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SB 209 Grad Requirements & Proficiency Tools
Sponsor Statement Version G
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Many Alaskans ask an important question: What should graduates of our public schools know, understand, and be able to do? Some argue that too many students leave high school unprepared, while others highlight the remarkable accomplishments of Alaska's graduates as evidence of a strong K-12 system. The truth is that Alaska offers exceptional educational opportunities and we also have meaningful room to strengthen student outcomes.

Senate Bill 209 clarifies in statute the high school credits required for graduation. It also creates a new opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned through a proficiency confirmation tool. This tool could take the form of an existing assessment, such as the MAP or AK STAR, or a portfolio review. Students who demonstrate proficiency in their twelfth-grade year would earn a seal of certified proficiency on their diploma, recognizing their mastery of Alaska's content standards.

Today, students must earn twenty-one high school credits, thirteen of which are defined in regulation. SB 209 increases required credits in social studies (including civics and economics), mathematics, and science by one each - raising the number of specified credits to sixteen. For high schools offering six credits per year, the total credit requirement remains unchanged. For schools offering seven credits per year, the total would increase to twenty-four. These adjustments better align coursework with Alaska's education standards and ensure students receive a well-rounded academic foundation.

Improving educational outcomes requires clear, measurable goals for students to work toward. Success depends on all stakeholders, teachers, parents, and students working together to meet these expectations. By establishing proficiency goals that recognize and reward achievement, we can raise academic performance across the state.

I respectfully urge your support for this legislation, which strengthens expectations, honors student achievement, and helps ensure Alaska's graduates are prepared for the opportunities ahead.