

September 23, 2011

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

Dear Governor Parnell:

Thank you for your August 15 letter regarding waivers to the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) law. Now that the details for the waivers have been released by the U.S. Department of Education, I urge you to work with Alaska's education stakeholders and apply for the regulatory relief being offered from this misguided law.

We both agree one of the best ways to improve education in Alaska is to restore local control. By allowing Alaska to play a more integral role in improving struggling schools and rewarding those who are high-achieving, NCLB waivers are an important step toward returning local control. The waivers will help Alaska move away from a purely punitive education system to one that recognizes individual student progress while maintaining accountability. Additionally, the waivers will increase flexibility for districts relating to the use of federal education funds. I encourage the State to develop an education plan that recognizes the unique needs of Alaska, while meeting the requirements of these waivers.

While these waivers are welcome news for Alaska schools, I know Congress must continue its work to permanently overhaul the NCLB law. I will continue to work with my colleagues to legislatively end this one-size-fits-all approach to education.

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As your administration considers applying for this regulatory relief, please know I am ready 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, meaningful education to Alaska's students.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator

CC: Mike Hanley, Commissioner of Education and Early Development  
Representative Alan Dick, Chair, House Committee on Education  
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice-Chair, House Committee on Education  
Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Education