

27 March 2026

Dear Superintendent Luke and Members of the School Board,

I am writing this letter in support of my colleague, Ms. Kacey Lou Leyba. Ms. Leyba is an integral member of our district staff and an incredible support for many, many of our students. On average, she meets weekly with anywhere from 19-30 students individually, does classroom lessons, interventions as needed, staffing for various things, and so much more. Her job is nuanced and delicate and requires her to be on at all times. She does so with an open heart and true desire to maintain connections with students, families, and communities.

As a counselor, she has intimate knowledge of our students and their unique needs that she has spent building during the past 4 years. That kind of knowledge has been gained through the utmost trust and respect from our students and should not be taken lightly. I understand the desire to keep folks in the district and I do, generally, agree with that. In this case, however, I do not feel that it is what is best for students.

Ms. Leyba is not moving out of our district by desire, but by need. Her family circumstances changed and she needs to move out of the district for now, but not forever. Her desire is to be in our district and she has purchased land in Newhalen with the intent to land there. As the majority of her job with students is done over the phone or zoom regardless of where she is based, I still feel that she is the absolute best person for her position. She will have more family support while based on Soldotna which means she will be able to be boots on the ground even more than she already is. That is what is best for students, not giving her up simply because she lives outside our school district.

I humbly ask you to reconsider your decision in regards to Ms. Leyba's contract and truly think about what is best for our students. I have been around for quite some time now and have seen how detrimental it can be for students to lose a trusted adult in their lives. Please think of them and the relationships Ms. Leyba has built and will continue to build.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate M. Cornell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Cornell
Newhalen School