

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

Sponsor Statement SB 188

An Act Providing for Payment and Loan Incentives to Public School Teachers for National Board Certification

An excellent education system requires discerning and responsive educators. SB 188 will support Alaskan public-school teachers seeking to attain professional excellence by incentivizing them to pursue and complete the National Board Certification process. SB 188 aligns with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development's (DEED) vision for transforming the state's education system outlined in the Alaska's Education Challenge report. This document sets a goal to "triple the number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in Alaska, and specifically increase the number of NBCTs in hard-to-staff schools and districts, both through the provision of salary incentives."

With SB 188, the legislature takes two steps to encourage more certifications and attain DEED's goal: providing for interest-free loans to cover the certification program costs and establishing an annual stipend. A loan fund will provide the zero interest loans to teachers in the amount of up to \$2,500, covering the full cost of the certification program. NBCTs working in Alaskan public schools will receive an annual stipend of \$1,500, for the duration of their certification (10 years), and if employed in a low- performing high-poverty district, will receive an additional \$1,000 annually. In these high-need areas, a teacher can receive up to \$1000, paid directly to the national certifying board, to offset the cost of certification. Incentive programs like SB 188 have been implemented in twenty-seven states and the proposed program in Alaska is fiscally modest in comparison to many other state programs. For example, seven states provide teachers with annual stipends of \$5000 or more.

Research shows that NBCTs improve education systems. A study in Georgia concluded that NBCTs outperformed their peers with the same experience levels. Another study suggested that burnout rates may be lower among NBCTs than their peers and many other studies correlate NBCTs directly to student learning outcomes. NBCTs represent the top of their profession: a teacher must have three years of classroom experience and a current state teaching certificate to seek this credential. To gain certification, teachers must complete four components in their certificate area: three portfolio entries and a computer-based assessment. Teachers remain active in the classroom throughout this intensive and reflective process. NCBTs in Alaska can use this certification toward obtaining a "Master Teacher Certificate" from DEED. Increasing our number of NCBTs will help the state sustain a resilient teacher workforce and support essential student development.

Supporting SB188 will positively impact teachers, students, and Alaska's education system.