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HOUSE BILL 163

“An Act creating the FAFSA raffle fund; relating to the definition of ‘gambling’; and providing for an effective date.”

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House Bill 163, FAFSA RAFFLE, creates a raffle for first-time filers for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Alaska has the lowest FAFSA completion rate in the nation, leaving over \$6,000,000 in student aid on the table annually. The FAFSA is the largest source of postsecondary education funding in the United States, providing more than \$150 billion in student financial aid each year. Filing the FAFSA is an important first step in a postsecondary plan for students, whether it is to pursue career and technical training or a college degree.

To help incentivize Alaskans to complete their FAFSA application, a monthly \$1,000 prize will be offered to first-time FAFSA filers during the open enrollment period October 1 – June 30 each year. Students will also have the opportunity to win one of five \$10,000 prizes when the enrollment period closes. Not having access to the millions of dollars of financial aid results in Alaskans either not pursuing education and career and technical training programs or taking out larger-than-necessary loans to cover the cost of their education.

Without completing the FAFSA application students are severely limited in their ability to access both state and federal financial aid for education. Unfortunately, Alaska high school classes of 2021 and 2022 left over \$12 million just in Pell Grant funding by not completing the FAFSA. Alaska students also need to complete the FAFSA to receive the Alaska Performance Scholarship, Alaska Education Grant, and other Alaska institution-based awards. Low-income students and families cannot access need-based funding without completing the FAFSA. More students completing the FAFSA will lead to more students continuing on to postsecondary education and ultimately result in a more skilled workforce in Alaska.

This bill is designed to increase the number of students who fill out their FAFSA applications so that, in turn, more Alaskans will have the financial support they need to attend college and career and technical training programs. This is especially important given the need in Alaska for a skilled workforce and the declining college enrollment numbers among Alaskans.