



SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 142 - Monthly Stipend for Boarding Schools

Currently Alaska Statutes authorize reimbursement to three statewide public boarding schools for the cost of room and board. This provision is set to sunset on July 1, 2013 unless the 28th Legislature takes action.

Since 2006, the state allowing statewide or district-wide boarding schools to seek reimbursement for the cost of room, board and supervision of students has been handled like a pilot program. We've got enough experience to know that this model is highly successful in that it high quality education for rural Alaskans with options is do-able. So successful are these regional residential alternatives that the Department of Education and Early Development is seeking proposals to expand on the model.

In support of the Department, HB 142 removes the sunset provision for providing stipends to boarding schools and it removes the prohibition for new statewide and district-wide residential schools. Language is added to include residential public school programs with terms of variable lengths that are planned to offer kids intensive STEM or leadership intensives. Boarding schools offer students who don't have access to grades 9 through 12 an alternative to being homeschooled and give students in smaller high schools the opportunity to attend a school that offers extracurricular activities available in larger high schools like sports, avionics, engineering, diesel mechanics and cosmetology. Kids leave these schools with job skills and are college ready.

This legislation by statute reimburses some boarding schools costs incurred by the district operating the program. A per-pupil stipend helps pay for the students' monthly residential care, which includes meals and supervision twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In addition a one round-trip between the student's community of residence and the school during the school year will be reimbursed if the district expends money for the trip.

Three schools currently qualify for the reimbursement: Nenana, Galena, and Bethel Alternative School, however; as stated previously, DEED is currently soliciting applications for three additional boarding schools statewide.

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