March 7, 2014

Governor Sean Parnell
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and Commissioner Mike Hanley on February 19th. We truly appreciate your taking time to meet with us. We hope the materials on school nursing we gave you provide greater understanding of the scope and significance of our work on behalf of Alaska’s children.

We considered your request for strategies to “get the most bang for the buck” from state funding of school nursing. At our meeting, one of the strategies already discussed is the importance of adequate funding for the Base Student Allocation (BSA). Funding for the components of public education is complex, and certain strategies may work well for some areas of the state and be insufficient for others. This is particularly true for rural Alaska, where costs are high and recruiting and retaining professional staff may be difficult.

We encourage you to consider additional strategies:

1. Advocate for professional school nurse services in order to address the health needs of children across the state.
2. Create a working group to study the current health needs of students and collect data to identify the gaps in meeting those needs. Then, identify creative approaches for providing school health services, either as part of BSA or in other ways.
3. Establish a minimum school nurse to student ratio as recommended by the National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
4. Partner with the University of Alaska, School of Nursing to provide funding for the education of rural students who will commit, upon graduation, to return to underserved areas as registered school nurses.

For additional information, another resource is our School Health Nurse Consultant Mary Bell, State of Alaska, Division of Public Health. She can be reached by e-mail: mary.bell@alaska.gov, or at the website: http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/school/.

We look forward to your help in creating sound and effective school health services for Alaska’s children.

Respectfully,

Nancy Bale, BSN RN NCSN, Anchorage
Maureen Hall, BSN RN NCSN, Juneau
Kathy Bell, BSN RN NCSN, Anchorage

cc. Commissioner Mike Hanley