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House District 35 – West Fairbanks

Sponsor Statement

HB 176: University of Alaska Fees

“An Act relating to notice of new fees and fee increases from the University of Alaska; relating to billing statements from the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date.”

Student fees in the UA system have been consolidated at each of the three main campuses since at least 2020. These consolidated fees are easier for University of Alaska administration to process, though consolidation provides far less transparency for students. In addition to the lack of fee transparency, the University system is not required to consult students in the creation or raising of fees. Until last year, the University of Alaska Fairbanks involved student leaders in the fee process through the Tuition and Fee Committee. However, UAF changed its committee structure to only allow student involvement in tuition decisions, not fees, and there is no formalized process for student involvement at either of the other main campuses. This lack of student involvement coupled with the lack of transparency in what fees students actually pay are concerning for student choice and freedom of information.

HB 176 seeks to provide more transparency for students in the fee process. It would require the Board of Regents to give students notice when a new fee is implemented or when fees are raised. It would also require all UA schools to provide itemized billing statements detailing how much students pay for each component of their fees. While the fee categories and the amount of the consolidated fee are required to be published online, it is often extremely difficult to find the amount allocated to each category. Students can see the general categories their fees pay for, but they usually do not see the dollar amount paid for each service, such as student activities or recreation.

With HB 176, our hope is to provide more information to students about what students seeking higher education pay for and to support their right to transparency for where their dollars will be spent.