

Alaska Superintendents Association

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Dear Representative LeDoux and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to review HB 109, Military Children School Residency Waiver. The bill could potentially affect an estimated 10,000 school-age children of active duty military members based in Alaska. Specifically, it would allow residency requirements to be waived for incoming students of active-duty military prior to physically being located in the state, for the purposes of a smooth transition and to facilitate uninterrupted educational progress.

At first blush, this makes sense. It allows military families to enroll their children in school, register for classes and apply for specialized programs at the same time as their in-state peers prior to physically arriving to their location in Alaska. In asking our members to review the legislation, most noted that this is already the standard operating procedure. School principals and administrators already, in the words of one, “roll out the red carpet” to incoming school-age children of active duty military prior to them actually arriving to their new location in Alaska. As this is already the practice, passage of the bill would then simply codify in state law what is already happening on the ground at our local school districts.

However, one concern that was raised was how this might affect school-age children of outgoing active-duty military, who may want to remain with a homeschool or correspondence program based in Alaska even after they leave the state because their parent or guardian has been assigned to a military base elsewhere. This has the potential of pumping up numbers for these correspondence and online programs based in Alaska, which would at first appear to be a good thing, depending on where you sit. It calls into question a policy issue, however, which is, is it appropriate for the State of Alaska to financially support such out-bound students whose parents or guardian have been shifted to a military installation elsewhere? The bill’s language appears to be intended toward *incoming* school-age children of active duty military, but perhaps clarifying language that addresses the *out-bound* issue should be considered.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this legislation.

Sincerely,

Patrick Mayer
Superintendent, Yakutat School District
President, Alaska Superintendents Association/Alaska Council of School Administrators