect on educational success.

[1:42:47 PM](#)

SARAH LEWIS, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of a permanent \$1,000 increase to the BSA. She shared a personal story related to her child not receiving necessary educational support. She mentioned the Alaska Reads Act and mentioned tutoring programs that had been cut. She discussed spending personal funds on private tutors. She noted that her daughter had yet to receive support from the school district.

[1:44:51 PM](#)

JULIA LUEY, PRESIDENT/CEO, VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported a \$15 million to \$30 million increase to the operating budget for behavioral health. She noted that Volunteers of America (VOA) provided the full continuum of care for youth, young adults, and their families. She mentioned the residential treatment

program in Eagle River, which served youth from every district in Alaska and was the only non-tribal residential treatment center operating in the state. With the increase, VOA would strive to expand and sustain services in response to the state's youth mental health crisis. She cited that the crisis was growing, and recent data showed that one in five of Alaska's youth attempted suicide. She mentioned increased overdose rates. She noted that behavioral health rate rebasing was over two and a half years behind schedule, which had resulted in losses to providers.

[1:47:14 PM](#)

AMANDA GARCIA, CO-OWNER, SALMONBERRY TOURS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of investment in the statewide tourism marketing program. She discussed her tour company, which employed 23 year-round employees and 36 seasonal employees. She cited that since 2020 the company was the concessionaire for a state historical park. She thought ATIA was important for Alaska to compete in the global market as a destination. She discussed the importance of marketing as a development tool. She described tourism as an economic pillar of the state which generated \$5.6 billion in economic impact. She claimed that for every advertising dollar spent, it generated \$370 in tourism dollars spent in Alaska business. She mentioned over \$150 million in revenue to the state.

[1:49:16 PM](#)

MAEVE SPIEGLER, SELF, KENAI (via teleconference), supported \$575,000 in funding for environmental modifications [for individuals with disabilities.] She relayed that she worked at the Independent Living Center working with children with disabilities. She worked with many individuals that were housebound. She discussed the need for personal home modifications and mentioned safety concerns. She relayed a personal story of her family's house modifications that allowed her brother to remain at home as long as possible.

[1:51:05 PM](#)

KATIE JUDGE, SELF, ANCHORAGE, spoke in support of funding for the school district. She had three children enrolled in ASD. She discussed utilizing the school nurse and loss of funding. She discussed her children's access to extra-curricular activities, art, and sports programs possible

with school funding. She was concerned with cuts to middle and high school sports and increased class sizes.

[1:53:33 PM](#)

BARB DAHL, SELF, KENAI (via teleconference), supported \$2.7 million funding for the Division of Agriculture. She was on the Alaska Farm Bureau Board and was the owner of Northern Bloom Peonies. She thought there should be a Department of Agriculture, which she thought would be helpful in many areas and was a low budget request.

[1:54:53 PM](#)

PATRICK REINHART, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION, ANCHOR POINT (via teleconference), supported \$5.7 million to support expansion of Infant Learning Programs, a \$480,000 increment for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), a \$75,000 increment to support the Deaf Navigator Program in the Department of Health, and funding a functional needs coordinator for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Emergency Operations. She mentioned that there was a Disability Services Advisory Committee, which he thought needed someone identified that only addressed the emergency needs of people with disabilities across the state. He supported \$250,000 in capital funding for the Human Services Transportation Grant Program under Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. He supported match funding of \$1 million to go towards providers to meet federally required matching funds.

[1:57:20 PM](#)

AMBER CHAPIN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a \$1,000 per-student increase to the BSA and increased funding for early childhood development. She was a registered pediatric nurse and mother of two children in ASD. She cared for acutely sick children.

[1:58:42 PM](#)

JOANNA CAHOON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a \$1,000 increase to the BSA. She had two children in ASD. She thought schools were in

crisis. She emphasized that the state could not attract or keep families if its schools were failing.

1:59:39 PM

CINDY HARRIS, BOARD MEMBER, ALZHEIMER ASSOCIATION ALASKA CHAPTER, SOLDOTNA (via teleconference), spoke in support of increasing funding for the Adult Day Services Grant, and increased funding for dementia education and prevention. She relayed that she had lost her mother and her four sisters to Alzheimer's and dementia. She discussed challenges for caregivers and the need for respite care. She supported increased funding for dementia education. She cited that Alaska had a high rate of dementia.

2:01:53 PM

BEN BOETTGER, COOK INLET KEEPER, SOLDOTNA (via teleconference), did not support appropriations to AIDEA.

2:03:37 PM

JAMES PATKOTAK, SELF, UTQUIAGVIK (via teleconference), testified in support of an upgrade of the Alaska Airlines terminal in Utquigvik (Barrow). He thought people knew how small the terminal was. He emphasized the need for an upgrade to the terminal. He was concerned about disease and germs in the terminal.

2:05:09 PM

SILAS WADE, DENALI FAMILY SERVICES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported increased behavioral health funding. He had worked in a children's shelter. He mentioned Medicaid reimbursement. He discussed attempted suicide by young people and emphasized that there was a mental health crisis.

2:06:51 PM

DAN TUCKER, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of increased funding for Adult Day Services grants and dementia education and prevention. He advocated for increased funding for respite and Alzheimer's prevention. He mentioned his personal experience with family with Alzheimer's. He stressed the need for increased

adult day service grants and the importance of dementia education and prevention.

[2:08:41 PM](#)

CHRISTY GOMEZ, SELF, TYONEK (via teleconference), spoke in support of an increase to the BSA. She was the principal of a school in Tyonek. She discussed unsustainable funding. She thought a BSA increase was necessary to keep pace with inflation and also ensure quality education was being provided under the state constitution. She thought well-funded schools led to better outcomes and a stronger workforce. She thought that without adequate funding, it was impossible to provide equitable opportunities for all students. She stressed that education was a necessity rather than a luxury. She contended that every child deserved access to a quality education despite the zip code.

[2:10:38 PM](#)

DAN BIGLEY, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DENALI FAMILY SERVICES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in favor of a \$30 million increase to behavioral health services. He worked for the largest provider of therapeutic foster care in the state, which also provided out-patient behavioral health services. He thought Alaska was experiencing a youth mental health crisis and pointed out the state's very high youth suicide rate. He mentioned rising rates of death by overdose and the importance of access to help. He cited that providers were shrinking in size and mentioned low staffing due to low pay and poor benefits.

[2:12:29 PM](#)

JEANNE GERHARDT-CYRUS, SELF, KIANA (via teleconference), supported an increase to the BSA. She discussed challenges with schools in rural areas. She mentioned the distance between schools in her area. She supported the \$480,000 increment for SESA and mentioned she was on the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education. She mentioned the decreasing state population and the challenge of providing for a smaller group of students with special needs. She mentioned the importance of early intervention.

[2:14:19 PM](#)

RON MEEHAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, FOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in favor of funding for school nutrition. He noted that he was manager of the Alaska Food Coalition, which represented more than 215 food banks, food pantries, tribal entities, faith-based groups, school districts, and more. He thanked the committee for its support of the anti-hunger network. He mentioned funding that had been provided for infrastructure that expanded access and capacity. He mentioned the importance of student and child nutrition and cited research that showed students that received food at school had better health and outcomes.

[2:16:39 PM](#)

CODY CHIPP, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported additional behavioral health services funding. He mentioned that he was a licensed psychologist. He described program closures. He described program degradation due to diminished funding. He mentioned kids in the Office of Children's Services that were not receiving proper behavioral healthcare. He mentioned previous testimony regarding the tragedies of youth suicide and overdose.

[2:18:48 PM](#)

LADAWN DRUCE, SELF, STERLING (via teleconference), testified in support of an increase to the BSA of at least \$1,000. She relayed that she and her husband were both retired educators and residents of over 30 years. She described a decade of school funding not keeping up with inflation. She mentioned Ms. Gomez's testimony. and the testimony of former student Mr. Meehan, who had testified about school lunches. She emphasized that one could see a difference in students that received proper nutrition through free school lunches.

[2:21:04 PM](#)

NIAMH DARDIS, DIRECTOR, REACH INFANT LEARNING PROGRAM, JUNEAU (via teleconference), supported expanding the Infant Learning Program eligibility. She discussed the importance of early intervention. She cited that 46 percent of children with early intervention did not need special education services beyond kindergarten. It was estimated that the eligibility adjustment would allow 77 percent more

children to access services in Alaska. She discussed long term savings in special education services. She mentioned that the eligibility expansion was a priority of the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education, Key Campaign, the Alaska Infant Learning Program Association, and others.

[2:22:59 PM](#)

BRANDY HARTY, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of a BSA increase of at least \$1,000 and increased funding for pupil transportation. She noted that she served on the Fairbanks North Star Borough Board of Education. She discussed decisions to close three schools for a total of seven school closures in recent years. She discussed cuts to music and extracurricular programs. She discussed the local contribution and mentioned small communities and the way federal impact aid was utilized.

[2:25:26 PM](#)

RACHEL BLAKESLEE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported a \$1,000 increase to the BSA. She was the parent of a kindergarten student in ASD. She discussed a decade of state education funding not keeping up with inflation. She mentioned the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers. She thought underfunded schools were driving families away from the state and accelerating economic decline while increasing reliance on a non-resident work force. She mentioned Alaska's high cost of living. She asserted that a system that was not well funded would not have good performance outcomes.

[2:27:35 PM](#)

JESSICA NOBLE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), strongly supported an increase of \$1,000 to the BSA. She had two children in ASD. She did not think test scores were not the only indicator of a successful education program. She wanted the governor to focus on teacher-student ratios. She supported a balanced budget. She did not support unsustainable out-sized Permanent Fund Dividends. She thought the state needed to work towards economic stability.

[2:29:03 PM](#)

CHRIS SCHUTTE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a \$1,000 increase to the BSA. He was a member of Dads for Schools. He thought increasing the BSA would be an investment in the state's future. He was a small business owner and commented on the impact of the school system creating the next generation of employees and leaders. He contended that underfunding schools accelerated population decline and hindered the economic growth of the state.

[2:30:53 PM](#)

BRIDGER REED-LEWIS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported increased funding for disability support services. He discussed the importance of adequate care for those with disabilities. He discussed his personal experiences. He thought cuts to services contributed to homelessness. He mentioned the importance of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

#

ADJOURNMENT

[2:33:38 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m.