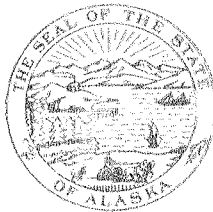


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SPONSOR STATEMENT

CS for SENATE BILL 17 (EDU)

"An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."

SB 17 would extend the sunset date for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) to June 30, 2021. In its current version it also repeals some extraneous language that has never been a necessary tool for the manner in which the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and SESA do business.

Currently on the books is a provision for DEED to reimburse itself with SESA funds when DEED contributes to the Alaska public employee and teachers retirement (PERS/TRS) system on behalf of SESA. However, DEED allocates annually to SESA the full amount appropriated to it by the Legislature. SESA contributes to PERS/TRS directly from those funds. There has never been a need for, nor the practice of, DEED contributing to the PERS/TRS system on behalf of SESA. Thus, all the agencies involved agree that that statutory language should be repealed.

SESA is a public agency, created in 1986 under Alaska statute AS 14.30.600. It is governed by the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education. SESA was created to assist Alaska school districts to serve children with low incidence disabilities. Technical assistance, provided by specialists with advanced training and specialized disability experience, is provided at no cost to school districts. Specifically, SESA is tasked to provide:

- (A) **itinerant outreach services** to students who are deaf, deaf-blind, mentally retarded, hearing impaired, blind and visually impaired, orthopedically disabled, health-impaired in other ways, and severely emotionally disturbed, and to students with multiple disabilities;
- (B) **special education instructional support and training** of local school district special education personnel; and
- (C) **other services** appropriate to special education needs.

SESA must be reauthorized this session to avoid discontinuation of these services beginning July 1, 2013.

SESA performs an effective and efficient service to school districts educating students with low incidence disabilities. SESA employs 11 education specialists who provided services to 45 school districts and more than 200 students during the last school year. During this time, SESA also provided 320 onsite consultations with school districts.

The August 2012 Alaska Legislative Budget and Audit Committee Report concluded: "SESA meets a valid public need by:

- (1) assisting school districts in providing students affected by low incidence disabilities (LID) an education that meets their unique needs;
- (2) affording opportunities to enhance the capabilities of school district teachers and paraprofessionals; and
- (3) providing LID and special education resources.

We recommend the legislature extend SESA's termination date until June 30, 2021." SESA offers services not provided by any other government or private sector agency in the State of Alaska. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.