



Senate Education Committee

Bill 178 – An act relating to school terms

Lon Garrison, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards.
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Chair Tobin and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Lon Garrison. I am the Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards, a nonprofit association serving 52 of Alaska’s 54 school districts. I am testifying today regarding **SB 178 School Terms**.

AASB does not have a current resolution recommending when and how long school terms should be. Because of that, I cannot comment in favor or in opposition to the proposed legislation, but I would like to offer some perspective regarding local impacts on school terms.

Presently, the school term is defined in AS 14.03.030 as “A school term begins and ends on the dates fixed by the governing body of a school district. A school term shall include not less than 180 days in session unless, with the approval of the commissioner,....”. This particular language preserves local control for school districts to determine when is best for them to begin classes and instruction. This broad language does not prohibit a district from choosing a start date that may be more appropriate for their district or region.

AASB recognizes that districts and regions may have unique cultural and seasonal opportunities or limitations that might affect a school term. A few districts have adopted terms that permit subsistence calendars that allow students to participate in important community and cultural events. While these still need to be approved by the Commissioner of Education, this flexibility can be critically important to improving student attendance and engagement.

AASB advocates that the committee consider carefully the broad impacts that including the language (e.g., **A school Term may not begin before the first Tuesday in September**) may have on the variety of school districts across the state. AASB recognizes the intent of the bill is to potentially have a positive effect on both students and local businesses in those areas that are more heavily impacted by a tourism-based economy. AASB also recognizes this committee’s continued advocacy for maintaining local control, and we hope that you will analyze this proposal with that perspective in mind.

Respectfully submitted,

Lon Garrison
Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards