

**House Education Committee  
HB 31 Testimony of support  
February 20, 2023**



Co-Chairs Ruffridge and Allard, members of the House Education Committee. For the record, my name is Lon Garrison, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on **House Bill 31 Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility**.

The Association of Alaska School Boards is in support of **HB 31** AASB's Delegate Assembly has two resolutions supporting this legislation. These include:

- **RESOLUTION #5.21 SUPPORTING THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**
- **RESOLUTION #5.22 SUPPORTING CTE CREDIT FOR THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**

The changes proposed in HB 31 would provide for several improvements that would make the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) more flexible, competitive, and effective in providing an opportunity for all Alaska students to be supported in their pursuit of postsecondary education. The importance of removing barriers, such as entrance exams like the ACT or SAT, and permitting students a more equitable chance to receive the crucial post-secondary education support needed to develop Alaska's workforce cannot be understated.

The proposal to include CTE credits as a means to qualify for the APS has long been supported by the Association of Alaska School Boards members. We know that career and technical education courses can often make the direct connection between learning and applying academic subjects like language arts and mathematics to real job skills a reality. Incorporating and acknowledging the value and effectiveness of those credits increases the opportunity for a large demographic of students to access this valuable and needed support.

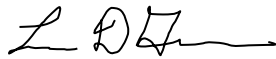
Alaska's post-secondary students are comprised of a large number of non-traditional students. Extending the period the scholarship is available to a student increases the likelihood of them completing their studies. Students that may come from low economic status, which may force them to alternate between school and earning and living, including supporting their education, will benefit greatly. Often students that originate from our most rural school districts may also face challenges when having to balance supporting their families and local communities with completing their education. As an example, providing a more extended opportunity for students pursuing a career in education, especially Alaska Native students working to be a teacher in their local schools, is critically important to our state in helping to solve our teacher recruitment and retention crisis. These students often face barriers our system rarely considers.

HB 31 proposes a modest increase in financial support to students. While others have testified that increasing the monetary amount of the award makes the APS more competitive with other scholarships, I would submit that the increase simply makes good economic sense. Like many other programs designed to help students, the financial support from APS has not kept up with inflation, tuition, or housing costs. AASB is adamant that our education system, from kindergarten through post-secondary education, needs to be as equitable and supportive of each student as it can be. For many Alaska students, the affordability of pursuing a post-secondary education that prepares them for our workforce is the real reason to increase the scholarship awards.

We know there is much more to be done to improve the equity of opportunity for Alaska students to access higher education. The Alaska Performance Scholarship is a unique and innovative way for Alaska to directly support the development of the workforce and future leadership of this state. The APS can be an effective tool for motivating and supporting students to go beyond the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The APS and its continued evolution to serve our students is critically important and deserving of your support.

AASB strongly encourages your support of HB 31 as a way of further supporting Alaska's public school system and Alaska's future through the education of its young people.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Lon Garrison,  
Executive Director, AASB

### **AASB Resolutions Supporting HB 48**

#### **5.21 SUPPORTING THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP (APS)**

AASB urges support for the Alaska Performance Scholarship for our high school students.

**Rationale:** APS has been successful in that more of our high school students are taking a rigorous course load in order to be eligible for the scholarship and after entering college take fewer remedial, or developmental, coursework, according to statistics compiled by the Alaska Postsecondary Commission. The recipients of APS also accumulated credits at a faster pace than non-recipients and were nearly twice as likely to continue their college attendance, the commission reported in 2016.

#### **5.22 SUPPORTING CTE CREDITS FOR THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP**

AASB urges support to allow students to substitute up to two units of Career Technical Education (CTE) classes to count as requirements towards the two to four-year college awards levels for the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

**Rationale:** Career technical education classes are often not selected due to the fact that they do not count toward the APS award if planning to go to two to four-year colleges in our state. CTE classes only count towards our technical schools. CTE classes are desired by many students in exploring careers and options and are relevant and engaging in keeping students in high school.