

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 219 Governor Panel on District Cost Factors

Senate Bill 219 offers a unique opportunity for the Legislature to step back from the current debate over the accuracy of the proposed geographic cost indices used in the education funding formula and encourages the legislative body to consider a new approach to this difficult, recurring policy issue.

Senate Bill 219 establishes a *Select Panel on District Cost Factors* within the Office of the Governor for the purpose of developing an updatable and durable model to measure actual relative cost differences in providing public education. Placement of this important panel under the purview of the governor affords an open, statewide perspective and fosters cooperation between all school districts.

How to accurately measure the relative cost variances between Alaska's 53 school districts has been a constant source of aggravation, discourse, and contention within the legislature and the education community for the past 24 years. The Legislature has attempted many times to develop an updatable model to measure the differences in cost between school districts, but unfortunately an acceptable plan has been elusive.

The *Select Panel* will take a fresh look at how to measure these differences with the goal of providing the State of Alaska with a fair, objective, accurate, and durable district cost model that educators and the public can support. The panel's finished work product will remove a perennial source of frustration for many.

It is time to try the approach outlined in Senate Bill 219. Please join me in support of this legislation.