

Refusing to release education funds is harming our schools and children

We're perplexed. And disappointed. Governor Dunleavy was an educator and claims to serve all Alaskans but has decided that education funding will not be released to school districts on July 15 this year. Talk about a harsh disconnect!

It's not a surprise, however. Governor Dunleavy is still withholding \$20M from our schools this year. The money was appropriated last year and signed into law by then Governor Walker. Governor Dunleavy is refusing to faithfully execute that law.

His explanation - that he proposed legislation to repeal these funds and is waiting for the legislature to act on his proposal - is nonsense. Governor Dunleavy knows the legislature is not going to agree to repeal these funds.

The conference committee adopted a joint statement of intent that DEED immediately release the FY 19 \$20 million in education funding. To continue to act as though the legislature may move to repeal this funding is a charade. It does not show good faith and is causing harm to our schools and most importantly our children.

On top of that, Governor Dunleavy is now challenging the FY20 education funding passed into law last year, saying it is unconstitutional. There is a bevy of lawyers who disagree with this claim, including the legislature's lawyers and last year's state lawyers. The Governor's stance is, "Do it my way or I will withhold funding for schools," which would throw our education system into chaos or worse.

We're disappointed. And worried for our schools, communities, and children. Without these funds, many school districts will not have the cash on hand to pay for health benefits in July and August. Most are now looking at potential furloughs and layoffs to survive. This 'pink slip' process is precisely what the Legislature worked so hard to avoid with their commitment to forward funding.

Our districts cannot afford to lose more teachers against the backdrop of the worst educator shortage in the history of Alaska. It is not clear how Governor Dunleavy believes this will help schools prepare for a successful school year. This standoff is a manufactured crisis, a form of political brinksmanship that damages our communities and the 132,000 kids in Alaska. How is this acceptable to a Governor who professes to love this state? This is not what leadership looks like.

We are asking the Governor to immediately release the current year \$20M in education funding - there is no longer any reason to hold these funds hostage. We are asking the Governor to please faithfully execute the laws of the State of Alaska and release FY 2020 education funds as appropriated.

And finally, withdraw the political memo you directed your Attorney General to write. Sit down with our elected legislative leaders and fund schools for the coming year as planned. Work together, rather than create a crisis that serves no purpose.