



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

June 23, 2023

Letter to Anchorage Legislative Delegation
RE: Special Session

Dear Anchorage Delegation,

Thank you for the historic vote of support to adequately fund public education during this year's legislative session! Unfortunately, the Governor slashed the much-needed funds in half and put Alaska's public education system at risk of failure. We need your support more than ever now. **Please call a special legislative session to ensure adequate funding for Alaska's schools.**

While ASD has a balanced budget for FY 2023-24, it is reliant on \$65 million in one-time funds and includes an increase in class sizes at all grade levels. Looking ahead to FY 2024-25, ASD will have a structural deficit of roughly \$90 million, hindering ASD's ability to recruit and retain its educators, and to support the increased costs associated with implementing the Alaska Reads Act. Given the uncertainty of the State funding of education, ASD may use the \$25 million in one-time funds it expects to receive in FY 2023-24 to help offset the budget deficit in the following year.

We do not take this request to call a special session lightly as we understand the disruption that is caused to your work schedules and daily lives, however, the urgency to address education funding cannot be overstated. Even if action is eventually taken during the typical legislative budget process to provide additional funds in FY 2024-25, there will be a significant negative impact to districts while State budgets are being deliberated.

ASD prepares its budget for the School Board to approve in February, which is then sent to the Municipality to be approved in March in accordance with City charter. More importantly, staffing and hiring for the following year is done in March and April and ASD is competing with the rest of the nation for highly qualified staff. If ASD is forced to reduce about 650 staff based on a \$65 million projected shortfall (\$90 million structural deficit less \$25 million carried over to the next year from one-time money), that would halt hiring any new staff to replace retiring staff and also trigger layoffs. Even if the State provided an increase to funding in the typical May/June time frame, the damage to districts will have already been done. Our best teachers and staff will have already found jobs in other states or districts or will have left the profession altogether. Trying to hire staff back in June or July is problematic as our most qualified staff have easily found other employment opportunities as teachers are in short supply nationwide.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Anchorage School Board Margo Bellamy, President

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The disruptive veto decision unnecessarily causes stress on an already vulnerable public education system. Alaska state law is clear on the roles and responsibility of funding Alaska's public education system. Adequately funding public education in a special session is the type of leadership needed to help Alaska's students right now. Alaska's workforce future starts with public education.

Again, thank you for the tremendous support you showed this legislative session. It's deeply disturbing that the governor didn't do the same. We know there are many more steps that can be taken to improve the process and help ensure an excellent education for all our students.

Please take the step and call a special session.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margo Bellamy".

Margo Bellamy, Anchorage School Board President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jharrett Bryantt".

Jharrett Bryantt, Ed.D., ASD Superintendent