



Governor Mike Dunleavy
STATE OF ALASKA

June 27, 2025

Mr. Lon Garrison
Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards
1111 W. 9th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr. Garrison,

I write to strongly object to your recent comments, suggesting that my veto of the \$200 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) somehow reflects a lack of support for Alaska's children, parents, or teachers. That assertion is not only false, it is offensive to those of us who have dedicated our lives to public education as teachers, principals, superintendents, and board members.

I served as a school board member and president of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. I am a lifelong educator, having worked as a teacher, principal, and superintendent in Alaska's public schools. I know what it means to be in the classroom and the boardroom. I care deeply about educational opportunity, but I also understand the fiscal realities our State faces.

Your criticism conveniently ignores the basic fact that Alaska cannot spend what it does not have. We are dealing with declining oil revenues, rising costs, and obligations across the entire spectrum of state services—law enforcement, public health, infrastructure, and yes, education. Governing is about balance and responsibility, not empty advocacy. In order to fund the increase to the BSA this year, the Legislature reduced the PFD of roughly 660,000 eligible Alaskans, including CHILDREN, TEACHERS, and ELDERS, as well as taking millions out of the Higher Education fund. I am assuming you and AASB have no problem with this.

What I find particularly troubling is the consistent pattern of the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) – under your leadership – to demand more money while resisting meaningful reform. Over the years AASB has opposed the Alaska Reads Act, expansion of high-performing charter schools, support for homeschool options, and other efforts aimed at improving outcomes for students. Instead of solutions, your organization offers only the tired refrain of “more funding,” with no accountability, no innovation, and no results. You have made it clear, more funding and local control matter most.

Alaska ranks near the bottom, 51st in the nation, in academic achievement according to NAEP scores. Does that bother you? Do you care? Where is your outrage about that? Where are your

Mr. Lon Garrison

June 27, 2025

Page 2 of 2

proposals to fix it? Why does AASB continue to hide behind the vague mantra of “local control” while glaring deficiencies in student outcomes persist year after year? If the status quo is unacceptable to families and taxpayers, why is it acceptable to you?

Let us be honest with the people of Alaska: AASB is not focused on better education or better student outcomes, it is focused on protecting a system. Your organization functions as a single-issue special interest group, one that lobbies for more money regardless of performance, enrollment decline, or budget conditions. You get paid to advocate for a system, not for students, not for parents, and certainly not for reform.

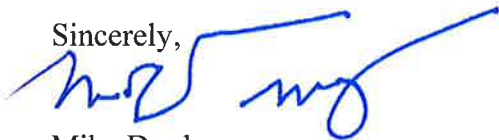
Meanwhile, I have a constitutional responsibility to govern for the entire State. I do not have the luxury of picking one constituency and ignoring everything else. Unlike AASB, I must weigh all obligations – education, yes, (and you ignore the fact that millions of additional dollars have gone into the system since I was elected) but also transportation, public safety, healthcare, energy, and more.

I must protect the fiscal solvency of the State, you do not have that obligation, even when it means making hard decisions that others refuse to acknowledge, let alone share responsibility for. When money is available, I have supported putting money into education. You may be surprised to know that an additional \$1.5 billion dollars, above and beyond the statutory formula, has gone into k-12 education, from both federal and state, for both capital and operating expenses, since I came into office. That’s right. Since 2019, an additional \$1.5 billion above and beyond the statutory formula has gone into education. I do not believe you have acknowledged that, if so, remind me.

Your misrepresentation of my veto as an attack on education is not only wrong, it is shameful. What is truly shameful is that AASB has worked against efforts to improve education outcomes, all while insisting on ever-increasing funds to prop up a system in trouble. You should be honest with the people of Alaska: your priority is not better schools or higher student achievement. It is to maintain the status quo at all costs regardless of the cost to our children’s future. By ignoring the needs of children, paying lip service to parents, and fighting against reforms, you and your organization demonstrate that you lack “The Moral Imperative” to assert yourself as a leader in education.

Rest assured, I will continue to fight for a better system and better outcomes for children at every opportunity until my term is up. That is “The Moral Imperative”! I will also do a much better job at informing the public of how you and your organization misrepresent your purpose and my actions.

Sincerely,



Mike Dunleavy
Governor