



April 13, 2026

SB 20 CPR Curriculum

To: House Education Committee

From: Lon Garrison, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)

Co-Chairs Himschoot and Story, and members of the House Education Committee:

For the record, my name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 20.

AASB acknowledges and supports the value of CPR education. Teaching students hands-on CPR is a practical, life-saving skill that can improve emergency response outcomes and contribute to safer communities across Alaska. The intent of SB 20—to expand access to this knowledge and increase the number of trained bystanders—is both commendable and important.

SB 20 would require the Department of Education and Early Development to adopt curriculum for hands-on CPR instruction, determine grade levels for delivery, and require school districts to provide that instruction. The bill further requires that the curriculum be based on national, evidence-based guidelines, include instruction on the use of automated external defibrillators, and incorporate hands-on practice in addition to cognitive learning.

This proposal aligns in part with AASB's commitment to student wellness and safety. Preparing students to respond effectively in emergency situations supports the broader goal of ensuring that Alaska's students are healthy, safe, and prepared for life beyond school. However, AASB has concerns regarding the practical implementation of this requirement under current conditions in Alaska's public education system.

First, SB 20 creates a new statewide requirement without providing dedicated funding or implementation support. School districts across Alaska are already operating under severe fiscal constraints. Many districts have reduced staff, eliminated programs, and, in some cases, closed schools due to ongoing budget shortfalls. In this context, even well-intentioned requirements become difficult to support when they lack the resources necessary for successful implementation.

While the bill allows for some flexibility in who may deliver the instruction, districts will still need to allocate staff time, coordinate scheduling, ensure appropriate training, and potentially acquire or access equipment. These are real and immediate costs. AASB has consistently raised concerns about the cumulative impact of adding new expectations to school systems that are



already under-resourced. We are particularly mindful of our long-standing position opposing unfunded mandates placed on school districts.

Second, we encourage clarification of the statutory requirement for “hands-on” practice. While we understand and support the importance of experiential learning in CPR instruction, the term “hands-on” is not defined in the bill. Without further clarification, this could lead to varying interpretations across districts and may create uncertainty about the level of equipment, instructor certification, or student demonstration required. Greater specificity would help ensure consistent and reasonable implementation statewide.

Third, we encourage continued attention to local flexibility. Alaska’s school districts vary widely in size, geography, and access to personnel and resources. Preserving flexibility in how districts deliver CPR instruction will be essential to ensuring that the requirement can be implemented effectively and realistically for communities across the state.

In closing, AASB supports the importance of CPR education and the goal of expanding access to this critical life-saving skill. However, we have concerns about districts’ ability to implement this requirement given current funding levels and operational constraints. **Given the importance of this new curricular requirement, AASB wants to ensure that districts can meet the requirements of this potentially lifesaving statutory requirement.** We respectfully encourage the committee to consider the need for implementation support, **clarify the statutory language related to “hands-on” instruction**, and ensure that districts retain the flexibility necessary to meet this requirement.