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SPONSOR STATEMENT

CS HB 179() – *An Act providing for public school funding for Internet services*

HB 179 will assist school districts with the cost of Internet services. Under the Federal E-rate program, broadband services are reimbursed based on each community's poverty levels as determined by the free and reduced school lunch program. The E-rate program covers 60 - 90% of the costs to purchase broadband services with a statewide average of 75%.

The total cost of Internet services for schools in 2012 was reported at approximately \$50 million. The E-rate program covered approximately \$40 million of these costs. The local school districts were required to pay approximately \$10 million with instructional funds.

This legislation will have the state pay the local share for school districts that is not covered under the E-rate program and it also sets a minimum floor of 10 megabits/second. That is, HB 179 will assist school districts with their internet needs and bring all schools across Alaska to a minimum level of internet services.

I urge your support of this legislation to help improve the quality of the educational opportunities for our children.