

Alaska State Legislature

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HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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Sponsor Statement

House Resolution 7

Supporting a Safe School Environment

House Resolution 7 will keep school safety at the forefront of efforts by students, teachers, administrators, legislators, and other policy makers. It will help identify potential dangers, unmet needs, and innovative solutions to potential dangers before they reach a crisis point.

Discussion of House Resolution 7 by experts and regular Alaskans, through public testimony and other forums, will allow for an inclusive approach to school safety which will address Alaska's diverse cultural, economic, and geographic circumstances as they relate to school safety.

We know school violence can happen here in Alaska. On February 19, 1997 at Bethel Regional High School, a student shot 15-year-old Josh Palacios, who later died of his wounds, wounded two others, then shot and killed Principal Ron Edwards. On May 7, 2001 four children in the Mountain View Elementary playground in Anchorage were stabbed by a man wielding a file knife, critically injuring one of them.

There have been successes in prevention as well. In the fall of 2015 at West High School in Anchorage, Police Department School Resource Officers were able to successfully deescalate a situation in which an armed man was seeking to enter the school.

School violence is something we must try to prevent rather than respond to, and although millions of dollars and countless hours have been dedicated to school safety efforts in the past decades, we must remain ever vigilant and able to identify and prevent problems before they occur.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is planning a statewide school safety convention in the fall of 2018 with representatives of all 54 school districts planning to attend. House Resolution 7 will help lay the groundwork for these efforts. It will keep school safety at the forefront of attention as we move forward to make our schools safer.

Please join the House Education Committee in supporting House Resolution 7.