

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 16, 2012

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

Dear Governor Parnell:

With the second submission deadline approaching to seek flexibility under the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) law, I am again urging you to direct the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to seek a waiver. I also offer any assistance I can to move the process forward. As you know, I believe the offer of a federal waiver of NCLB rules is a tremendous opportunity to improve education in Alaska by providing more flexibility for our educators, while bolstering academic standards, improving accountability systems, and supporting effective instruction and leadership.

Because of needed accountability for federal education spending, states must follow certain principles to show they are working to improve academic achievement and increase the quality of instruction before receiving flexibility from the law. Many of these principles appear to align with initiatives your administration is already undertaking, such as improving Alaska's academic standards—by some accounts among the least demanding in the nation.

If you believe these federal waiver principles are not feasible or will not help improve education in Alaska, I respectfully request you share your specific concerns. As I indicated in my previous correspondence, I am willing to assist you in explaining to the Obama Administration the unique challenges Alaska's schools face, and why unique solutions will be required to deliver a quality education to our students. For instance, labeling schools as failures for not meeting every NCLB benchmark when students are indeed making progress is not fair. Federal waivers will allow important flexibility and recognize growth.

This waiver discussion is also important as the annual state education funding discussion is underway in Alaska. Greater flexibility in how federal dollars are spent—granted through the waiver process—can help Alaska school districts as budgets are approved and funding priorities are set.

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As you know, I do not support the NCLB law and continue to push for a legislative overhaul incorporating more local control and flexibility. As Congress continues this work, I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity for more flexibility in the law. Waivers will help our local Alaska communities play a larger role in improving student achievement.

Thank you for your attention to this request for information.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator

CC: Alaska Education Commissioner, Mike Hanley