



SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 142 - Monthly Stipend for Boarding Schools

Currently Alaska Statute authorizes reimbursement to three statewide public boarding schools for the cost of room and board expense incurred by students. This provision is set to sunset on July 1, 2013 unless the 28th Legislature takes action.

Since 2006, the state's reimbursement for the cost of room, board and supervision of students at public boarding schools has been handled like a pilot program. Today we've got enough data to know that this model is highly successful and has earned its place in the arsenal of educational options for Alaska's children. So successful are these regional residential alternatives that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) is seeking proposals to expand on the model.

To further school choice and quality education, HB 142 removes the sunset provision for stipends to boarding schools and it removes the prohibition for new statewide and district-wide residential schools. Language is added to include residential public school programs with terms of variable lengths. Examples of these types of residential programs offer kids intensive STEM or leadership intensives in regional centers for an abbreviated term. In Alaska, boarding schools offer students an alternative to homeschooling or give students in smaller high schools the opportunity to attend a school that offers extracurricular activities unavailable in their hometown high schools like sports, avionics, engineering, diesel mechanics and cosmetology.

This legislation by statute reimburses approved boarding schools costs incurred by the district operating the program. A per-pupil stipend helps pay for the students' monthly residential care, which includes meals and supervision twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In addition one round-trip between the student's community of residence and the school during the school year will be reimbursed if the district expends money for the trip.

Today, three districts operate residential boarding schools that qualify for the reimbursement: Nenana, Galena, and Lower Yukon SD, however; as stated previously, DEED is currently soliciting applications for three additional boarding schools statewide.

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