



Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage

Resolution #23-08: Supporting the Alaska Performance Scholarship (HB 31 & SB 56)

SPONSORED BY: Matthew Green, *Speaker of the Assembly & Senator*
Albiona Selimi, *Chief Activities Officer & Delegate of CAS*
Hannah Huber, *Government Relations Officer & Senator*
Macchelssy Dinganga, *Speaker Pro Tempore & Senator*

ENDORSED BY: Katie Scoggin, *President*
Shanone Tejada, *Vice President*

COMMITTEE: Legislative Affairs Committee

DATE: March 23, 2023

WHEREAS: The Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage (USUAA) serves as a mechanism to promote the interests of the student body and the community at large by advocating for governmental policy that supports the University of Alaska Anchorage and its constituent parts; and,

WHEREAS: USUAA believes in promoting the educational needs, general welfare, rights of the students, reducing and removing barriers that may exist for students as they pursue higher education in Alaska; and,

WHEREAS: [The Alaska Performance Scholarship](#), or APS, is a merit-based program that funds post-secondary education for Alaska students attending school in-state, which reduces the financial burden that students may experience as they seek to be productive members of Alaska's workforce; and,

WHEREAS: House Bill 31 ([HB 31](#)) and Senate Bill 56 ([SB 56](#)) take meaningful steps to address issues of financial burdens and scholarship opportunities for Alaskan students, whether they be in highschool or returning to higher education; and,

WHEREAS: The cost of education, including but not limited to tuition, books, and fees, have risen across the nation, but specifically by [50% at the University of Alaska Anchorage \(UAA\)](#) forming a financial barrier for student seeking to attend UAA; and,

- WHEREAS: Requiring standardized testing scores, limiting usage to within six years after high school graduation, and constraining turnaround times to notify recipients all creates an opportunity barrier for students considering attending the University of Alaska System and those seeking to return to higher education in Alaska; and,
- WHEREAS: When the State of Alaska waived standardized testing requirements for the Class of 2020 and 2021, eligibility rose from [23% \(Class of 2019\) to 37% and 36%](#), respectively; and,
- WHEREAS: Standardized testing requirements was the [biggest barrier](#) students reported facing when trying to qualify for the APS, especially for rural Alaskan students, as only 9% of rural students in western and northern Alaska qualified; and,
- WHEREAS: HB 31 & SB 56 raises the award levels that have remained stagnant since 2011, to adjust for the higher cost of education, which assists in removing financial barriers for students; and,
- WHEREAS: HB 31 & SB 56 removes the standardized testing requirements that affects all students but disproportionately disadvantages rural Alaskan students, extends the usage of the scholarship to within eight years after graduating high school, and requires an earlier date to inform students of their eligibility, which increases opportunities for prospective and returning students; and,
- WHEREAS: School district representatives also report high levels of interest among ineligible students, including among strong students who they say would benefit from the program; and,
- WHEREAS: APS usage rates (among eligible students) are higher among subgroups with the lowest eligibility rates including Far North, Southwest, first-generation, and Alaska Native students. Standardized test requirements are the biggest barrier to APS eligibility; and,
- WHEREAS: Of the three eligibility requirements (standardized testing, curriculum requirements, and grade point average), data reveals that students are most likely to fail to meet required scores on standardized tests, notably the SAT or ACT; and,
- WHEREAS: School districts report that students are often unfamiliar or unprepared for tests, and that many otherwise successful students are barred from APS eligibility due to the test requirement; and,
- WHEREAS: In the survey of ineligible high school graduates, the number one barrier among those interested in APS was standardized tests; and,
- WHEREAS: The number of students taking the SAT or ACT has dropped significantly (more than 25%) this results directly to reduced eligibility for APS.

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED:

The Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage supports HB 31 & SB 56 because it reduces and removes financial barriers and increases avenues of success for prospective and returning students; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage calls upon the members of the 33rd Alaska Legislature to pass HB 31 & SB 56 because it paves a way for higher education students in Alaska to succeed; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Union of Students at the University of Alaska Anchorage calls upon the Governor of Alaska to sign HB 31, SB 56, or any compromise bill to the same effect into law, if it passes in both Houses of the Legislature; and,

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage will send a copy of this resolution to: Governor Mike Dunleavy, Speaker Cathy Tilton, Senate President Gary Stevens, Members of the Alaska House of Representatives, Members of the Alaska Senate, Members of the House Education Committee, Members of the House Finance Committee, Members of the Senate Education Committee and Members of the Senate Finance Committee.

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED:

The Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage will send a copy of this resolution to: The Board of Regents, President Pat Pitney, Vice President of University Relations Michelle Rizk, Vice President of Academics, Students, and Research Paul Layer, State Relations Director Chad Hutchison, Chancellor Sean Parnell, Provost Denise Runge, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Deanne Woodard, and Dean of Students Ben Morton.

PASSED BY A 9-0-1 VOTE OF THE USUAA ASSEMBLY



Katie Scoggin, *Student Body President*

Approved

Vetoed

Date: April 12, 2023