



Anchorage School District

Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

April 22, 2019

Dear Members of the 31st Alaska Legislature:

I am writing to express support for House Bill No. 24 pertaining to limited teacher certificates for language immersion programs.

The Anchorage School District has a longstanding history with dual language immersion programs. Our first program was Japanese, beginning in 1989. Since then, we have added two Spanish programs and we are home to the nation's very first Russian immersion program. We also have a K-8 German immersion charter school, with a continuation strand at Service High School. The aforementioned programs are all K-12. Three years ago, we launched a Mandarin Chinese immersion program (currently K-2), with plans to expand each year until it is also a K-12 program. Last August, we launched a Yup'ik immersion program using a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education. This is the first indigenous language immersion program in an urban setting in our nation. Finally, we will open a French immersion program next fall with plans to expand annually.

I provide this background to illustrate my district's long commitment to language programs, all of which have stemmed from community interest and grassroots efforts over the years. In addition to our immersion programs, ASD offers language classes at its middle and high schools. We offer Level I through Advanced Placement in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish, as well as Level I-IV in American Sign Language. Approximately 8,000 ASD students are enrolled in a second language offering, with roughly 2,500 students in our dual language immersion programs.

With multiple language programs in place, our ability to hire fully-qualified teachers with the high level of language proficiency needed to teach in an immersion program is an ongoing challenge. Very rarely do we have a pool of candidates—teachers with native or near-native language proficiency who are eligible to be certificated under existing regulations from which to draw, and we find ourselves constantly recruiting to fill these “hard to fill” vacancies.

We have taken advantage of DEED's “program enrollment” option, which requires candidates to enroll in a teacher education program while they are teaching full-time. This has not been easy on our teachers who are doing so. We also recognize that DEED has recently developed a Type W limited certificate. However, it still requires a teacher preparation program.

Educating All Students for Success in Life

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Superintendent Dr. Deena Bishop

I am not suggesting that we support candidates who have not completed a teacher education program, however, sometimes it is impossible to find certificated candidates who have the language proficiency needed for the position and who have also completed a teacher preparation program. It is worth noting that these candidates are highly educated individuals, many of whom hold advanced degrees from their home countries, including engineers, doctors, lawyers, and accountants.

ASD is supportive of the flexibility that HB 24 offers with respect to sharing with the State Board of Education our experience and challenges with operating immersion programs. We support HB 24 and the creation of a one-year limited certificate for "instruction in a language other than English." ASD welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the certificate as the State Board develops the regulations. ASD foresees using limited certificates in rare circumstances.

HB 24 provides the flexibility needed to ensure that ASD has native or near-native speakers of our given immersion languages in the classroom. This option will be helpful as we continue to provide the highest quality language immersion education possible, ensuring that hired individuals have the content knowledge and subject area expertise required to teach in their assigned area.

Thank you for allowing me to comment in support of HB 24. Please let me know if you have questions.

Respectfully,



Dr. Deena Bishop
Superintendent, Anchorage School District



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

Cordelia Kellie

2001 W. 34th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99517
cordeliakellie@gmail.com

Representative Kreiss-Tomkins
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

March 27, 2019

RE: Support for HB 24, Relating to Limited Teacher Certificates

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

I am writing in support of HB 24, an act relating to instruction in a language other than English and limited teacher certificates.

Uvaṅa Qigṅaaq. Inuuruṅa Kisaḡvinṅmi paṅmakpak aglaan ilatka Uḷḡuniḡmiugurut. My name is Qigṅaaq and I live in Anchorage at this time, but my family is from Wainwright.

Utuqqanaaḡuḡniaqtugut. Aitchuḡukvivut miḡliqtuptinnun lṅupiat llṅqusiāt, lṅupiuraallaniḡlu. We are going to be elders. We want to gift to our children lṅupiaq values and the value of knowledge of language.

Taimanigu, iṅuit lṅupiuraaḡniaqtut nunaaqiptinni – miḡliqtullu utuqqanaallu. One day, people will be speaking lṅupiaq in our communities, our children and our elders.

Through years of working in grassroots language revitalization efforts with adult second-language learners, many in our community have concluded that immersion schools are going to be the tool which makes headway in creating fluent speakers and returning vibrancy to our Indigenous languages. In fact, several of my colleagues and peers are working on such designs at this time.

What is distinctive about HB 24 is that it provides a mechanism to put teachers in immersion classrooms, immediately.

There has been concern in years passed about the language in this bill in relation to levels of competency of those seeking to teach content through the language.

However, many of us working to learn our languages have degrees, and additionally, several of are even pursuing advanced degrees such as myself. To not consider passing

this legislation grossly underestimates our Native community and our growing capacity in the Western educational sense, in addition to being who we are.

I support this legislation, I support immersion schools, and I support pathways to put teachers in those immersion schools. Furthermore, I am an example of someone who could take advantage of HB 24: I am learning Iñupiaq, have an English/Communications degree, and 10 years of professional experience. With HB 24, I could be in a classroom teaching language arts or writing through the language, similar to how immersion schools do across the nation.

I thank you for sponsoring this legislation. Quyanaqpauraq (thank you very much).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Qigñaaq".

Qigñaaq Cordelia Kellie



KULANUI O
HAWAI'I MA HILO

Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani
College of Hawaiian Language

<http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/khuok/>

MOKUNA
PAPAHAHA KĀLA'I'IKE
Academic Studies Division

Muapuka
Undergraduate Programs

Mulipuka
Graduate Programs

Kula Mauli Ola
Laboratory Schools

Kahuawaiola
Indigenous Teacher Education Program

MOKUNA
HALE KUAMO'O
Hawaiian Language Center

Ho'oiikaika Kumu
Hawaiian Medium Teacher Development

Ho'omohala Ha'awina
Lawelawe Pāpaho & Keleka'a'ike
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He Mea Hai Ma Ka Papaha
Kaulike Me Ke Pai Laemāuna

An Equal Opportunity/
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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.

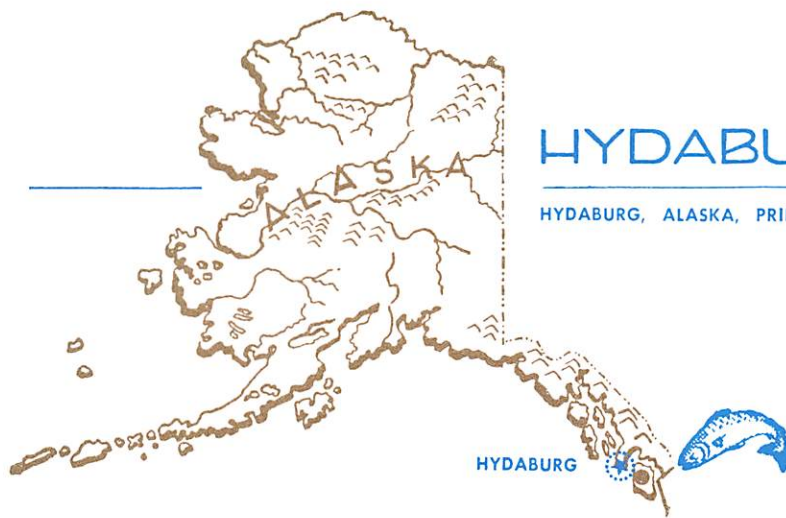
The Hawai'i State Legislature has been a strong supporter since those initial bills. Legislative support has paved the way for further development of education through Hawaiian. Our teacher licensing law includes a variety of provisions accounting for the unique status of Hawaiian language immersion 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



HYDABURG CITY SCHOOL

HYDABURG, ALASKA, PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND 99922

April 4, 2019

Members of the 31st Alaska Legislature:

We at the Hydaburg City School District support HB 24, "An act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and relating to limited teacher certifications." In our community, our students have struggled with education. A significant element of the struggle is the disconnect between cultural lifeways and the systems and processes of the schools. Over the past few years, we have been working hard to integrate cultural lifeways into our local schools in authentic ways. These ways include Haida language immersion pre-school, a focus on culturally responsive social and emotional learning, addressing academic gaps through experiential learning, focusing on career and technical education as a career pathway, and truly involving the community in our schools. As a result, we are steadily making gains.

Based on our understanding, HB 24 supports limited teacher certifications for language immersion education, and continues to support limited teacher certificates for Alaska Native Culture and vocational and technical education. These three elements have the potential to help us develop our programs through engaging instructors who have areas of deep expertise and wisdom, but not necessarily college degrees or regular teacher certification. The passage of HB 24 would also enable us to honor and compensate local instructors who have much to offer but are unable to instruct independently due to licensure compliance expectations. Often, due to lack of certified staff in these areas, course quality either suffers or schedules remain unfilled as important courses are not offered. In our community schools, Alaska Native Culture is essential learning as is career and technical education. We cannot develop appropriate programs without qualified instructors and in these crucial areas, qualified does not necessarily mean formally educated.

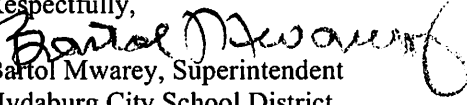
We at HCSD also appreciate that HB 24 provides the basis for stipulation that teachers instructing under a limited certificate achieve appropriate training and education as expected by the community school board and state board. While we appreciate the versatility of limited certification, we also recognize that training may be valuable for these individuals. This element supports our talented community members to achieve additional education and training while also sharing their current experience with learners.

HCSD support of HB 24 is aligned with what we believe in for our community. Alaska Native Culture is essential to the wellbeing of our students and community; instruction and instructors should be valued. Vocational training provides a career path for many of our students and should not be curtailed by a lack

of teachers when many have the content expertise to teach in this area. Finally, Alaska Native language immersion programs have the potential to save Alaska Native languages, HB 24 empowers this effort.

Thank you for bringing HB 24 forward and for your support of communities such as Hydaburg that are seeking to develop programs that are aligned with our cultural and social realities.

Respectfully,


Bartol Mwarey, Superintendent
Hydaburg City School District

April 20, 2019

Dear House Labor and Commerce Committee Members,

I'm submitting my written testimony as a member of the public in support of HB 24. I grew up in Fairbanks and have background in education and specific interest in bilingual education as well as language revitalization. I left Alaska to attend Dartmouth College and later got a masters in education equity with focus on bilingual education at the CU Boulder. Last year I worked for the Anchorage School District, Title VI Indian Education Office coordinating Project Ki'L which is an afterschool program serving over 200 Alaska Native youth in 6 schools. I worked every day to support the academic success of these at-risk students because male Alaska Native students specifically face the highest drop out rates and lowest academic achievement of any demographic our district serves. I support HB 24 because I know that for indigenous youth, learning a heritage language can support not just academic achievement but also better mental and physical health outcomes, including a dramatic decrease in suicide and diabetes rates.

Knowing multiple languages further prepares graduates from Alaskan schools to be highly competitive in an increasingly global job market. Dual language immersion programs, which teach content in both English and the target language, are widely regarded as the most effective way to reach fluency in a second language and additionally benefit students' academic performance in English and overall learning outcomes. For example, students from immersion programs demonstrate higher academic achievement in English as measured by standardized tests, ACT and SAT scores, and academic performance in college. It's worth noting, second language instruction had the highest effect on scores in the ACT's English subsection. Specific skills that students learning a second language improve on include reading comprehension, language mechanics, and language expression, and the ability to think divergently. Students also demonstrate stronger word knowledge, spelling, math computation, and math problem solving. This is because students transfer skills between the languages they learn.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this bill would address the critical shortage of teachers and enable districts to hire the most qualified individuals to best serve our students by providing schools with flexibility necessary to staff immersion schools with effective teachers. A lack of certified teachers is a crucial barrier for many of Alaska's existing and proposed immersion programs. HB 24 would allow school boards to hire teachers they deem the most qualified for immersion programs, through an individualized vetting process. This bill provides important de-regulation and opportunities for increased local control by enabling school districts to hire talented teachers on a case by case basis. Alaska already has a shortage of teacher applicants and finding certified teachers who can teach content in another language can be prohibitively difficult. This bill widens the hiring pool and enables immersion schools to fill vacancies, that sometimes for lack of other options are staffed with subs who don't even speak the target language, with skilled individuals.

I personally understand how long it takes to become proficient in another language and have been studying Spanish since middle school, and while I'm conversational, I wish I had had the opportunity to study in an immersion program to gain true fluency. For all these reasons and more I encourage you to strongly support HB 24.

Sincerely,
Margi Dashevsky