

TESTIMONY ON HB108 – Concurrent Secondary & Trade School

Chair Drummand, Chair Stori, House Education Committee Members, my name is Trish Zugg, I am the Career & Technical Education Program Administrator for the Mat-Su Borough School District.

The key to providing an educated, skilled, and ready workforce in Alaska, is seamlessly CONNECTING our systems of learning and labor; thereby, ensuring clarity of expectations at every level. Connected systems of education and labor fortify the effectiveness of the whole pathway of learning, of the transitioning between systems, and ultimately participation in the workforce.

High quality Career & Technical Education and effective workforce development should be evidence based. A rigorous sequence of study, recognized credentials, equity in access, technical expert instructors, contextualization of academics (and that means for most of our students, the answering of “when and how will I ever use this math”), but the richest and most effective evidence is that of work-based learning. Extending learning outside the classroom is what congeals the classroom instruction with workforce expectations.

Our goal is to have work-based learning opportunities for all our students. Work-based learning is a spectrum of experiences from learning **ABOUT** work (guest presenters, mock interview, workplace tours), learning **THROUGH** work (job shadow), and learning **AT** work (internships, apprenticeship). Apprenticeship as an example, is a gold standard for learning AT work. The key is, learning AT work provides for a means to earn while you learn in high demand careers, where there are proven results based on industry standards related instruction, a route to career advancement, credentialing, a pathway to degrees, and a means to afford higher education.

Work-based learning, or extending the classroom to industry & training opportunity, is not just formalizing transitions to the traditionally trades; but also, to sectors such as Healthcare, Aviation, Information Technology, Hospitality and Financial Services.

The preparing and transitioning of ALL our students for success is our goal. We desire not to ready them for one specific level of transition, but to prepare them for all levels they might decide to pursue. Of the many transition options, work-based learning & training, when intentionally designed through

connected systems, positions ALL students for better clarity of workforce expectations and productivity.

Work-based learning is intentional preparation for life, for the development of character and good citizenship, not just a preparation for a job. This construct of work-based learning is critical in addressing what professionals say really matter, that is, simultaneously technical training for both the soft “employability” and hard “technical” skills. The inherent strong relationship that is developed between students and employers/trainers explicitly provides for both of these critical skill sets in ways traditional classroom alone does not. It’s applying what you have learned in a live environment.

In closing,

Because work-based learning is employer driven, the need for systems and employers to collaborate are key. I serve in a district with high-quality education and training with proven pliability...we stand ready to customize our education training outcomes to the specific needs for employer and workforce success. Most important to that success, we must have the employer buy-in and systems to facilitate. We are committed to enthusiastically advocating for and preparing our students to be paired with incentivized employers/trainers. This bill would help create the conduit for those incentives and pairings to happen, and for them to happen systemically, more robustly, and as an INSTITUTIONALIZED norm. Work-based learning which includes pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship, internships, job shadowing, training intensives, and more; should become part of the DNA of our workforce readiness, this bill would be foundational to better guide and support that effort.

The win-win is that industry gains a more upskilled workforce that is invested locally, resulting in recruitment gains and reduction in employee turnover. The inherent strong relationship that is developed between work-based learners and employer trainers, further fosters retention and confidence. **MSBSD supports HB 108 because it is good for the post-secondary education readiness of all Alaskans, for the Alaskan workforce, and our economy.**

Invited Testimony for HB108
January 23, 2022

Jamie Burgess, Superintendent for Nome Public Schools

The recent federal infrastructure act will bring a significant amount of funding for capital projects into the State of Alaska, and along with it, new jobs in industries such as construction, welding, heavy equipment operation, pipefitting, and more. In addition, the ever increasing high cost and challenges for students in rural Alaska to participate in traditional college or university options mean it is incumbent upon those of us in educational leadership to ensure that career and technical educational opportunities are available for our students. For many decades, we pushed hard for our students to be ready for college, and now we recognize that there needs to be a balance in our offerings to our students. Here in Nome, the progress towards a deep draft port means new jobs are coming, the majority of which will be “blue-collar” in nature, and we want those jobs to go to our regional residents. In addition, in our region, there is a huge need for qualified individuals such as plumbers, welders, automotive mechanics, electricians, and other similar jobs. Every day I see people begging for help on our social media, as those individuals in town or in the villages who do know how to do these jobs are incredibly overworked.

We do recognize that there will be challenges in developing program contracts for concurrent vocational training in rural Alaska that meet industry standards for apprenticeships, and in finding industry certified instructors. This will likely require creativity, collaboration and partnerships between rural districts, rural and road districts and post-secondary organizations in the state which typically certify instructors and provide journeyman opportunities for students. For example, Nome has a model program called NACTEC which is a partnership between Nome Public Schools and the Bering Strait School District and provides short-term residential Career and Technical coursework for students in BSSD and NPS as well. Nome-Beltz Middle/High School was originally built in 1964 as a vocational residential school for young Alaska Native individuals in the region and has one of the most spacious and exceptional well designed and equipped metal, construction and automotive shop facilities in rural Alaska, and NACTEC takes every possible advantage of this to provide programs to students of both BSSD and NPS. The entire Senate Finance Committee recently had an opportunity to visit our facilities and can testify to how well-equipped our facilities area. Adding on an apprenticeship program would be easier for NPS students since NACTEC facilities are based in Nome and no travel would be needed. However, creativity is something that we in rural Alaska do particularly well.

Regardless, I believe HB108 is a step in the right direction in recognizing that providing apprenticeships for students while in high school is similar to efforts to allow students to take college credits while in high school. We should allow students to have equal opportunities for early readiness for a technical career as for a college experience, since in our rapidly evolving workforce, technical jobs can pay as well or better than many jobs requiring a four year degree, often with much less post-secondary training and debt.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak with you.