

Hello, this is Becky Martin. This is my tenth year working in the Petersburg City School District where I currently teach third grade. I'm a graduate of Petersburg High School and mother of three children.

Returning to Petersburg after college to raise and educate my children was a wise choice. I am surrounded by dedicated colleagues who work hours and hours beyond the contract every week, and I can see the impact their years of experience, training, and knowledge have had on my students and my daughters.

But this excellence is facing a seismic shift. My youngest daughter is preparing to graduate, and I don't see the same courses or quantity of applicants for empty teaching jobs next year.

The state's Base Student Allocation (BSA), the means by which the state determines how much money school districts receive, has remained unchanged since 2017, and is now worth 25% less in 2024 due to inflation. Communities all over Alaska are struggling to fund their schools and some are buckling under this relative decrease.

Petersburg's teachers currently carry a disproportionate share of our district's financial burden. During the previous 3 year contract negotiating cycle, inflation increased by 15%. Since the previous contract only addressed a 1% cost of living adjustment each year, teachers salaries are now worth 12% less than they were three years ago.

This "savings" is the reason Petersburg's impact has been delayed, but our teachers cannot continue to rescue the local school budget, singularly bearing the burden of inflation and flat state funding. Petersburg's starting salary is currently 49th out of 54 in the state and our experienced teacher pay is in the bottom quarter.

One may argue that teachers cost too much, but everything is more expensive: milk, gasoline, houses, and if we can't compete with salaries other districts in Alaska or our nation pay for quality instructors, our students will ultimately suffer.

The quality and depth of instruction, expectation that every student can learn, and the individualized teaching that is standard today was not universal 32 years, when I entered the profession. Today, every teacher I know is working harder than ever and for countless hours outside their contract. However, unlike other jobs I've held, a teacher's extra efforts bring no prospect of increased income or career advancement, only a loss of family or personal time.

On top of this, three quarters of our staff belong to the Tier III state retirement system, which means we will have no guaranteed monthly income, limited access to health insurance, and no Social Security.

School funding *doesn't* take care of itself, it takes a lot of time, attention, and problem solving, and we are at a breaking point. Expecting teachers to take on more: and work with

salaries that don't address the rising cost of living, is no longer an option. Education funding must increase or teachers will leave, class sizes will swell, high school courses will disappear, extracurricular programs will shrink, and students will suffer. ...

Please reach out to your hard working school board members and city council representatives. Thank them for their service and remind them that our children deserve quality teachers and a robust education. Encourage them to think creatively, strategically use our financial resources, and continue their efforts to secure additional funds from the state.

Please email, write, or call your state representatives. Inadequate educational funding is a community and state issue that our teachers can no longer bear without your help.