



April 15, 2026

SB 143 Municipal School Board Terms - AASB Oral Testimony

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. For the record, my name is Lon Garrison, Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

SB 143 is a governance bill, and it aligns strongly with AASB's long-standing beliefs and resolutions **supporting local control**.

School boards occupy a unique role in Alaska. They are **locally elected officials fulfilling a state responsibility**—governing public education on behalf of their communities. While the State establishes the constitutional and statutory framework for education, it is local school boards, elected through **locally determined processes**, that are directly accountable to their communities for how that responsibility is carried out. That balance between state responsibility and local control is foundational to Alaska's system of public education.

SB 143 is consistent with that structure. It allows municipalities to determine whether adjustments to school board term lengths make sense locally, while requiring approval by voters. That reinforces both **local decision-making and public accountability**.

This bill aligns directly with AASB policy, including:

- **Belief B.1 – Local Governance**, affirming that public education is best governed by locally elected boards accountable to their communities;
- **Resolution 1.10 – Local Control for the Operation of School Districts**, supporting local authority over governance decisions; and
- **Resolution 1.11 – Local Control for Determining School Board Term Limits and Representation**, affirming that decisions about school board service and structure should be made locally.

There are also practical strengths. In some communities, aligning school board terms with other municipal elections could reduce election costs and support greater continuity in governance—both important considerations.

At the same time, there are trade-offs. Longer terms may reduce the frequency of elections and opportunities for voter input. Some communities may value continuity, while others may prefer more frequent accountability. SB 143 appropriately leaves that decision to local voters.



In closing, AASB supports the principle of local flexibility reflected in SB 143 and its strong alignment with our beliefs and resolutions on local governance.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this proposed legislation.

B.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Public education is the responsibility of the states and of the local school boards created by those states. This system of local school board governance is one of the purest examples of democracy in action today in that school boards, as locally elected representatives, are held accountable for public education by the public they serve as locally elected representatives. The mission of the Association of Alaska School Boards is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing students with quality public education, focused on student achievement through effective local governance.

Amended 2003, 2007, 2009

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1.10 LOCAL CONTROL FOR THE OPERATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AASB strongly supports the fundamental right of local control in all facets of the operation of local school districts and decisions affecting the education of public school students. AASB is protective of local control to include but not limited to the following:

- AASB is opposed to mandated school district or local school consolidation.
- AASB is opposed to mandated borough formation or consolidation.
- AASB is opposed to any attempt to create alternatives to the creation, operation, or revocation of charters for charter schools. Alaska’s charter schools are public schools authorized, supported, and governed by local school boards.
- AASB opposes any overreach into the operation of local schools by both the state and federal government. School boards willingly comply with legislation that provides guidance but opposes regulatory direction beyond the general intent of legislation.
- AASB opposes any legislative intent to determine term limits for school board members. Local communities have the right of self-determination and are the best qualified to make decisions based on what is in the best interest for their students.
- AASB opposes non-legislative changes to the State funding formula, including those that further restrict local governance and decision-making for school funding already outlined in the State funding formula.
- AASB requests the legislature to evaluate the impact of open enrollment in correspondence programs on local districts and municipalities.

Rationale. Self-determination and local control of both Borough/Municipal school districts and Rural Education Attendance Area school districts are granted by the [Alaska State Constitution](#) and empowered through Alaska Statutes for these self-determination rights and local control of education. [Alaska State Constitution Article 1, Section 2](#) – “All political power is inherent in the people. All government originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted for the good of the people as a whole.” [Article 10, Section 1](#) – “The purpose of this article is to provide for maximum local self-government....”. [Article 10, Section 2](#) – “All local government powers shall be vested in boroughs and cities.....”. [AS 14.08.101](#) – Powers of an REAA Regional School Board and [AS 14.14.090](#) – Duties of a Borough school board provide for broad authority for local school boards to operate, manage, oversee local public schools. “One size fits all” is not a valid or appropriate path for education. Local citizens know best what their students need and are able to discern the most appropriate curriculum, instructional methodology, and cultural nuances that provide the best education for their children.

Adopted 2024

Amended 2025

(Sunsets 2029)

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1.11 SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTROL FOR DETERMINING SCHOOL BOARD TERM LIMITS AND SECTIONAL REPRESENTATION

AASB supports the fundamental right of local control in determining the maximum length of service a school board member may serve (i.e., term limit). AASB supports and believes in the principle of local self-determination in regard to length of service and school board member sectional representation within the boundaries of any school district.

Rationale. While the basic structure for school boards is well defined in Alaska statute ([AS 14.08.041](#) and [AS 14.12.030](#)) the number of terms an elected school board member may serve is not prescribed by state law. In addition, Alaska statute defers decisions for sectional representation by school board members to local voters within either a Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) ([AS 14.08.051](#)), borough, or city school district. The basic tenet of local, democratically elected control of governance for school districts has long been championed and advocated for by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). Thus, AASB will continue to protect such principles and practices and resist any efforts to create statewide mandates that supersede local control.

Adopted 2019

Renewed 2024

(Sunsets 2029)

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