



Official Business

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Rep. DeLena Johnson**  
State Capitol, Room 505  
(907) 465-4958

*Rep.DeLena.Johnson@akleg.gov*

**Rep. Bryce Edgmon**  
State Capitol, Room 410  
(907) 465-4451

*Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov*

**Rep. Neal Foster**  
State Capitol, Room 511  
(907) 465-3789

*Rep.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov*

## **Sponsor Statement**

HB 193  
(version A)

“An Act relating to funding for Internet services for school districts: and providing for an effective date.”

HB 193 increases broadband share for eligible schools from 25 megabits per second (Mbps) to 100 Mbps of download speed and provides funding to help those schools reach 100 Mbps through the School Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG).

The Alaska School Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) program was created to assist schools to increase internet download speeds. Established in 2014 by the Alaska State Legislature, this grant originally allowed schools to reach download speeds of 10 Mbps. In 2020, the State Legislature revised the statute to help schools reach 25 Mbps download speeds. HB 193 seeks to increase the download speeds to 100 Mbps.

Schools that qualify for a discounted rate for internet services under The Universal Service Administrative Company, Schools and Libraries Program, commonly known as “E-rate,” are eligible for the School Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG). The E-rate program provides discounts of up to 90 percent to help eligible schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband with School Broadband Assistance Grant making much of the rest.

New improved technologies and increases to internet services have allowed for faster delivery of internet services for cheaper. Due to these advances the cost of internet in some rural districts has decreased, causing annual internet costs to fall below benchmarks established by state law. However, these schools are still considered underserved in terms of broadband. To allow school districts to utilize these advances, HB 193 would increase the minimum requirement of Mbps from 25 to 100, increasing the funding available through the BAG program in future years and leveraging more E-Rate funds to bring Alaskan schools in line with national standards for broadband connectivity.

In 2023, 151 Alaskan schools in 27 school districts benefited from the school BAG awards. The funding leverages federal E-rate funds at approximately 8:1. The increase proposed by HB 193 would allow even more schools the connectivity they need to stay current in the modern world and ensure that Alaskan schools aren’t left behind as internet technology becomes ever more vital to the education of our youth.