

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Representative Dan Saddler

House Majority Leader • Serving Chugiak-Eagle River & Peters Creek

To: Representative Neil Foster
Co-Chair, House Finance Committee

From: Representative Dan Saddler *-DRS*
House Majority Leader

Date: March 28, 2024

Re: HB 219 Responses to Finance Committee Questions

Please find below responses to questions asked during the March 22 hearing on HB 219: Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program, provided by the Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

Why hasn't the Assistive Technology Loan Fund been swept? How has it avoided sweeping?

The fund has avoided being swept because it consists of federal funds, and it is not allowed to be swept.

Could the fund be reappropriated to other areas, within or outside of disability services?

The intent of the legislation is to reappropriate the balance of the Assistive Technology Loan Fund (ATLF) to the non-profit organization Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA). ATLA is the only private non-profit, statewide, comprehensive resource center serving Alaskans with assistive technology solutions used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life. The ATLF originated with federal funds from the Assistive Technology Act and is managed by the Administration for Community Living within the federal Department of Health & Human Services. The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has obtained approval from the Administration for Community Living to reappropriate the balance of the ATLF to ATLA.

Would it be possible to hire staff for deaf assistance using these funds?

That would not be feasible as these funds are finite and would require ongoing appropriations to maintain staff. There have been no cuts to deaf services in the last 30 years. DVR has specialized staff that work with the deaf, deaf blind, and hard of hearing. They also have a full time American Sign Language Interpreter that works for DVR and has statewide responsibilities.

Has the fund collected interest over the past 30 years? Are the earnings on the fund restricted?

In order to provide further details, DVR has submitted a request to our Finance Officer to obtain additional information from the Treasury on the interest collected over the past 30 years. It is unknown how long this request will take to be processed. Earnings on the fund are restricted.