

**HOUSE BILL NO. 24**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY REPRESENTATIVES KREISS-TOMKINS, Fields, Johnston**

**Introduced: 2/20/19**

**Referred: Education, Labor and Commerce**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1   **"An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and relating to limited**  
2   **teacher certificates."**

3   **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4    \* **Section 1.** AS 14.20.025 is repealed and reenacted to read:

5           **Sec. 14.20.025. Limited teacher certificates.** (a) Notwithstanding  
6           AS 14.20.020(b) and 14.20.022, the department may issue a limited teacher certificate,  
7           valid only in the area of expertise for which it is issued, to a person qualified under (b)  
8           of this section to teach

9                           (1) Alaska Native Culture;

10                          (2) military science;

11                          (3) vocational or technical education;

12                          (4) any subject if the language of instruction is not English.

13                   (b) A person may apply for a limited teacher certificate under this section if  
14           the person is the subject of a request made under (c) of this section and demonstrates,

1 as required by regulations adopted by the board, instructional skills and subject matter  
2 expertise sufficient to assure the public that the person is competent as a teacher. The  
3 board may require a person issued a limited teacher certificate under this section to  
4 undertake academic training as may be required by the board by regulation and make  
5 satisfactory progress in the academic training.

6 (c) The department may issue a limited teacher certificate under this section  
7 only if the school board of the district or regional educational attendance area in which  
8 an applicant for a limited teacher certificate will be teaching submits a request to the  
9 department for the limited teacher certificate to be issued to the applicant. A request  
10 for a limited teacher certificate under (a)(4) of this section must specify the subject  
11 and instructional language for which the certificate is valid.

12 (d) The board may adopt regulations necessary to implement this section. The  
13 regulations may not require an applicant under (a)(4) of this section to achieve a  
14 minimum score on an examination unless the examination is given in the instructional  
15 language for which the limited certificate is valid.

16 (e) A limited teacher certificate issued under this section is initially valid for  
17 one year. The department may, in accordance with regulations adopted by the board,  
18 extend or renew a limited teacher certificate issued under this section if the school  
19 board that initially requested the issuance of the limited teacher certificate requests  
20 that the certificate be extended or renewed and certifies that the person has  
21 demonstrated skills in classroom instruction and student assessment.

# ALASKA LEGISLATURE

*Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins*

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Committees:  
State Affairs, Co-Chair  
Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism  
Fisheries  
Community and Regional Affairs



Juneau, Alaska 99801 (Jan. – April)  
State Capitol, Room 411  
907.465.3732

Sitka, Alaska 99835 (May – Dec.)  
201 Katlian Street, Ste. 103  
907.747.4665

## Sponsor Statement | HB 24 – Limited Teacher Certificates

Language immersion education is an increasingly popular educational model that also produces impressive academic outcomes. In an immersion program, some of the academic subject matter is delivered in a language other than English. HB 24 provides needed flexibility to school districts operating language immersion programs.

HB 24 gives the state board of education the tools necessary to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing Alaska’s immersion programs: finding fully certified teachers also fluent in an Alaska Native or foreign language. Under HB 24, the state board could provide school districts case-by-case flexibility to hire language immersion teachers they know are qualified to lead a classroom but who — for reasons such as limited English proficiency, advanced age, or familial responsibilities — are unable at the time to get a full teacher certification. To do so, the state board would have to create a new certificate along the lines of the existing “Type M” or “Type I” limited certificates.

Alaska already has a variety of successful and popular immersion programs, including Wasilla’s Fronteras, Anchorage’s Rilke Schule, and Anchorage School District’s highly regarded world languages program.

Immersion is also central to Alaska Native language revitalization efforts. In Israel, New Zealand, and Hawaii, immersion education was at the core of indigenous language revival. At Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in Bethel, instruction is done in Yup’ik, and interest in Alaska Native language immersion education is growing elsewhere in the state.

HB 24 will help Alaska’s language immersion programs continue to provide high-quality dual-language education.

# ALASKA LEGISLATURE

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## Sectional Analysis | HB 24 – Limited Teacher Certificates

HB 24 repeals and re-enacts AS 14.20.025.

### **Section 14.20.025(a)**

The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) may issue limited teacher certificates in certain specialty areas:

- Alaska Native culture;
- Military science;
- Vocational or technical education;
- Classes taught in non-English languages.

Under current law, limited certificates may be issued for teaching Alaska Native languages or culture, military science, and vocational or technical education. HB 24 adds classes taught in non-English languages to the existing list.

Certificates issued under this section in one of these specialty areas are subject to the provisions of AS 14.20.025 and exempt from certain requirements of AS 14.20.020 or AS 14.20.022.

### **Section 14.20.025(b)**

Limited certificates can only be issued to a person if the school board of the district in which the person will teach has requested a limited certificate for that specific person. The limited certificate is valid only in the district that makes the request.

A person may only receive a limited certificate if they demonstrate “instructional skills and subject matter expertise sufficient to assure the public that the person is competent as a teacher.” This language is used in current law, and like in current law, the state board of education is empowered to write regulations interpreting it.

The state board of education’s regulations may require that a limited certificate holder undertake additional academic training.

### **Section 14.20.025(c)**

A limited teacher certificate must specify the language(s) and subject(s) for which it is valid.

Restates that limited certificates can only be issued to a person if the school board of the district in which the person will teach has requested a limited certificate for that specific person. The limited certificate is valid only in the district that makes the request.

#### **Section 14.20.025(d)**

Gives the state board of education authority to write regulations implementing AS 14.20.025.

Provides that the regulations cannot require a certificate applicant to achieve a minimum score on an exam unless that exam is given in the instructional language the certificate will be valid for (e.g. a teacher who will be teaching only in German or Iñupiaq cannot be required to pass an exam given in English).

#### **Section 14.20.25(e)**

Limited certificates are initially valid for one year. Terms and lengths of extension and renewal shall be set by the state board of education. In order for a limited certificate to be extended or renewed, the school board that initially requested the certificate must certify that the certificate holder has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction and student assessment.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2019 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 24  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB024-EED-SSA-3-21-19  
Title: LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES;  
LANGUAGES  
Sponsor: KREISS-TOMKINS  
Requester: House Education Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development  
Appropriation: Education Support and Administrative Services  
Allocation: Student and School Achievement  
OMB Component Number: 2796

## Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2020 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2020 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2020	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

## Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

## Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

## Change in Revenues

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2019) cost:** 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2020) cost:** 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No  
(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

## ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 03/31/20

## Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Not applicable, initial version based on the Governor's 2.13.19 FY20 budget request.

Prepared By:	Tamara Van Wyhe, Director	Phone:	(907)465-2857
Division:	Educator & School Excellence	Date:	03/21/2019
Approved By:	Heidi Teshner, Administrative Services Director	Date:	03/21/19
Agency:	Office of Management and Budget		

## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 24

### Analysis

This bill repeals and reenacts AS 14.20.025, Limited teacher certificates. This bill would continue to allow for a person with expertise in Alaska Native language, Alaska culture, military sciences, and vocational areas to gain a limited teacher certificate in those specific areas. The bill expands the persons eligible for a limited certificate to include individuals with expertise in all world language other than English. Additionally, a person with expertise in either an Alaska Native or a world language who demonstrates expertise in subject areas like mathematics, science, and social studies may teach in the subject areas using the language other than English for instruction.

This bill maintains the State Board of Education & Early Development's authority to require an individual that qualifies for a limited teaching certificate to undertake academic training as specified by the State Board. As well it requires that the school board of the district or regional educational attendance area requests the issuance of a limited teacher certificate to an applicant. The request must specify the subject and instructional language for which the certificate would be valid. This bill prohibits the State Board from adopting an examination requirement for a limited certificate issued under this bill unless the examination is in the instructional language for which the limited certificate is valid. Finally, the bill establishes the length of the initial limited certificate as one year with the option of extending or renewing the certificate upon request of the school board that initially requested the issuance of the certificate.

This bill allows the state board authority to find innovative mechanisms to determine the content area and pedagogical competency of educators providing instruction in languages other than English. Currently, statutes require a basic competency exam, a bachelor's degree, and the enrollment in or completion of a teacher preparation program to teach specific content areas (like mathematics, reading, language arts, science, and social studies). The additional authority provided by this bill would remove these requirement and allow the state board to develop alternative assessments of an educator's knowledge, skills, and abilities in these areas.

No effective date has been provided.

There is no fiscal impact to the department under this bill.

## NATIVE EDUCATION

# Teaching the Whole Child: Language Immersion and Student Achievement

Teresa L. McCarty • September 1, 2014

As Congress considers two bills to support Native American language immersion, including the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, it is time to take stock. What does research say about the impact of Native-language immersion on Native students' academic achievement? We now have 30 years—more than a generation—of data on Native-language immersion in the U.S. and beyond.

But first, what do we mean by Native-language immersion? It may be easier to begin with what immersion is *not*. Native-language immersion is not simply “Native language instruction.” It is not a pullout program or a 50-minute class. Native-language immersion is not *submersion*, a method that compels students to learn a second language at the expense of their mother tongue.

Native-language immersion is voluntary; parents often participate in immersion themselves to support their children's language learning at home. Native-language immersion is additive, building on students' first-language abilities as a foundation for learning the Native language as a second language. Native-language immersion is full-day or most-of-the-day teaching and learning in the Native language, often complemented by after-school and summer programs. Native-language immersion systematically incorporates Native cultural content and culturally appropriate ways of teaching and learning. Most important, Native-language immersion not only engages students in learning the Native language, but also math, science, social studies, music, art, and even English *through* that language. In other words, Native-language immersion is a whole program that cultivates what language researcher Fred Genessee calls “the whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community.”

Hawaiian language immersion provides the most dramatic example of the success of such a program. From a situation in the early 1980s in which fewer than 50 children spoke Hawaiian, Hawaiian-medium schooling has produced 4,000 children assessed as fluent speakers of Hawaiian. These changes have come in tandem with impressive academic gains for historically underserved Native Hawaiian students. In a 2012 issue of the *Journal of American Indian Education (JAIE)*, Professor William Wilson of the University of Hawai'i Hilo reports on the P-12 Nʻwahʻokalaniʻpuʻu (Nʻwahʻ?) School, which boasts a 100 percent high school graduation and 80 percent college attendance rate. Although English is not introduced until grade 5, Nʻwahʻ? produces graduates who are college-, career-, and civic life-ready for English-dominant settings.



On the Navajo Nation, the Window Rock Unified School District (WRUSD) has run a voluntary Navajo immersion program since 1986. Reporting on the program's first 10 years, Agnes and Wayne Holm note that immersion students performed as well on local tests of English as their non-immersion peers, and better in English writing and math. Now a whole-school program called Tséhootsooí Diné Bi'ólta', immersion in WRUSD continues to demonstrate student achievement outcomes equivalent or better than those of English-medium schools serving Navajo students.

Between 2009 and 2011, I conducted a study of Navajo immersion at the K-5 Puente de Hózhó (Bridge of Beauty or PdH) Public Magnet School in Flagstaff, Arizona. Part of the national Promising Practices study led by Professor Bryan Brayboy of Arizona State University, the PdH study responded to Executive Order 13336's call for research on the role of Native languages and cultures in American Indian/Alaska Native student achievement. On state-required tests, PdH students equaled or surpassed their Native peers in English mainstream schools. In recent years, PdH has ranked among the district's top-performing schools. Equally important, the study showed that Navajo immersion brought parents and elders into the program, reinforcing intergenerational ties.

These are but a few examples of Native-language immersion programs demonstrating success:

Akwesasne (Mohawk) Freedom School in upstate New York

Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Yup'ik Immersion School in Bethel, Alaska

Cherokee Immersion Charter School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Cuts Wood (Blackfeet) Academy in Browning, Montana

Native American Community Academy (Lakota, Navajo, Tiwa) in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Waadookodaading (Ojibwe) Language Immersion School in Hayward, Wisconsin

While individual program data are informative, equally revelatory are national data. In a 2005 government-commissioned study of best practices in immersion schooling in New Zealand, Professor Stephen May and his associates at the University of Waikato found that Māori-medium programs in which 81 to 100 percent of instruction took place in Māori—called Level 1 programs—produced the strongest academic gains. The researchers attributed this to the well established “language interdependence principle”: The stronger a child becomes in Māori, the more likely s/he is to be successful in English. This also means that immersion requires several years to demonstrate optimal results; students who participated in Level 1 immersion for 6 to 8 years reaped the greatest linguistic, cognitive, cultural, and academic benefits.

In the Promising Practices study, we found that strong Native language and culture programs (equivalent to Māori Level 1) produced the greatest academic benefits, and benefits were cumulative. Therefore, programs need to be long-term. Long-term programs that begin with 90 to 100 percent of instructional time in the Native language and provide high-quality English instruction by the end of the program promote high levels of language acquisition and academic achievement.

Overall, what do three decades of research show? Close examination of the data confirms the benefits of well-implemented immersion in promoting students' language acquisition, enhanced test performance, increased school retention and graduation rates, college entry, and more diffuse but important outcomes such as parent involvement and cultural pride.

These are not the only goals of these programs, of course, as they are rooted in Native peoples' inherent and constitutionally and internationally recognized rights to sovereignty and self-determination. Further, Native-language immersion is a positive influence on diversity and equity in schools and society. More research is needed, but the evidence to date strongly indicates that Native-language immersion significantly benefits Native students.

Children get one chance at their P-12 education, and it serves them for life. They deserve the opportunities and academic benefits that Native-language immersion provides.

*Teresa L. McCarty is the G.F. Kneller Chair in Education and Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Alice Wiley Snell Professor Emerita of Education Policy Studies at Arizona State University. She is a fellow of the American Educational Research Association and the International Language Revitalization Center. Her recent books include Language Planning and Policy in Native America: History, Research, Praxis (Multilingual Matters, 2013).*



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He Mea Hai Ma Ka Papaha  
Kaulike Me Ke Pai Laemāuna

An Equal Opportunity/  
Affirmative Action Institution

March 27, 2019

To Legislators To Whom It May Concern

Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Aloha Members of the Alaska Legislature,

I write in support of legislation to facilitate Alaska Native language immersion programs such as House Bill 24.

My name is Dr. William H. Wilson. I am the senior faculty member of the Hawai'i State Hawaiian Language College, which is located on the Hilo campus of the University of Hawai'i. Our college is somewhat similar to the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, but was established quite a few years after the ANLC.

My academic background is in historical and applied linguistics, language revitalization, and indigenous languages in education. My wife, Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā, and I raised our two children totally in Hawaiian at home and educated them totally through Hawaiian immersion from preschool to grade 12. Upon high school graduation, they both went on to college and graduated – one from our own University of Hawai'i and one from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Both today have successful careers in business and both continue to use Hawaiian as their regular language of conversation with each other and with us.

I begin with the above details to provide some personal evidence that education through endangered indigenous languages can be highly successful both in terms of maintaining a precious indigenous heritage of a state and in terms of academic and economic outcomes. Furthermore, those successes can be accomplished – indeed in my experience are best accomplished – through innovative mobilization of community resources in the manner called for in House Bill 24.

My own children are atypical in that their parents are university professors. Approximately 70 percent of the other Native Hawaiian children educated with them were from “free and reduced lunch” backgrounds. Over 95 percent were Native Hawaiian, generally a particularly low-performing population in state schools. Nearly 100 percent of the teachers in our children's school were themselves Native Hawaiian, and many were either uncertified or teaching at a grade level or in a subject level for which they had not been certified. We were working together, however, as a community in educating the children. First graduating students in 1999, the school they attended, Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u,

(Nāwahī), has never had a dropout; and through the years over 85 percent of graduates have gone directly on to college.

While we are very proud of our children's school, similar results are being produced in the eight other Hawaiian immersion sites (or sets of classes in an English-medium school) that have reached through to the senior-high-school level. A portion of those sites teach partially through English beginning in middle school, and other like Nāwahī are taught totally through Hawaiian right through to the senior year. All sites are similar to Nāwahī, however, in the high proportion of students from lower economic backgrounds and in their enrollments being close to 100 percent Native Hawaiian. Recently the state published information that 20 percent of the teachers in schools teaching through Hawaiian statewide are uncertified compared to four percent uncertified teachers in the schools taught through English. Yet, outcomes relative to high school graduation and college attendance directly out of high school are higher in the schools taught through Hawaiian than in schools taught through English.

The statistics are as follows: Relative to “On Time High-School Graduation,” students in Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently graduate at a rate eight percentage points higher than Native Hawaiians in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 78 percent) and also three-percentage-points higher than the rate for non-Native Hawaiian students in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 83 percent). Relative to “Immediate Enrollment Into College,” students from Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently enroll directly into college at a rate 15 percentage points higher than other Native Hawaiians who have graduated from high school (61 percent vs. 46 percent) and at a rate 21 percent higher than lower-income Native Hawaiian graduates as a whole (61 percent vs. 40 percent).

While I do not have official statistics, it is a widespread observation that students in Hawaiian Immersion have special strengths in overall “wellness.” That is, they are well adjusted, polite, in better health, are contributors to society, and are statistically less likely to engage in risky behaviors. To give an example from the 2017 senior class at Nāwahī, both the division-one offensive and defensive football players of the year for our county of 190,800 people were from Nāwahī.

The Hawaiian-language-revitalization movement that produced these results began small, with handfuls of students in private-language-nest preschools. These preschools were taught by second-language learners and by fluent speakers, none of whom had state licensure. What the teachers had was knowledge of the language, knowledge of the culture, ability to connect with students, and a passion to share what they knew from a values base that had assured survival and success among Native Hawaiians for countless generations before.

From these roots, our Hawaiian-language education system slowly grew. We moved first into kindergarten and then added a grade a year through elementary school. We then moved on to middle school and through high school. We relied on the teachers that we were able to find – some licensed many not. But we parents persisted in pursuing Hawaiian-language education for their children, and we saw good educational results. The movement spread from our community to others statewide, and new sites continue to open.

Our preschools began first as community initiatives that were modeled in part on Hawai'i immigrant-language schools and partly on New Zealand Māori language nests. During the development of our schools, we discovered that legal provisions allowing immigrant language schools to hire teachers without certification did not apply to the non-foreign Hawaiian language. Indeed, we also discovered that an earlier system of government education through the Hawaiian language was closed down by law in 1896. That legislation barring use of Hawaiian as a medium of education was still on the books when we began our efforts in the early 1980s.

We decided to go to the legislature for relief. The state education establishment was opposed to our request; but after three years of lobbying, the legislature produced two bills. One bill completely exempted preschools taught through Hawaiian from any required licensures of teachers, a regulation parallel to what already existed for foreign-language schools. Through the second bill, passed that same year in 1986, the state legislature lifted the legal barrier to use of Hawaiian as a medium of education in the public schools. As a result, in 1987 we were able to matriculate our older children from the language-nest preschool into the state school system as a special class – or stream – in a mainstream English school. We added the next grade in 1989 and grew grade by grade from there, graduating the first seniors in 1999. Our son was in the first graduating class. Eventually enrollment became large enough to establish Nāwahī as a separate school site.

The Hawai'i State Legislature has been a strong supporter since those initial bills. Legislative support has paved the way for further development of education through Hawaiian. Our teacher licensing law includes a variety of provisions accounting for the unique status of Hawaiian language immersion teachers. We have a special set of certifications for Hawaiian immersion that allow teachers to teach K-12 because the immersion sites are small and teachers need to teach at multiple levels. The law includes a provision for special support for teachers who teach in Hawaiian immersion programs and for those who teach on Ni'ihau (an isolated island where everyone speaks Hawaiian), allowing extra time as they work toward certification.

We have been very fortunate in Hawai'i to have a supportive legislature. The mainstream educational establishment of our state including the State Department of Education, while highly concerned for the academic progress for Native Hawaiians, was actually initially opposed to Hawaiian immersion. Even today the educational mainstream in our state continues a tendency to follow practices and models that emanate from large national educational organizations based in the contiguous forty-eight states. This is why our legislators, grounded in the distinctiveness of our state and its communities, have been the ones providing leadership in opening up this Hawaiian immersion pathway. The legislature did not support Hawaiian immersion without us providing evidence that other countries had successfully implemented what we were advocating, but they did open up opportunities that would not have existed for us if the legislature had listened primarily to those from the educational mainstream who opposed Hawaiian immersion initiatives based on there being no such model within standard national educational practice in the contiguous forty-eight states.

In providing a legal pathway for Hawaiian immersion, our state legislature has greatly benefited Native Hawaiian communities and the state as a whole. I am very grateful for their groundbreaking support and the outcomes for my own family as well as for the larger population

of our state. I see many parallels in what the Alaska State Legislature is doing with House Bill 24. I commend your work in supporting Alaska Native communities that are seeking to grow Alaska Native language immersion education. I wish you all the success in your endeavors and would be happy to help in any way where our experiences here and some of the research of our College might be useful.

Dr. William H. Wilson  
Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo



March 28, 2019

Members of the 31st Alaska Legislature:

I am writing as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards to express support for House Bill 24, “an Act relating to instruction in a language other than English.”

The Association of Alaska School Boards is a statewide organization that advocates for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance. Our membership consists of over 330 board members across Alaska, and our 15 member Board of Directors represents all regions of the state.

Through numerous resolutions and initiatives, the Association of Alaska School Boards has demonstrated a sustained commitment to promoting Alaska Native language program development, encouraging the adoption of culturally responsive curriculums, and urging the hiring of qualified Alaska Native educators – all with a mind toward supporting the academic success and improved graduation rates of Alaska Native students.

Language immersion education is an effective means of achieving these stated goals and priorities, but our members regularly encounter challenges when hiring for immersion schools. House Bill 24 would provide crucial flexibility for school districts to employ fluent educators – particularly in Alaska Native languages – who are best-suited for language immersion programs.

Accordingly, the Association of Alaska School Board supports the passage of House Bill 24.

Sincerely,

Norm Wooten  
Executive Director  
Association of Alaska School Boards



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He Mea Hai Ma Ka Papaha  
Kaulike Me Ke Pai Laemāuna

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To Legislators To Whom It May Concern

Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Aloha Members of the Alaska Legislature,

I write in support of legislation to facilitate Alaska Native language immersion programs such as House Bill 24.

My name is Dr. William H. Wilson. I am the senior faculty member of the Hawai'i State Hawaiian Language College, which is located on the Hilo campus of the University of Hawai'i. Our college is somewhat similar to the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, but was established quite a few years after the ANLC.

My academic background is in historical and applied linguistics, language revitalization, and indigenous languages in education. My wife, Dr. Kauanoe Kamanā, and I raised our two children totally in Hawaiian at home and educated them totally through Hawaiian immersion from preschool to grade 12. Upon high school graduation, they both went on to college and graduated – one from our own University of Hawai'i and one from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Both today have successful careers in business and both continue to use Hawaiian as their regular language of conversation with each other and with us.

I begin with the above details to provide some personal evidence that education through endangered indigenous languages can be highly successful both in terms of maintaining a precious indigenous heritage of a state and in terms of academic and economic outcomes. Furthermore, those successes can be accomplished – indeed in my experience are best accomplished – through innovative mobilization of community resources in the manner called for in House Bill 24.

My own children are atypical in that their parents are university professors. Approximately 70 percent of the other Native Hawaiian children educated with them were from “free and reduced lunch” backgrounds. Over 95 percent were Native Hawaiian, generally a particularly low-performing population in state schools. Nearly 100 percent of the teachers in our children's school were themselves Native Hawaiian, and many were either uncertified or teaching at a grade level or in a subject level for which they had not been certified. We were working together, however, as a community in educating the children. First graduating students in 1999, the school they attended, Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u,



(Nāwahī), has never had a dropout; and through the years over 85 percent of graduates have gone directly on to college.

While we are very proud of our children's school, similar results are being produced in the eight other Hawaiian immersion sites (or sets of classes in an English-medium school) that have reached through to the senior-high-school level. A portion of those sites teach partially through English beginning in middle school, and other like Nāwahī are taught totally through Hawaiian right through to the senior year. All sites are similar to Nāwahī, however, in the high proportion of students from lower economic backgrounds and in their enrollments being close to 100 percent Native Hawaiian. Recently the state published information that 20 percent of the teachers in schools teaching through Hawaiian statewide are uncertified compared to four percent uncertified teachers in the schools taught through English. Yet, outcomes relative to high school graduation and college attendance directly out of high school are higher in the schools taught through Hawaiian than in schools taught through English.

The statistics are as follows: Relative to “On Time High-School Graduation,” students in Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently graduate at a rate eight percentage points higher than Native Hawaiians in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 78 percent) and also three-percentage-points higher than the rate for non-Native Hawaiian students in English-medium schools (86 percent vs. 83 percent). Relative to “Immediate Enrollment Into College,” students from Hawaiian Immersion Schools currently enroll directly into college at a rate 15 percentage points higher than other Native Hawaiians who have graduated from high school (61 percent vs. 46 percent) and at a rate 21 percent higher than lower-income Native Hawaiian graduates as a whole (61 percent vs. 40 percent).

While I do not have official statistics, it is a widespread observation that students in Hawaiian Immersion have special strengths in overall “wellness.” That is, they are well adjusted, polite, in better health, are contributors to society, and are statistically less likely to engage in risky behaviors. To give an example from the 2017 senior class at Nāwahī, both the division-one offensive and defensive football players of the year for our county of 190,800 people were from Nāwahī.

The Hawaiian-language-revitalization movement that produced these results began small, with handfuls of students in private-language-nest preschools. These preschools were taught by second-language learners and by fluent speakers, none of whom had state licensure. What the teachers had was knowledge of the language, knowledge of the culture, ability to connect with students, and a passion to share what they knew from a values base that had assured survival and success among Native Hawaiians for countless generations before.

From these roots, our Hawaiian-language education system slowly grew. We moved first into kindergarten and then added a grade a year through elementary school. We then moved on to middle school and through high school. We relied on the teachers that we were able to find – some licensed many not. But we parents persisted in pursuing Hawaiian-language education for their children, and we saw good educational results. The movement spread from our community to others statewide, and new sites continue to open.

Our preschools began first as community initiatives that were modeled in part on Hawai'i immigrant-language schools and partly on New Zealand Māori language nests. During the development of our schools, we discovered that legal provisions allowing immigrant language schools to hire teachers without certification did not apply to the non-foreign Hawaiian language. Indeed, we also discovered that an earlier system of government education through the Hawaiian language was closed down by law in 1896. That legislation barring use of Hawaiian as a medium of education was still on the books when we began our efforts in the early 1980s.

We decided to go to the legislature for relief. The state education establishment was opposed to our request; but after three years of lobbying, the legislature produced two bills. One bill completely exempted preschools taught through Hawaiian from any required licensures of teachers, a regulation parallel to what already existed for foreign-language schools. Through the second bill, passed that same year in 1986, the state legislature lifted the legal barrier to use of Hawaiian as a medium of education in the public schools. As a result, in 1987 we were able to matriculate our older children from the language-nest preschool into the state school system as a special class – or stream – in a mainstream English school. We added the next grade in 1989 and grew grade by grade from there, graduating the first seniors in 1999. Our son was in the first graduating class. Eventually enrollment became large enough to establish Nāwahī as a separate school site.

The Hawai'i State Legislature has been a strong supporter since those initial bills. Legislative support has paved the way for further development of education through Hawaiian. Our teacher licensing law includes a variety of provisions accounting for the unique status of Hawaiian language immersion teachers. We have a special set of certifications for Hawaiian immersion that allow teachers to teach K-12 because the immersion sites are small and teachers need to teach at multiple levels. The law includes a provision for special support for teachers who teach in Hawaiian immersion programs and for those who teach on Ni'ihau (an isolated island where everyone speaks Hawaiian), allowing extra time as they work toward certification.

We have been very fortunate in Hawai'i to have a supportive legislature. The mainstream educational establishment of our state including the State Department of Education, while highly concerned for the academic progress for Native Hawaiians, was actually initially opposed to Hawaiian immersion. Even today the educational mainstream in our state continues a tendency to follow practices and models that emanate from large national educational organizations based in the contiguous forty-eight states. This is why our legislators, grounded in the distinctiveness of our state and its communities, have been the ones providing leadership in opening up this Hawaiian immersion pathway. The legislature did not support Hawaiian immersion without us providing evidence that other countries had successfully implemented what we were advocating, but they did open up opportunities that would not have existed for us if the legislature had listened primarily to those from the educational mainstream who opposed Hawaiian immersion initiatives based on there being no such model within standard national educational practice in the contiguous forty-eight states.

In providing a legal pathway for Hawaiian immersion, our state legislature has greatly benefited Native Hawaiian communities and the state as a whole. I am very grateful for their groundbreaking support and the outcomes for my own family as well as for the larger population

of our state. I see many parallels in what the Alaska State Legislature is doing with House Bill 24. I commend your work in supporting Alaska Native communities that are seeking to grow Alaska Native language immersion education. I wish you all the success in your endeavors and would be happy to help in any way where our experiences here and some of the research of our College might be useful.

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