



# 2018 Joint Position Statements

***Adequate funding for public education is our number one priority.***

## **Priority Funding for Education**

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the true cost of an adequate education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding is crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

## **Revenue Enhanced Fiscal Plan Imperative**

Alaska's most important need is to immediately develop and implement a long-term multi-revenue fiscal plan, based on the following facts from the Alaska Legislative Finance Division:

1. State expenditures have been cut by \$3.5 billion (44.5%) since FY13, to a level equivalent to FY07.
2. FY17 revenue supported 46% of FY17 expenditures.
3. Budget reserves will be depleted by FY19.

We strongly oppose cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

## **Early Childhood Education**

ACSA believes in a continuum of quality education, which supports providing a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students from preschool through the elementary years. Research clearly demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement across all demographics. ACSA believes funding early childhood education must be a priority to increase long-term success for all children and meet the constitutional obligation to provide equal protection under the law inclusive of educational opportunities.

## **Career and Technical Education**

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional development and management between the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOL) with educators and industry based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, regional and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving on-time graduation rates, higher career earnings and decreasing dropout percentages, while also offering more dual credit opportunities.

## **Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators**

A quality education for Alaska's students is directly related to the level of effectiveness of Alaska's educators. ACSA strongly encourages the development of comprehensive statewide programs to prepare, attract and retain high quality educators and professionals, especially in the areas of Special Education, STEM and Leadership. ACSA further advocates for support to enhance existing professional learning programs for all educators to improve their practice to meet the individual needs of all students. We believe that with strong new teacher mentoring and professional learning opportunities for current educators and a comprehensive recruitment effort through K-12, Alaska Teacher Placement and the University of Alaska, we can meet the growing demands for more high quality educators in our state.

Alaska needs innovative, alternative pathways to attract teaching and leadership talent to the education profession and address unique circumstances. Statewide teacher mentoring and administrative coaching is needed. This must include development of an Education Career Pathway for our current students to explore within the K-12 system. Also, alternative qualifications, retire/rehire provisions, teacher retirement incentives, and an examination of the current retirement system must be considered.

## **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - State**

Support the Department of Education and Early Development to redefine the state accountability system while ensuring that local control is honored. The new accountability system, should provide stakeholders with multiple indicators to accurately and effectively monitor student, school and district performance, focusing on improving student learning and achievement through critical thinking and problem solving, while providing stakeholders information to improve quality educational opportunities. The system should ensure the statewide assessment is one of several valuable indicators of success. We support an assessment that meets federal requirements and student learning needs.

### Other State Issues; e.g. Workman's Comp, PERS/TRS:

- The state should continue efforts to control the cost of Worker's Compensation claims, including adoption of medical treatment guidelines, improved management of claims and an improved Reemployment Benefits process.
- We strongly oppose efforts to shift PERS and TRS costs from the state to employers. Policy for termination studies and "below the floor" charges should be reexamined. These cost shifts are "back door" cuts to school district budgets.
- We encourage solutions to the escalating costs of health insurance in the state, including exploring the viability of multiple options such as a possible state health care authority, revision of the 80th percentile rule and appropriate controls of the cost of medivacs.
- We strongly encourage action to ensure that quality mental health services are available to support all of our schools.
- We support continued collaboration with the State Board of Education and Early Development's efforts to move forward with the Alaska Education Challenge.

## JPS Federal Issues 2017-2018

### Forest Receipts (Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act)

- ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the federal government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership.
- We desire a long term solution that will allow all aspects of what constitutes responsible forest management while comprehensively renewing the forest products industry in the impacted areas. We request that funding be provided to impacted communities during the interim while a new revenue stream is being established.
- SRSCSDA payments have not been received by districts since FY2015 yet these resources remain critically important to 24 of Alaska's 54 school districts. If not reauthorized, Alaska will lose over \$10 million in revenues mostly tied to education. Since there is a year lag time in receiving these funds for most districts, a reduction in funding of this magnitude will create hardships on students that are both significant and unforeseen.

### ESSA

- We encourage the United States Department of Education to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control and avoiding federal overreach while developing and implementing ESSA. To those ends, we request that USED allow more time for states and districts to develop their plans and provide a one-year review.
- We encourage legislators to eliminate discretionary funding caps, to allow adequate investment in education. We ask that the department stick to the intent of the law and not attempt to create regulations that "fix" problems not addressed in legislation, such as the "supplement, not supplant restrictions", and the insistence by USED to require that a school's performance be defined by a single designation.
- We encourage Congress to fully fund the education programs authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, so as to fulfill the funding levels authorized by the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act.

### Affordable Care Act

We support and encourage modifications to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) "Cadillac Tax" and how it applies to Alaska. The cost of even basic health care plans in Alaska are high; yet, due to the cost of medical services in Alaska they are categorized within the existing thresholds of the Cadillac Tax which are determined at the federal level. The current calculation unfairly penalizes Alaskan employers for factors beyond their control. Solutions may include a geographic differential or other mechanism to recognize Alaska's unique cost structure.

We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease healthcare costs by such measures as allowing employers to purchase health insurance policies across state lines.

### Other Federal Issues

- We oppose use of public money to fund private education through vouchers or other mechanisms.
- We support full funding of E-Rate and Impact Aid, with no significant program changes needed.



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