



The Associated Students of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 31st, 2026

TO: Ashley Carrick, Representative

CC: Julie Queen, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services
Owen Guthrie, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Tom Hough, Executive Director of University Advancement
Mike Sfraga, Interim Chancellor
Charlene Stern, Interim Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
Bonnie Brennan, ASUAF Senate Chair
Brynn Illingworth, ASUAF External Affairs Chair
Yan Vyshynskiy, ASUAF Vice President
Lilly Varney, ASUAF Director of Public Relations
Victoria Thompson, ASUAF Advisor
Chad Hutchinson, UA State Relations Director
Leah Berman, UAF Faculty Senate President

RE: **Reflections on HB 176 from UAF Student Leadership**

Dear Representative Carrick,

First, we want to say thank you. Not just for your work as a legislator, but for the way you continue to show up for the University of Alaska and for students. It means a lot to us students to see someone who once sat in our seats now shaping policy at the state level.

On behalf of the student body at UAF, we wanted to reach out specifically regarding [HB 176](#). We wanted to share how students are thinking about the practical implications of the bill as written, and how it could play out on campuses day to day.

At a high level, students strongly support the values behind this bill. Transparency, accountability, and student protection around fees are all things we care about deeply. Where questions begin to surface is not around the “why,” but around the “how.”

Misinterpretation and Misplaced Outrage

One concern that has surfaced repeatedly is how system-wide fee notifications might be interpreted by students. Because the University of Alaska operates as a single entity, many students would receive notices about fees that don't apply to them or their campus. In practice, this could create confusion and, in some cases, misplaced frustration. A student might reasonably assume they are being charged more for a service they don't use or don't even have access to, simply because they received a notification about it. That misunderstanding has the potential to generate outrage where none is warranted, which ultimately undermines trust rather than strengthening it.

Message Fatigue

Closely related to this concern is the risk of message fatigue. Students are already experiencing message fatigue due to the volume of fee-related and administrative communications they receive. When students are repeatedly alerted to fee changes that have little or no direct impact on their education, important messages can begin to blur together. Adding additional layers of mandatory fee communication would not solve this problem and instead risks pushing an already strained system past a breaking point, increasing the chance that students miss critical alerts about safety, academic deadlines, and opportunities.

Local Governance and Context

We're also thinking carefully about how this framework interacts with existing governance structures. Many fee decisions are currently handled at the campus level, where context can be explained clearly and students have direct, meaningful avenues for feedback through student government and shared governance bodies. That local proximity really matters. It allows decisions to be shaped by the people *most directly* affected and informed by the realities of each campus. An additional bureaucratic barrier between students and the decisions that have the greatest impact on them could be introduced by centralizing fee communication. Since it gives more weight to system-wide notifications than to conversations at the campus level, it could inadvertently reduce the student voice in shared governance.

Operational Delays

Another concern is the potential for operational delays. If even small or time-sensitive fee adjustments must go through a full Board process, campuses may not be able to respond quickly enough to meet academic needs within a semester. In practice, this could mean delays in securing course materials, lab supplies, software licenses, or other required resources, or in some cases, students losing access to them altogether. While oversight is important, we worry that excessive procedural requirements could negatively affect the student learning experience.

Recommendations

How HB 176 moves forward is ultimately your decision. If you choose to advance it, we respectfully offer the following recommendations to preserve the bill’s intent while reducing unintended impacts on students and campuses.

- **Establish a de minimis threshold**

Exempt minor, course-specific fee adjustments from triggering a 30-day notice requirement, particularly when changes are operational in nature and affect a small number of students.

- **Target notifications to impacted students**

Limit required fee notifications to students at the affected university or campus, rather than issuing system-wide notices that might cause confusion or misplaced concern.

- **Adopt a tiered transparency framework**

Maintain robust notice and Board-level oversight for mandatory, system-wide fees, while allowing campus-specific or course-level fees to be communicated individually by each university.

We share these thoughts with a great deal of respect for the intent behind HB 176 and for the care you bring to student issues. Our hope is simply to highlight how students may experience this policy in practice, and where well-intentioned transparency could, without refinement, lead to confusion or unintended consequences. Thank you for taking the time to consider the student perspective. We appreciate your leadership and your continued willingness to engage directly with students and student government.

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Jackson Nelson, ASUAF President

Yan Vyshynskiy, ASUAF Vice President

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Lilly Varney, ASUAF Director of Public Relations

Brynn Illingworth, ASUAF External Affairs Chair

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Bonnie Brennan, ASUAF Senate Chair