



March 26, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson & McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brent Barry, and I have the honor of serving as the Superintendent of the Phoenix-Talent School District. I'm writing today to express our district's strongest possible support for HB 3149 -2, which provides a 1-year extension for wildfire-impacted school districts.

The Alameda Fire in 2020 was a tragedy unlike anything we've seen. It destroyed homes, disrupted lives, and displaced hundreds of students in our schools. More than four years later, the scars are still visible—not just in the landscape, but in our classrooms.

While we are forever grateful for State and Federal allocated funds for wildfire recovery for school districts, it wasn't until December 2024 that the first family in our district received support to begin rebuilding. That's four long years of waiting. Many of our families are still living in transitional housing. Our educators have seen firsthand how this prolonged instability affects students—struggling with attendance, emotional regulation, concentration, and even meeting basic needs.

Without passage of HB 3149 with the -2 amendment, the impacts on our district will be devastating. Next year, without the passage of HB 3149 -2, we're facing major budget reductions due to the expiration of wildfire recovery funding. This is not just about numbers—it's about capacity. Our counselors are stretched thin. Our buses are traveling farther to reach displaced families. Our teachers are doing everything they can to support students still living in crisis. While we've done our best to maintain a high standard of care, this level of response isn't sustainable without continued support.

HB 3149 is not just a policy update—it is a lifeline. It acknowledges the timeline of reality, not bureaucracy. Recovery doesn't end when the headlines fade—it ends when families are safely housed, when students can focus on learning again, and when schools can rebuild their foundation.

I urge you to pass HB 3149 -2. Our schools, our families, and our community are counting on it.

Sincerely,

Brent Barry

Superintendent, Phoenix-Talent School District