



Legislative Update: Coalition for Education Equity 4/12/17 Partner Update

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Coalition for Education Equity members and partners:

The End is Near (theoretically): Legislative Session Update

We are nearing the scheduled end date of the 30th Legislative Session, but everyone expects for the session to extend into the additional 31 days allowed by the Alaska Constitution. A lot has been happening in the education arena during the session – some of it has been disheartening, but there have been many positive developments and I remain optimistic about the potential outcomes. Over the last few days, many of the district and school administrators from around the state were in town for the ACSA Legislative Fly-In and brought with them absolutely gorgeous weather (thank you!). I've missed enjoying the weather and also meeting with folks due to a nasty virus that took me down Sunday night, but did catch the presentations to the House and Senate Education Committee Joint Hearing Monday morning via akleg.gov (thank you to Dr. Lisa Parady and her ACSA team for putting together these [informative presentations](#)). I also managed to connect with a few of you on Sunday and via email and the buzz that I heard concerns me. The Senate Majority continues to assert to constituents that there will be a cut to education, at times suggesting that it will be somewhere between a 1-5% cut to the BSA, other times suggesting that the proposed cut will be exchanged for House passage of SB 26 (the Senate Majority's Permanent Fund restructuring plan) or in lieu of the proposed income tax. They have communicated to you that education leaders and school districts are simply going to have to "make a choice" about where the cuts will come from; that we all have to do our part and that education needs to bear the burden of some of the cuts.

We don't. This is a false choice. The simple truth is that additional cuts to education in Alaska are unbearable. Additional cuts will mean cuts to instruction, cuts in the classroom, cuts that threaten the ability of our schools to adequately provide instruction to our children in Alaska's educational standards, and cuts that threaten the ability of DEED to provide adequate oversight and accountability for our schools. The real choice is to pass a balanced fiscal plan that generates diversified revenue so that our state can meet its constitutional obligation to educate our children and continue to invest in a thriving future.

The House Majority understands this and is standing firm in its support for education. They have no intention of bargaining away our children's futures and are the key to ensuring education funding holds steady. The House Majority continues to work toward a balanced fiscal plan and has introduced provisions in its committee substitute for SB 26 that require Senate passage of HB 111 (oil tax reform) and some other broad-based revenue measure.

We believe that the Senate Majority is trying to weaken the position of our school districts and education leaders by convincing them to suggest areas for cuts. I urge you to stand strong in your positions. No cuts are acceptable and any further cuts will do damage.

What to do now:

- Continue to provide your message to the Senate that no cuts to education are acceptable and that any further cuts will do damage (provide specifics for how cuts will directly impact your classrooms and your students).
- Provide your Senators with support – encourage them to vote for oil tax reform (HB 111) and additional revenue measures that will provide our state with a sustainable and balanced fiscal plan for the future.
- Provide examples of how the continued and persistent uncertainty in education funding hurts your district (Holly Holman of ALASBO provided some great examples of this in her presentation to the joint education committee on Monday).

- Continue to advocate for consistent, predictable, adequate funding so that school districts can make timely and responsible decisions, plan for the most efficient use of funds, increase negotiating power, adequately recruit and retain quality teachers, and spend more time and energy focusing on innovation and collaboration to improve student outcomes.
- THANK the House Majority members for their support for education, for standing firm on education funding, and for their work to develop a fiscal plan that will provide for sustainable funding of our budget in the future.

Coalition for Education Equity's Legislative Progress

We had an ambitious set of legislative priorities this year and are making good progress on many of them. Here are some highlights of our work so far:

- We worked with House Majority members, and provided written testimony to ensure the \$2 million for state-funded pre-elementary programs remained in the budget.
- We succeeded in getting \$1.2 million added in the House operating budget that will fund Moore 2-year kindergarten sites as part of state-funded pre-k.
- Our efforts behind the scenes quelled a proposed reduction to the debt reimbursement program and REAA/small schools construction fund; powerful public testimony sealed the deal and thwarted a similar effort from occurring in the Senate.
- We have two bills moving that will improve the usage of the REAA/small construction fund. HB 135 allows the DEED commissioner to grant extensions for communities to provide their local match (passed the House unanimously and now in Senate Education). HB 212 allows the REAA/small schools construction fund to be used for major maintenance in addition to school construction (introduced and currently in House Education Committee).
- We advocated for funding to incentivize district collaboration. This has been incorporated into SB 96, encouraging cooperative arrangements with one-time grants of up to \$200,000.
- We have worked to support the development of legislation that will expand pre-elementary programs across the state.
- We have provided detailed information from the Moore Case Decisions and Orders to support legislators in their arguments and have been building a case for adequate funding of schools and DEED.

In Other News

Study and District Support for Educator Workforce Satisfaction and Retention

The **Coalition for Education Equity** is working with consultants Dr. Barbara Adams and Jerry Covey to launch a pilot study, which will research educator workforce quality and retention, and provide direct support to districts (as part of CEE's Educator Quality & Quantity or EQQ effort). The study, titled ***Research-based Educator Systems Support (RESS)***, will work with selected volunteer **Coalition for Education Equity** member school districts during the 2017-2018 school year. The study and all support services will be provided to participating districts during the pilot period at no charge to them. The objective of this pilot is to apply a third-party, research-based, systems model in order to understand and track educator satisfaction with their work, social, and basic needs environments throughout the school year. This data will be shared with school districts to ensure a timely, well-informed, district response that addresses educator concerns with the intention of reducing turnover. In addition to providing valuable feedback and support to districts, we expect this study to result in a rich resource for the state including research analysis, potential tools and/or resources, and policy implications and recommendations. The advisory team (CEE Executive Director Sarah Sledge, DEED Deputy Commissioner Sana Efird, LKSD Superintendent Daniel Walker) met with Barbara and Jerry to outline district selection criteria and next steps for implementation. This study is being funded with unused/unallocated funding from the Moore Settlement.

If you are a **Coalition for Education Equity** member district and are interested in participating in this study, please send an email to our executive director, [Sarah Sledge](#).

*The **Coalition for Education Equity** is a member-based, non-profit organization that uses research, policy development and advocacy to help solve school performance issues in rural and urban areas of Alaska. Our work is made possible predominantly through membership dues from our school district and corporate members. Learn more about us at www.ceequality.org. If you're interested in becoming a member, please contact Sarah Sledge at sarah@ceequality.org.*

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