

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON HOUSE DISTRICT 2

SPONSOR STATEMENT House Bill 242

“An Act relating to funding for digital learning as a component of public school funding.”

House Bill No. 242 establishes a “digital learning funding factor” in law to assist school districts to implement a full range of digital technology solutions. The factor is added as a multiplier in the Student Based Formula that is used to determine the funding for each school district.

The bill proposes to multiply the ADM by a factor of 1.005 for digital learning needs. Funds can be used to acquire a range of technologies, such as mobile devices, tablets or notebooks, plus software and services like professional development and technical support. School districts will retain complete flexibility to use the funds based on local priorities.

Alaska’s current kindergarten students will graduate and enter the workforce or go to college in the year 2023. There is no doubt their future will be digital. The world already depends on computers and other digital devices. Technology is a basic ingredient of modern life.

Effective digital learning must be the new vehicle of teaching and learning. In fact, many states have embraced this new reality with aggressive programs to provide mobile devices to as many students as possible. There is strong evidence that proper use of technology in a modern classroom results in improved student performance.

Several years ago, the Alaska State Legislature saw this coming and funded “The Consortium for Digital Learning”. Operated by the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB), this program implemented a pilot “one to one” laptop program, with participation by many school districts throughout the state. The pilot has been successful. It is time to take the next step. The “digital learning funding factor” will help get the job done while giving districts flexibility to use these funds based on local priorities.

The Higher Education and Career Readiness Task Force recommended to “consider using modern classroom (or cyber-room) teaching practices; including for example, replacing traditional textbooks with electronic books, and providing the option for students to view classroom lectures remotely, via the internet.” House Bill No. 242 implements this recommendation.