

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 11, 2011

The Honorable Sean Parnell
Governor
State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

Following an announcement made this week by the Obama administration to allow states to apply for waivers, I urge the State of Alaska to apply for a waiver to the No Child Left Behind law. As you well know, Alaska has its own unique set of challenges in educating our children, and we must act to restore local control of our education system.

I have been a long-time critic of No Child Left Behind policies. In too many cases, its punitive nature has tied the hands of teachers and administrators when schools need help the most. We need to move toward a system that is student-focused and provides flexibility to improve struggling schools, while putting more emphasis on innovation and school improvement at the local level.

I hear every day from Alaska educators that they need relief from the stringent requirements of No Child Left Behind. The Obama administration announced this week it will provide a process for states to seek relief from key provisions of the law, without sacrificing accountability. Should this be an opportunity for Alaska to get out from under this Washington based, one-size-fits-all approach to education, then I encourage your administration to pursue these waivers in September.

I will continue to work with Senate leadership to overhaul the misguided No Child Left Behind law and incorporate more local control and flexibility to allow communities to play an integral role in improving student achievement. I urge the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to pursue waivers as another step toward continuing Alaska's education reform efforts.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator

Cc: Commissioner Mike Hanley, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development