



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

Sean Dusek, Superintendent of Schools

148 North Binkley Street Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7520

Phone (907) 714-8888 Fax (907) 262-9132

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Senate Finance Committee
Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-chair
Senator Anna MacKinnon, Co-chair
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senators Hoffman and MacKinnon:

On behalf of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), thank you for the opportunity to speak to Senate Bill 22. Clearly, the State needs to make difficult decisions regarding the budget. I ask you to make these decisions as soon as possible and to support, at a minimum, the current education funding levels.

KPBSD has recently made several difficult decisions. These include reconfiguring schools, restructuring our student transportation system in the southern peninsula, significantly reducing district office administration and services, and most significantly, reducing existing classroom staff.

At the recent town hall meeting in Soldotna, it was clear that many on the Kenai Peninsula are proud of this school district's accomplishments. They are prepared to pay for essential services with the belief that education is the most important one.

KPBSD is a high performing district that represents this state well. We testified to the House and Senate Education Committees last month regarding our results and innovations. We are committed to improving upon these good results. Funding reductions put our high performance and improvement efforts at risk. If the legislature makes education funding reductions, we will be forced to make deeper, across the board cuts which will negatively impact students.

In addition, the Senate Finance Committee's stance on funding reductions to education has created greater uncertainty for staff members. Without definitive education budget recommendations from your committee, we are currently unable to offer contracts to non-tenured teachers, in which we have a significant investment. Further delay will force newer staff to seek positions elsewhere. This will negatively impact students and create increases in the professional development costs required to prepare newly hired employees.

Please keep in mind that the current discussion on education funding reductions does not mitigate the largest cost driver in our district - health care. This should be a primary focus for legislators as this cost far out paces the normal rate of inflation and is crippling business and public entities across the state.

In sum, I encourage you to decide on the funding level of education quickly and to maintain, at least, the current funding levels so that our district will not have to make further reductions that will clearly negatively impact students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you need further information, please contact me.

Sincerely



Sean Dusek
Superintendent of Schools

Cc: Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Gary Stevens