

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Sponsor Statement SB 102

The goal of this legislation is to improve educational outcomes for Alaskan students. The graduation rate for high school in Alaska is 76%, 52% of which need remediation classes once they enter college. Our children and workforce deserve better. This bill seeks to improve outcomes by providing students with additional internet access and increased opportunity for virtual education, even in the most remote places in Alaska. This will provide access to the best teachers in our state to teach in multiple areas of our state, via the internet.

It is the Legislature's primary constitutional requirement to provide for an education system in Alaska. It is time to refocus and prioritize our state money on improved deliveries of education. SB XXX will provide assistance to districts with high technology costs and technological disadvantages, by increasing the minimum requirement of megabits per second from 10 to 25. It will direct monies from the higher education fund to increase the amount of Broadband Assistance Grants (BAG) that the state can pay to school districts and will allow schools the flexibility to direct additional dollars to the classroom.

Currently, 137 schools, in 29 school districts, receive a BAG award. SB XXX will bring 197 schools up to the new floor of 25Mbps and provide funding to help those schools reach 25Mbps.

The total cost of internet services in FY16 was approximately \$92.6 million. The Federal E-Rate program discount covered approximately \$79.1 million. The School BAG awards covered \$3.4 million. School Districts across the state only had to pay a cumulative sum of approximately \$10 million in FY16.

The value of E-Rate and BAG for our schools is tremendous. This bill will leverage between 70-90% federal dollars. For every state dollar, we receive about \$7 from the federal government.

I urge your support of this legislation to help improve educational outcomes for Alaskan students.