

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Mike Dunleavy
Senator

Sponsor Statement for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 89

The purpose of CSSB 89 Parental Rights in Education, is to codify in state statute the inherent rights of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children. As parents are the ultimate authority regarding their children, this bill requires local school boards to adopt policies which promote the involvement of parents.

A child's parents (be they biological or not) are, in most cases, best suited to understand what is in their child's best interest. It may seem unnecessary that this would need to be re-stated in law. However, too often we see parents pitted against government in decisions regarding children's education and upbringing. I am thus sponsoring this bill to re-balance that relationship. I feel it essential to ensure that our educational system acknowledges the essential rights of parents, and that schools adopt policies to encourage parental involvement.

These policies must accommodate the following:

- Parents will be given the chance to review content of any activity, class, performance standard, program, or standards-based assessment or test required by the department
- Parents can object to and withdraw children from any standards-based assessment or test required by the department, and the absence cannot be counted as unlawful
- If parents have a concern about any activity, class, performance standard, or program that covers human reproduction or sexual matters, or which inquiries into personal or private family affairs, they can object and keep their child out of that particular activity, and the absence cannot be counted as unlawful
- Parents will be allowed to withdraw children for religious holidays, and the absence cannot be counted as unlawful
- Parents must provide written permission before children may attend each human reproduction or sex education instruction or presentation

Existing law requires parents to provide written permission before students take part in certain questionnaires and surveys administered by schools. This bill extends that requirement to all questionnaires and surveys administered by schools.

As the stewards of their children, parents must be guaranteed the right to make the decisions they feel are best for their children's education. I request your support for CSSB 89.