



Representative Andi Story

Alaska State Legislature

Sponsor Statement

HB 237; Version M

March 3, 2020

“An Act making special appropriation from the general fund for early literacy programs in public schools”

Reading is a foundational skill, critical to a student’s continued progression and success. As “Alaska’s Education Challenge” states, research suggests that school readiness at an early age is a critical strategy for improving future student outcomes and closing achievement gaps.

School districts across Alaska recognize the importance of early literacy and have taken to heart the goal of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Many districts have already devoted considerable resources to this end, even in these times of budget constraints.

HB 237 provides resources to bolster and support school districts in this important work. It distributes \$10 million in early literacy grants to districts outside the formula, as though through the foundation formula. This approach ensures every district receives funds to support their early literacy initiatives. In directing funds to school districts, HB 237 honors local control and community-based decisions in meeting the literacy needs of its youngest students.

The proposed appropriation for FY21 is \$10 million, and for FY22, an inflation adjusted \$10,225,000.

HB 237 recognizes the value of community-based services, interventions and choices in determining the most effective and culturally relevant strategies to increase the number of students who are reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

HB 237 includes intent language that directs the Department of Education and Early Development to report on the use of the early literacy funds to the Alaska Legislature by January 31, 2021.

The data from this report will highlight the ways schools are supporting students and meeting early literacy goals.

Contact

Alaska State Capitol
120 4th St Juneau, AK 99801

907-465-3744
rep.andi.story@akleg.gov