



Representative Andi Story

House District 3

Alaska State Legislature

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 31

February 8, 2023

“An Act relating to the Alaska performance scholarship program.”

For the last decade, the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) has made postsecondary education more accessible and affordable for Alaska’s young adults. The scholarship has helped thousands of students afford college and career technical certifications, and encouraged countless students to stay on track to be college and career ready upon graduation. Furthermore, APS encourages students to attend postsecondary education in-state and is critical to building Alaska’s workforce.

However, according to a 2021 study by the McDowell Group for the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), the APS award has fallen almost three-quarters short of its expected eligibility and use. The modernization of APS will help meet our students and industry workforce needs.

To expand student use, this bill seeks to expand the eligible pool of APS applicants by adding up to one year of career technical education (CTE) courses as an option to the required curriculum for APS eligibility. The skills learned in CTE courses are of high student interest and needed in many career fields in the Alaska workforce. Furthermore, in Alaska, data shows that students enrolled in CTE concentrators are seventeen percent more likely to graduate than their counterparts.

House Bill 31 also seeks to achieve the vision of making APS more accessible and affordable to hardworking Alaskans by incorporating the findings of the McDowell Group’s APS study. The bill does this in several ways:

1. Adds career technical education (CTE) courses, up to one year, to count towards eligibility for the APS. This encourages students to pursue careers needed in the Alaska workforce.
2. Increases the eligibility window for use of the award from six years after graduation to eight years.
3. Increases the award amount for the first time in over twelve years, keeping the scholarship competitive compared to offers from out-of-State institutions.
4. Removes the standardized testing requirements. There is growing evidence that college entrance exam scores aren’t correlated to success in postsecondary performance, and that GPA is a much better indicator. Also, entrance exams are increasingly proven to create barriers to student eligibility because of the geographic and financial hurdles.
5. Keeps students aware of their standing and remaining requirements needed to achieve the award.
6. Notifies the student at the beginning of their junior year, that they have met the requirements of APS if they finish their courses their senior year.

Financial assistance provided by the APS is vital to many young Alaskans seeking postsecondary training. Affordable postsecondary education offers students the opportunity to attain skills that can lead to valuable jobs and satisfying careers. The proposed changes to APS will help address our workforce needs.

I appreciate your consideration of House Bill 31.