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Fairbanks, AK 99775-5300

March 26, 2015

Representative Lynn Gattis  
State Capitol Room 500  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 107 – Composition of the Board of Regents

Dear Representative Gattis:

I want first to thank you for giving me and other regents the opportunity to share our perspectives at last week's hearing on HB107. We understand and appreciate the reasons for the proposed legislation.

As detailed in my February 24 letter, we continue to have concerns about the original bill, and have additional concerns about the Committee Substitute (CS).

The original bill:

- would create geographic constituencies and promote regionalism on the board; and
- the regional residency requirements may be subject to constitutional challenges that could call board action into question. This latter point seems supported by the opinion from Legislative Legal.

By reducing the number of regents from 11 to 9 the CS would further alter board composition, and incidentally, reduce diversity and representation. I am not aware of any compelling reason for this change. On the contrary, I believe it would be detrimental to accomplishing the business of the board. During the March 18 hearing, a vague concern was expressed that 11 was an unwieldy number. In my four years on the board and as the current chair, I do not find 11 to be unwieldy at all. In fact, it would be quite challenging to populate our four working sub-committees (Audit, Facilities, Academic and Student Affairs, and Planning & Development), with only nine members. Historically all board members have been actively engaged and obtaining the statutory quorum of six members (see AS 14.40.200) has not been an issue. With a reduction to nine members we would have two less members to do the work and to make a quorum, while the quorum would at most be reduced by only 1 (assuming a parallel change in the statute). This increases the risk that a quorum could not be met.

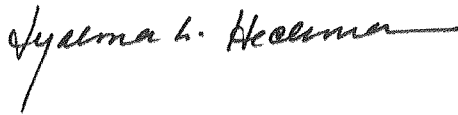
Second, if the goal of HB 107 is to foster diversity, we believe this will be much better accomplished with 11 members than with 9. Eleven members help to ensure diversity in geography, age, ethnicity, background, knowledge, and skills. All are important to the range of issues we address in our oversight of this large and complex organization. It should be noted that nationally, the predominate size for university governing boards is 11 or 12, according to the Association of Governing Boards, a national organization that tracks such best practices.

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Finally, as we saw recently, there is no shortage of highly-skilled people interested in serving on this board. I understand that more than 50 applied for the four openings. The small cost savings of two fewer people (less than \$10,000) seems insignificant when measured against the opportunity for those two additional people to do the required work and weigh in on the issues and challenges ahead of us.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on CS for House Bill No. 107.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jyotsna Heckman", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jyotsna Heckman, Chair  
Board of Regents

cc: House Education Committee members