




March 10, 2025

Senate Education Committee

Alaska Senate

State Capitol

Juneau, AK 99801

By Email:senate.education@akleg.gov

Dear Senators:

I am writing this letter in support of Karen Perdue who will be up for confirmation for a Regent of the University of Alaska at the March 17 meeting of the Senate Education Committee.

Karen has had a distinguished career of public service to Alaska: (1) a seven-year stint as Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services for the Knowles Administration (2) as member of the University of Alaska Board of Regents for the last eight-years and (3) a Board member of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital for many years.

Despite different political persuasions, Governor Dunleavy has chosen to reappoint Karen because of her past key leadership as a member of the Board of Regents.

I urge you to support Karen's confirmation.

Sincerely,

Bill Corbus

Date: 10 March 2025

To: Senate.Education@akleg.gov

I write in strong support of **Karen Perdue's candidacy for being confirmed by the Alaska Legislature to the University of Alaska's Board of Regents** following her appointment for a second term by Governor Dunleavy. Karen has superb qualifications and experience for serving in a second term, in particular for BOR oversight of issues related to educating and training UA students seeking careers in health and biomedical research due her service for eight years as Commissioner of Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services and 10 years as Associate Vice President of Health Programs at the University of Alaska. In the latter capacity Karen oversaw the growth of UA's nursing programs and that of our participation in WWAMI, the western states collective program for training physicians through affiliation with the University of Washington's School of Medicine. Karen's experience as an administrator both to the state legislature and for the university makes her unique in both knowledge of and practice for translating state priorities to positive change in how the university works.

Karen's interests in serving Alaska in her retirement include her role on the board of the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital Foundation and her many individual efforts of giving and outreach, local and statewide, as recognized by being honored as a Distinguished Citizen by both the Girl and Boy Scouts. Karen works effectively in the setting of the BOR as a respectful listener of opinions from students, faculty, and administrators, but also as an advocate for responsible improvement of BOR policies and regulations, the foundation for UA operations. With her experience with the UA, she serves as a resource to the entire BOR.

In my roles as a faculty member for 38 years at UAF, 30 years as Science Director for our Toolik Field Station, 20 years as the Director of the Institute of Arctic Biology, and 10 years as Director of Alaska INBRE (the NIH sponsored program for building in capacity biomedical and health research across Alaska), I carry the upmost respect and admiration for Karen Perdue's abilities and energy to constructively lead UA into the future. I urge you to confirm her appointment.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Barnes, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Administrator Emeritus
University of Alaska
[REDACTED]

March 10, 2025

Senate Education Committee Members

RE: Letter of Support for Confirmation of Ms. Karen Perdue, UA Board of Regents

Respected Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Please allow me to provide this letter to you in support of Karen Perdue, who is currently serving on University of Alaska Board of Regent, under her prior eight year term. As you know she will continue to do so until a confirmation is completed to re-appoint her for another eight years, or another individual is appointed.

You may not know of my background on this particular arena so let me briefly provide that. I was appointed to UA Board of Regents in 2011 and served till end of my term in December 2018. I was Chair of the Board of Regents for two years. I am a big supporter of higher Education and a proud double alumna of University of Alaska, Fairbanks. In my professional life, I am the former President & CEO of Denali State Bank, a bank I help start in 1986 and later led as its Chief Executive Officer and President from 2002 to 2012, at which point, I retired.

During my years as UA Regent, I was regularly asked about what I did, even from University staff and others in the UA system. There is a lack of understanding about the role of a regent. Also, there are some misconceptions about it as well. Did I get free tuition for myself and my family? NO. Did I get compensation for every meeting? NO. Did I get privileges like free use of Student Recreation Center? NO. Did I get free parking? NO. You get the drift!

What I did get was an opportunity to engage, advocate, understand, and provide oversight to this great institution. In my eight years of service, the good times were behind us, meaning we were no longer building new buildings, adding programs, adding staff and faculty, but were looking at budget cuts, shutting down programs, looking at where we could cut expenses, reduce rural and smaller campuses, trim down athletics. It was heartbreaking work, why? Because at the end of every decision, there were people involved, their livelihood at stake, their future at risk. In my tenure we had possibly more meetings than any other prior eight year term. We had two Chancellors retire, UA President retire, and Title IX became a huge and time consuming issue. There was anxiety, uncertainty, and a lot of concern about good people leaving our University. Students, who are and always will be our primary focus, were affected by all these decisions.

My intention in recapping this is to perhaps take the liberty of outlining for you in a brief manner that the role a Regent plays for eight years is not a walk in the park. It's a lot of work, lot of time that is required and we get to work with really tough issues. The Regents

Letter of Support: Karen Perdue, UA Board of Regents

are faced with challenges that are known, like budgets, deferred maintenance on aging infrastructure; (no money), student enrollment, student and faculty successes, and then those that come out of nowhere and suddenly become a huge issue.

When faced with challenging issues, as the University has in the past few weeks, it's not something that Regents take lightly. Every decision made will make some people very unhappy. However, the Regents are advised when they begin their term that their focus needs to be across the board, not geographically limited to promote their regions, and should absolutely be in the best interest of the University as a whole. That's the lens we look through when making tough decisions. I will tell you from experience, it's not easy, and we as regents are recipients of anger, votes of no confidence, and general hostility. It's not a good feeling for anyone, especially when the Regents are doing the best they can for the institution as well as complying with what's been thrust on them. Demanding that all Regents resign, will not remove this issue of compliance, as there are consequences to non-compliance. As you see, the issues facing the Regents are many, fraught with emotions, anxiety which leads to anger. All directed towards a group of volunteers!

With all that said, if there is someone who serves their eight year term and then wants to throw their name in the hat again for another eight years, it's because they have the University's best interest at heart. We have already established that this is not a glamorous or compensated position. My hats off to those who are good at what they do and want to keep doing it.

Karen Perdue is one of those individuals. She has served very well in the last eight years, she is a thoughtful leader, very astute, understands education, and works well with faculty, students, staff and partners well with the governance groups. Her professional and public service background is impressive. The knowledge and understanding that she has gained in the last eight years should not be lost to a new person who will start at ground zero. Please consider my letter as a vote of confidence for Karen Perdue.

If you are so inclined to speak with me, please feel free to call me on my number. [REDACTED]

Respectfully,
Jyotsna "Jo" Heckman, Retired.

Jo Heckman

Former President & CEO Denali State Bank
Former UA Regent, 2011-2018
Former UA Regent Chair, 2015-2016
Former Director, UA Foundation Board
Former Member of UAF Chancellor Advisory Board

Letter of Support: Karen Perdue, UA Board of Regents

MICHAEL POWERS

Members of Senate Education Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Members of Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to offer my strongest recommendation for Karen Perdue as she re-applies for a position on the Board of Regents for the University of Alaska. I have had the privilege of knowing Karen for over 30 years, during which time I have witnessed her remarkable contributions to education services, public health initiatives and community advocacy across Alaska.

As the former State Health Commissioner, Karen was the chief architect of Alaska's most instrumental Medicaid reforms, demonstrating an exceptional ability to navigate complex policy landscapes and drive meaningful change. Her leadership in this role not only improved healthcare access for Alaskans but also demonstrated her commitment to addressing the pressing needs of our communities, from the urban Anchorage Bowl to some of our most far-flung rural communities.

In her capacity as a former Vice President of the University of Alaska, Karen was the principal force behind the launch of the University's nursing education program. This initiative has been critical in addressing health and social service shortfalls in our state over the past two decades, providing a desperately needed workforce development program that has had a lasting impact on the health of Alaskans.

As the former CEO of the Alaska Hospital Association, Karen skillfully and effectively led collaborative health program outreach efforts to support the missions of Alaska's community hospitals, federally qualified health clinics, tribal health organizations and rural and urban health organizations. Her ability to organize, facilitate, and bring-to-closure statewide policy initiatives has earned her universal respect. She has worked shoulder-to-shoulder with University Presidents Mark Hamilton, Jim Johnson and current UA President Pat Pitney, gaining a deep understanding of academic governance, curriculum development, faculty engagement, and student success initiatives.

Karen's extensive experience and demonstrated ability to engage stakeholders makes her an invaluable asset to the Board of Regents. All Alaskans stand to benefit from her renewed participation on the Board, as she brings a wealth of knowledge, a commitment to excellence, a passion for education, and an ability to execute strategic initiatives. Her perspective is unique, inspiring and difficult to replicate.

Thank you for considering this recommendation. I am confident that Karen Perdue will continue to be a transformative force on the Board of Regents, and I encourage you to support her candidacy. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.



Mike Powers (retired)

Former CEO & CFO, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital (1986-2015)
Former UA Board of Regents (2011-2015)
Former UAF Interim-Chancellor (2015-16)
Former Member: UA Foundation (2009-2011)
Former WICHE Commissioner (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education)