



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 23, 2021

State of Alaska
Representative Grier Hopkins
House of Representatives Education Committee
Representative Harriet Drummond, co-chair
Representative Andi Story, co-chair
State Capitol Room 434
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Support of HB 25 - PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Dear Representative Hopkins, and House Education members:

I am writing in support of HB 25, which will require the Alaska State Board of Education to adopt "Statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning." Student mental health and well-being have been an ongoing concern in Alaska, and in our school district for several years. With the interruption to in-person school, and the subsequent isolation many of our students have experienced during the pandemic, these concerns are more relevant than ever.

The KPBSD Board of Education has four [2021 State Legislative Priorities](#). This one directly relates to SEL:

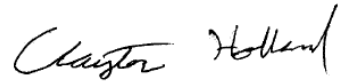
Positive School Climate, Social and Emotional Learning and Well-being

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and wellbeing is the key to providing a safe school environment, conducive to learning, and must be a high priority. With the high rates of domestic violence, childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in Alaska, and in light of the collective trauma our students, families, staff, and communities have experienced due to the COVID19 Global Pandemic, school efforts towards meeting social emotional needs is more critical than ever. The state must provide financial support so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that support and foster the health and development of students.

Additional funding is necessary to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain more school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Funding is also needed to increase professional development opportunities for districts in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges. Meeting the Social Emotional Learning needs of students is essential to the long-term well-being of our students and ultimately of our communities.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District has taken many steps over the years to address social-emotional learning (SEL) with our students. We support HB 25 and the attention this bill will bring to social-emotional learning for all school districts in Alaska.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clayton Holland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Clayton Holland
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction