

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to support HB 2630 to provide stable funding for those schools districts effected by the wildfires that occurred on September 8th 2020. I'm the currently the board chair for the Phoenix-Talent Schools Board of Directors. I'm grateful for the consideration of this Bill and of all the support our district and communities have gotten at the State level. It means so much to our district and our community during these struggling times.

Our family was one of the lucky ones that didn't have to evacuate. We lived off the grid for six days and welcomed five separate households to stay with us. Of those five households, three people are staff members of our district. After a sleepless night, and not even sure of the condition of their own houses all three started doing whatever they could for the students of our district. They were on their phones, computers, or driving to locations to help in anyway possible. The stories they shared with me were absolutely heartbreaking. The children staying here and my own children were doing all they could, trying to gather supplies for their friends that lost everything, going out to the Expo where temporary shelter set up. They helped translate, hand out supplies, and do whatever they could, all while being evacuated at my house. I believe that the Alemda fire has effected every single child, staff member and family in our district.

Many of our families had to leave the area for stable housing, and those that stayed here are in hotels, rv parks, camping, or staying where they can, often moving monthly. For many the only stable thing in children's life right now is school. If we do not get stable funding for the next 5 years that is one more change our families will have to experience. The loss of a teacher, an IA, or a program, on top of the trauma they are already facing could be devastating.

Phoenix and Talent communities are working hard to bring back families, businesses and rebuild their towns. Without stable schools this will be even more challenging. This is funding is not only for our children but for the future of our towns.

Many of our families effected still needed housing are from underserved populations. The SIA funds we are receiving are more needed than ever before. Most of the funds will be going to mental health for our students.

Thank you for your time, and please support HS 2630 it is vital to our district and our communities.

Sincerely,

Dawn Watson
Phoenix-Talent Board Chair