

Good afternoon. For the record, Stephanie Butler, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB 103. My comments are specific to the APS.

The APS is an existing resources that has quite extraordinary reach. We tend to think of the primary benefit as being to students who receive APS awards, but there are actually much greater benefits to the state:

- The APS impacts school districts as well as students: As a result of APS, all school districts in Alaska have taken steps to ensure a more rigorous curriculum is available to all their students;
- The APS impacts our state's workforce, helping to ensure we are training Alaskans for jobs that have been going to non-residents, and helping us to address the looming shortage of trained workforce professionals;
- The APS may ultimately also change our state's economy when more of our high school grads qualify for higher-paying jobs and are better able to give back to our Alaska economy

Perhaps most telling in terms of the benefits of APS are those students who are the first in their family to pursue college or career training, many of whom will be leveraging the APS to leave poverty behind and actually begin contributing to the state. Fully 20% of the APS recipients are the first in their families, and when we look just at the Level 3 recipients (the lowest qualification level), that number increases to over 25%. In fact, almost 20% of APS students meet federal low-income thresholds. For low-income kids, the APS can be the difference between a life of poverty and an opportunity to succeed and give back to the economy.

There is also strong evidence that the APS is delivering on the goals set by the Legislature and the Administration in creating the APS:

- APS users have a 25% higher rate of Alaska residency five years after graduation, and 83% of APS users say they were influenced by the APS to attend school in Alaska
- APS-eligible students (even those who never use the APS) report the APS made them more likely to work to achieve better grades, take placement exams, seek college or academic advising, and take challenging courses.
- Almost twice as many APS students are prepared for college work, in terms of needing no remediation at UA, as compared to non-APS students.
- Last, 67% of APS students persist into their fourth year at UA, compared to only 35% of non-APS students, again almost double.

In summary: the APS is a positive force towards addressing Alaska's education and workforce crisis, and that impact is growing. It makes a difference for all students, even those who do not get an award, because it encourages all students to reach higher. It makes a difference for schools, which are offering more rigorous curricula to all their students, and for the state as a whole, when it helps to stem the brain drain and helps ensure Alaska residents are trained for Alaska jobs. Thus, this testimony respectfully requests your reconsideration of its elimination.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. Thank you also for this really challenging work you are doing in support of Alaska's future.