KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Senate Education Committee
Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
State Capitol Room 125
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Education Testimony 4.5.17

Dear Senator Hughes and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 102, SB103 and SB 104. I appreciate that the issues of internet access, innovation, and curriculum development are being discussed to support education improvement efforts in the State. Infrastructure, funding, and innovation are critical to provide an excellent education for all of our students every day.

In regards to SB 103, I am concerned about losing the Alaska Performance Scholarship for our students to utilize at the University of Alaska. Since 2011, when this program was first implemented, we have seen positive results at the university level as rigorous course work has been implemented at the high schools. While this improvement is not enough, there are promising results that should be considered before eliminating the program. I would like to add that at the same time the scholarship program was put in place, adequate, forward funding from the state was being implemented. When this happened, tangible, positive results also occurred, especially in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

In listening to the overview of the three bills at a prior Senate Education Committee meeting, I heard committee members and the bills' sponsor place emphasis on the required support of the Department of Education and the Commissioner to successfully implement and monitor requirements of the bills. In order for that to happen, please provide the necessary funding for DEED to ensure the innovations' success. We want to put as much support and funding in the classroom as possible, but strong leadership at the State and local level must be a part of this as that is also the second most important factor in student achievement. Through consistent and heavy investment in our classrooms through high quality professional development, KPBSD has experienced significant improvement in many key student achievement indicators. This reliable investment is key to improved student achievement, but takes a long-term funding commitment.

Finally, please know that educators in KPBSD and around Alaska have not given up on our students. I believe no one cares more about improving education and student success than educators. Please continue working with your professional educators and allow us to grow our pockets of excellence across Alaska for all students in our great State.

Respectfully,

Sean Dusek

Sean Dusek
Superintendent