

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

March 3, 2005
11:09 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mark Neuman, Chair
Representative Carl Gatto
Representative Bill Thomas
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Les Gara
Representative Woodie Salmon

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bob Lynn

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 13

"An Act relating to reimbursement of municipal bonds for school construction; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 13 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 128

"An Act establishing the Alaska Schools Physical Activity Task Force."

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 13

SHORT TITLE: SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOND REIMBURSEMENT

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GATTO, GRUENBERG

01/10/05	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 12/30/04
01/10/05	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/10/05	(H)	EDU, HES, FIN
01/25/05	(H)	EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106
01/25/05	(H)	-- Meeting Canceled --
02/01/05	(H)	EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/01/05	(H)	Heard & Held
02/01/05	(H)	MINUTE(EDU)
02/22/05	(H)	EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106

02/22/05 (H) -- Meeting Canceled --
03/03/05 (H) EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 128

SHORT TITLE: SCHOOLS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TASK FORCE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MCGUIRE

02/04/05 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/04/05 (H) EDU, HES, FIN
02/24/05 (H) EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/24/05 (H) -- Meeting Canceled --
03/03/05 (H) EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE MAX GRUENBURG

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as co-sponsor to HB 13.

EDDY JEANS, Director

School Finance

Department of Education and Early Development

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided relevant information concerning the Department of Education and Early Development's perspective on HB 13.

KIM FLOYD, Specialist

Public Information

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, MSBSD

Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 13 and HB 128.

MARY FRANCIS, Executive Director

Alaska Council of School Administrators

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 13.

JENNIFER APP, Director

Alaska Advocacy

American Heart Association

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 128.

TIM WALLSTROM, Ph.D.

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 128.

PHILLIP C. PETRIE, Volunteer Advocate
American Diabetes Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 128.

PETER MJOS, M.D.
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 128.

EMILY NENON, Director
Alaska Government Relations
American Cancer Society
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 128.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR MARK NEUMAN called the House Special Committee on Education meeting to order at [11:09:28 AM](#). Representatives Gatto, Thomas, and Gara were present at the call to order. Representatives Salmon and Wilson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 13-SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOND REIMBURSEMENT

CHAIR NEUMAN announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 13 "An Act relating to reimbursement of municipal bonds for school construction; and providing for an effective date."

[11:10:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO, sponsor to HB 13, stated that this legislation is a way for urban districts to finance school construction. He said that there is a shortage of space in several areas in Alaska, specifically in the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage and as schools deteriorate, they need replacement. He related that this bill allows for the construction of schools where the state supplies 70 percent of the cost and the homeowners and residents of the area supply 30 percent.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS commented that Haines is an organized municipality and qualifies [for the proposed legislation].

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO stated that he is unaware of any areas in the state that would not qualify for the "70/30" division of funding. He remarked that this funding is open to everyone in the state if those interested, apply.

CHAIR NEUMAN asked if this legislation will act like a new school bond or if it can be used for repairs and maintenance.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO said that this legislation does not cover routine repairs and maintenance, but does apply to reconstruction or major maintenance.

[11:13:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARA commented that this legislation is something that wealthier [or urban] districts in the state can take advantage of. Since many of the rural communities don't do matching bond contributions, he related, those schools are usually funded through an appropriation. He said that if school construction is pushed in places that need it, then he would like a commitment from the sponsor to address the needs of rural districts [that cannot benefit from this legislation]. He questioned if [this legislation] is viewed as a global way to help all the school districts. He asked if Representative Gatto supports the funding of rural school district construction and maintenance.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO reminded Representative Gara that legislation enabling the "70/30" split construction issue expired [January 1, 2005]. He related that some districts didn't have bonding available or didn't put bonding out at the time. He explained that this bill extends the old bill to July 1, 2006 and gives [urban communities] an opportunity to put bonding out there. The important part of this legislation is the commitment from a community to fund 30 percent [of school construction costs]. He inquired as to the percentages supplied by rural communities to cover school construction costs.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA said that this bill only applies to school districts that have a tax base that bond, and it doesn't apply to the REAA's (Rural Education Attendance Areas) or to the smaller communities that don't bond. He explained, "if I feel that we're not going to be supportive to the bush communities and help them with their maintenance and construction problems ... I think I will end up fighting this ... I think all of the school districts need help in this area ... I am not going to get into a regional war where we are trying to do something for

our own districts but not for other people's districts ... what I was really looking for was a commitment that we could all work together to ... get through the maintenance and construction list for those schools that aren't going to benefit from this bill."

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO stated that he can commit to "work." He said that this legislation is available to any district that applies for [school construction funding assistance].

[11:17:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARA stated that the small, rural, and REEA districts don't apply and can't apply, so they might want to, but they are unable to. He explained that he will support this legislation as long as he feels that there will be support for the rural districts when that time comes.

CHAIR NEUMAN said that Mr. Jeans will be available to answer questions concerning issues of funding in rural districts.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS pointed out that the Haines Borough recently went through an election to bond and it will cost \$2.67 "mills" that they are willing to put on their "mill" rate to build a new school. He said, "it depends on what definition ... they are rural because they are an organized municipality ... and they are going to borrow 17 or 16 because the state ... they're under the old plan, 70/30, and are willing to do that ... it did pass ... little towns are willing to do it, but at a big expense ... three of the schools are ready to fall down ... it is cheaper to build a new one than it is to replace or remodel the old ones."

[11:19:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBURG stated that he is sensitive to the issues in bush communities and has made commitments to the bush caucus in helping provide for school construction. He emphasized that he wants to move HB 13 forward, while keeping in mind the needs of bush communities.

[11:21:38 AM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance, Department of Education and Early Development, (EED), stated that he had previously given testimony on HB 13 and had described the position of the EED.

CHAIR NEUMAN asked Mr. Jeans to give the committee an idea on how to address the needs of rural Alaska with the construction of new schools and the repair [of old schools].

MR. JEANS replied that the mechanism is already in place and the EED has a process where the new construction and major maintenance requests, from school districts, are evaluated. He explained that the lists are prioritized for the legislature. On the EED's web page, he related, there is the school construction list as well as the major maintenance list. He reminded the committee that the governor has recommended in his budget, that the first 20 projects on the major maintenance [list] be funded this session. The process is there, he said, and the list is there, and it is up to the legislature to consider those requests.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA inquired as to the types of schools included on the major maintenance list.

MR. JEANS stated that [the list] includes any school district that applies. It is up to the school districts to apply, he said, and after they apply the EED goes through the prioritization process.

[11:24:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARA stated that, in 2002, [the legislature] passed the last big bonding proposal, including a state bond for rural districts, and a match for the districts that contributed. He inquired as to what Anchorage funded through its 30 percent match and if they were schools on the major maintenance list. He asked if schools that are on the major maintenance list are the ones that end up not being bonded through the local match program.

MR. JEANS explained that on the 2002 "statewide geo bond list" of schools, there was one project from the Anchorage School District and the rest were REAA school districts. He said that at the same time that that "geo bond package" was approved by the voters, the debt reimbursement program opened up and was available to all municipalities. Included in that legislation, he related, was that the grant program was closed to municipal school districts because the debt program was available to them. That legislation has "sunsetting", he said, so the two lists that the EED compiled this year include both REAA's and municipal school districts.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA asked if non-REAA districts have the ability to bond.

MR. JEANS said that non-REAA districts have the ability to bond, but they may not have the capacity [to bond].

CHAIR NEUMAN asked Mr. Jeans to explain what REAA stands for.

MR. JEANS said that REAA stands for Regional Education Attendance Area.

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON inquired as to how HB 13 affects the priority list of school construction.

MR. JEANS explained that it does not affect the school construction list or the major maintenance list, other than if this bill was to pass, those municipalities that have projects on those lists could go back to their voters, get approval and bond for those projects.

In response to Representative Salmon, Mr. Jeans said that the two different programs require separate appropriations. He explained that going into the 2007 budget, the EED is requesting \$86 million to fund the debt reimbursement program for fiscal year 2006. He mentioned that the governor has requested \$28 million for the first twenty projects on the major maintenance list.

[11:29:29 AM](#)

KIM FLOYD, Public Information Specialist, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, (MSBSD), stated that the MSBSD has a school on "deed's" priority list for school construction and the state would have to invest \$440 million before that school is built. She said that this school was needed three years ago. She continued:

We have an average annual growth rate, in our district, of approximately 7 percent ... 500 - 600 new kids each year ... the Knick Goose Bay area is the fastest growing area in the state of Alaska ... our school is number 31 on the "deed priority list", \$440 million dollars before we get there, we need some relief, we're asking for help; I do hope that HB 13 can pass out of this committee, today, so that the conversation can continue. We are not trying to, by

any means, create a regional debate. The reality is, with 500 to 600 kids new to our district every year, it is the equivalent of a new elementary school. We've had 300 new kids just since the count period ended. They are coming both from in the state and from out of the state. As you can imagine, this is creating great strain on our existing facilities, currently we have 52 portable classrooms in use throughout our district, approximately 12 percent of our students are educated in portable classrooms. They are fine for a temporary "stop gap" measure, but they certainly aren't a long-term investment in infrastructure. Those schools will still be needed thirty years down the road and portables certainly don't have that type of lifespan.

CHAIR NEUMAN inquired as to the associated costs of using portable classrooms.

MS. FLOYD said that each portable costs \$70,000 to build and install plus the additional heating and electricity costs after installation. She explained that portables do not have [restroom] facilities and children are required to leave classrooms, unattended, and enter the main building. She pointed out that the MSBSD has a comprehensive, 20 year facility plan, has updated the 6 year plan submitted to "deed" each year, and are actively working with developers in the Mat-Su community to make sure that planning is efficient and cost effective. She emphasized that the MSBSD feels as though they have been extremely good stewards for bonding projects in the past, and expect to be in the future.

CHAIR NEUMAN asked Ms. Floyd to comment on the process that the MSBSD will go through if HB 13 passes.

[11:34:22 AM](#)

MS. FLOYD stated that the MSBSD has a 6 year "sub" plan that is given to the state to look at the capital infrastructure needs. The priority list generated from that plan helps to create a bond package list and that is forwarded to the borough assembly, she related. The borough assembly analyzes the needs and may repackage what the MSBSD created, she explained, and then they approve an initiative for the ballot. She pointed out that once that passes, the MSBSD must wait 4 years before the [new] school actually opens. She added that if the MSBSD were to successfully bond this fall, the new schools would not open

until 2009. She emphasized that new schools were needed 3 years ago. She stated that MSBSD will need short term solutions in the meantime.

CHAIR NEUMAN inquired as to the number of schools in the MSBSD that are over capacity.

MS. FLOYD stated that there are 36 schools in the MSBSD; of the 17 elementary schools, the majority are in the Palmer-Wasilla area and there is not a single empty classroom. She explained that even with increased operating monies, class sizes cannot be reduced. She said that the MSBSD is at a critical point of looking at options that aren't acceptable to parents and that don't meet community expectations for quality education. She added that last year the funding that the legislature appropriated helped reduce class sizes at the Kindergarten level.

CHAIR NEUMAN asked about the growth rate of the MSBSD.

MS. FLOYD stated that the MSBSD has a growth rate of 500 to 600 students a year with an average annual growth of about 7 percent. She said that population forecasts estimate the MSBSD will be bigger than the [Anchorage School District] in 30 years.

[11:37:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS asked for clarification related to the MSBSD going under the last bond issue and applying for [new] schools.

MS. FLOYD stated in the fall of 2003, the MSBSD passed \$56 million in bonds. In response to Representative Thomas's follow up question regarding the application for more bonds, Ms. Floyd explained that last year, the MSBSD was faced with a 13 percent increase in assessed evaluations and that is the MSBSD's only source of revenue in the community for borough operations or for payment on bond debt. She said that the MSBSD was faced with a sales tax that was 1 percent borough wide, and dealing with discussions on real estate transfer fees and gravel extraction taxes. She said:

We try very hard to make sure that we are in communication with all stakeholders in our community and the belief at that time was it was not a good idea, in that environment, to go forth with a school bond. We tend to be a little reactive in our

community, we're learning to grow up, and we weren't quite at the crisis point that people felt that those bonds could have been successful in that environment. We're there now. We're at the precipice, we're going over ... we did do a survey this past fall, we asked residents how they felt about an \$80 million dollar bond package, which would include 3 elementary schools and a high school - all needed projects. With the "70/30" bond debt reimbursement, we had a 75 percent support ... people know we've reached that edge ... our community is ready, and we would appreciate an extension and an opportunity to address our student's needs."

[11:39:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked if the opening of the new hospital is included in the population growth prediction.

MS. FLOYD said yes, along with the retail bloom that is occurring and the building of the biggest Wal-Mart in the state. She said that it is staggering to listen to developers and hear about what will hit the community around the MSBSD.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS inquired as to the the Mat-Su community utilizing "forgiveness taxes".

MS. FLOYD stated that the MSBSD is trying very hard to meet with developers and plan how to deal with the coming changes in the community. She said that the MSBSD feels that there is a very valuable public/private partnership that needs to happen.

[11:42:02 AM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN commented that property taxes in the Mat-Su Borough have risen over 40 percent in the last 3 years, with another expected rise of almost 13 percent this year. He emphasized that the community is willing, despite these tax increases, to support the school bond.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO inquired as to the development of a vocational technology focused high school and if it will affect the need for more funds.

MS. FLOYD stated that the career and "vo-tech" high schools were part of the last bond package that was passed. She stated that there will also be an elementary school that will open in the

fall of 2006, and it will be completely filled by the time it opens. She emphasized that these new schools will be at their maximum capacity when they open.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON stated that her district is losing so many teachers and programs, that it is hard to imagine how difficult the MSBSD situation is.

MS. FLOYD said the the MSBSD realizes that this situation is very different than most districts in the state. She said that though they are addressing the situation adequately, the time has come where the MSBSD needs help.

MS. FLOYD commented that the MSBSD will start surveying students and investigating where they are coming from. She mentioned that after Christmas break, at Goose Bay Elementary School, 10 students were enrolled that came from out of state.

In response to Chair Neuman's comments on the benefits of "vo-tech" schools, Ms. Floyd stated that the MSBSD has the most highly recognized career and technical education programs in the nation.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO commented that the top six welding students all came from one school in the [Mat-Su] Valley. He also stated that the issues of growth in the Mat-Su Valley are causing severe expenses.

[11:46:36 AM](#)

MARY FRANCIS, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, (ACSA), stated that there are schools all over the state in need of construction and major maintenance, and the ACSA supports the continuation of the debt reimbursement program. She explained that the ACSA has a resolution that advocates for fully funding previously approved bonds as well as the continuation of the program. As you know, she said, there have been many years of minimal funding for school construction and major maintenance and it has created a huge need statewide. She mentioned that because there are high needs now, there are many municipalities that are willing to kick in their share of 30 or 40 percent [for construction and maintenance of schools] and the ACSA would very much support this legislation and hope that it passes out of committee.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA asked if the ACSA has a position on the proposal for how much should be funded to get through the major maintenance and construction list.

MS. FRANCIS stated that the ACSA supports following the list that the EED creates. She explained that the ACSA feels that the process by which people apply for placement on the EED's list is very thorough. She pointed out that the ACSA supports the funding of all school districts in the state of Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA inquired as to the ACSA having a proposal on how far through the list the legislature should go this year, to be equitable.

MS. FRANCIS stated that the ACSA has not addressed that issue, yet.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked for clarification about an earlier comment concerning full funding of existing bonding.

MS. FRANCIS stated that some of the school districts were concerned that [the legislature] would cancel what was previously approved for bonding.

[11:50:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO moved to report HB 13 out of committee with individual recommendations and the attached fiscal notes. There being no objections, HB 13 was reported out of the House Special Committee on Education.

HB 128-SCHOOLS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TASK FORCE

CHAIR NEUMAN announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 128 "An Act establishing the Alaska Schools Physical Activity Task Force."

[11:50:45 AM](#)

SHALON SZYMANSKI, staff to Representative Lesil McGuire, presented the background information on HB 128 on behalf of sponsor, Representative McGuire. She stated that, according to the American Obesity Association, more than 30 percent of U.S. children and adolescents are overweight or obese and studies have shown that overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults with a variety of medical problems, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancers and high cholesterol.

She said that a recent study in the Anchorage School District found that 36 percent of Anchorage school students are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. She continued:

The National Association of Sports and Physical Education recommends elementary school students receive at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week, and that middle and high school students receive at least 225 minutes per week. The Center for Disease Control recommends at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day. With all of these known recommendations from experts, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Valdez school districts are requiring that only middle school students receive daily physical education. Elementary school students in these districts are receiving only two 30 to 40 minute physical education periods per week ... the four years that students are in high school, they're required to take only a year and a half of [physical education] in order to graduate. The level of [physical education] required in these schools is clearly lower than what is recommended by health education and health experts. This task force, if established, would be made up of school officials from both urban and rural areas, physicians, a member from the Department of Education and Early Development, and legislators. We do recognize different schools have different facilities available to them, for [physical education] and it would be up to this task force to determine an effective and economical way to increase [physical education] within the existing school infrastructure. The task force will also look into whether new laws or regulations are necessary to provide more physical activities in schools and consider whether school construction requirements should be changed to facilitate more [physical education]. Many other state legislatures across the nation have taken similar steps in addressing the problem of the growing number of overweight children ... Alaska should consider following their lead. Creating this task force would be a step in the right direction.

[11:55:05 AM](#)

JENNIFER APP, Alaska Advocacy Director, American Heart Association, stated her support of HB 128. She opined that Ms. Szymanski covered many of the statistics that are important

around childhood obesity. She highlighted the remarkable connection between childhood obesity and later incidents of cardiovascular disease. She related that new studies have shown that young teenagers are exhibiting the kinds of heart health traits that typically have not been seen until middle age [of adults]. She said that usually, the average lifespan of [Americans] increases every year, but this is the first time in decades that average lifespans are decreasing [due to obesity]. She emphasized that this bill is a step in the right direction. She explained that childhood obesity is caused by two major problems, lack of physical exercise and poor nutrition. She said that different schools will need different solutions, but beginning to proactively address this problem with a task force is an important way to show that the legislature cares about child health and recognizes that obesity is a serious problem. She pointed out that a task force could really give input and guidelines to elementary schools, middle schools and high schools to improve children's health and insure that kids are learning how to be active throughout their life.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO inquired as to the obesity rates of children entering Kindergarten.

MS. APP stated that as children move through the school system, they are exceeding the normal weight limit. She explained that the percentage of overweight children in Kindergarten is smaller than the percentage of overweight students in the eighth grade.

In response to Representative Gatto's question about family responsibility with obesity, Ms. App explained that there are a combination of responsibilities. She continued, "A couple of trends have happened over the past couple of decades, and they ... accompany this rise in obesity ... a decrease in physical education in schools ... as we've seen that [physical education] requirement decline, we've seen childhood obesity increase ... we know that some kids, the only exercise that they are going to get is at school...the one other thing ... a ... correlation between physical activity in schools and a child's ability to learn ... some schools are cutting recesses, as well as cutting [physical education] and teachers are having a harder time controlling children who don't get outside and burn off some energy ... studies ... show that kids ... learn better if they get out and exercise a little bit.

[12:02:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON stated that another correlation with obesity is the presence of televisions in homes, and in children's bedrooms. She opined that schools cannot be expected to act as parents and that prevention is the key to obesity problems. She expressed her hope that the American Heart Association promotes the education of parents on healthy lifestyle practices, such as getting physically active outside with children and good nutrition.

MS. APP agreed that the education of parents is important and that those programs are being undertaken by the American Heart Association. She explained that the school environment is the only place for some children to learn physical activity skills. She said that this bill is about setting up a task force to figure out the best ways to improve the physical activity of Alaskans. She reiterated that regular physical activity has a direct correlation to improving test scores.

TIM WALLSTROM, Ph.D., University of Alaska at Anchorage, stated that he is on the board for the Alaska Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and is the chair of Alaskans Promoting Physical Activity Committee which is a subcommittee of the Take Heart Alaska Coalition. He said that he is encouraged by the introduction of this bill and hopes that it passes from the committee so the task force can begin its work. He explained the importance of physical education at the elementary school level where fundamental movement skills are taught and currently, too many schools in Alaska do not have educators who know how to teach fundamental movement skills. He pointed out that once children leave sixth grade, it is unlikely that someone will teach them fundamental movement skills, such as throwing a ball. He said, "you have probably heard the old sexist expression, 'throws like a girl' or 'runs like a girl', and those are for folks who exhibit what we call immature motor patterns who have not been taught how to run, have not been taught how to throw, and folks who aren't skilled or competent movers tend to choose activities which don't involve movement ... that is a very strong factor when it comes to choosing sedentary lifestyles which is ... an important piece of the inactivity cycle which leads to obesity ... heart disease, diabetes, and cancer."

[12:09:04 PM](#)

PHILLIP PETRIE, volunteer advocate, American Diabetes Association, stated that he is in support of HB 128. He explained that the American Cancer Society, the Heart

Association, and the American Diabetes Association have developed a joint position statement on physical education and schools and with youth. He said that he has type 2 diabetes and that up until now, type 2 diabetes has occurred primarily in middle aged adults but now, children as young as 4 years old are being diagnosed. He pointed out that this is not the sole responsibility of schools and that parents should be held responsible [for their children's health]. He recalled the program [from his youth] called "the President's physical fitness challenge" and said that everyone in his school wanted to be a member of the president's team. He opined that similar programs are needed in schools today as there has been a terrible decline of physical education. He expressed his hope that priorities are redeveloped so that physical education takes a vital part in schools as well as at home and after school for children.

12:11:00 PM

PETER MJOS, M.D., stated that, as a physician, he has been directly involved with obesity related issues for over twenty years. He explained his participation with the "Alaska American Academy of Pediatric Sports Medicine Group" and their success through the 15th Legislature in obtaining a resolution voicing the state's strong support of the concept of daily quality vigorous physical education in grades K-12. He informed that he was one of the founders of Take Heart Alaska, the state's cardiovascular disease prevention task force, and served as vice president for many years. He said that he served on the American Heart Association Northwest Region Advocacy Board I has been a board member of American Circumpolar Society for Cicumpolar health. He pointed out that he represents the American Academy of Family Practice. He added that his involvement in these programs has been motivated by witnessing a steady deterioration of the health of children and adults. He said:

We're now in about the fourth or fifth generation of adults who are completely sedentary and subsequently as role models, as parents, the physical activity levels of children has deteriorated almost to nothing, as I will try and demonstrate ... We are no longer merely in the grip of an epidemic, that's not hyperbole, that is the description from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, but we are in fact besieged by ... a crisis of health ... the scope of which includes ... diabetes type 2 ... hypertension

... and a cascade of cardiovascular and inflammatory conditions. American adults are ... 70 percent overweight or obese and children are at least 30 percent obese or overweight and these figures are, according to the CDC, exaggerated in rural Alaska. In weight management, it remains true, it is a matter of calories in, and calories out, it is the calories out factor which HB 128 addresses. For obese children from even the earliest preschoolers, obesity [according to former surgeon general, Dr. David Satcher], "dooms them to a life of illness and societal disfunction from which recovery is nearly impossible and their burden falls not only on themselves but on families and society at large"...

DR. MJOS stated that sedentary obese students suffer from a wide variety of disabilities including feeling poorly, eating poorly, sleeping poorly, very risky behaviors including disciplinary problems, substance abuse and smoking. He explained that fit students will likely become fit adults with improved behaviors, less risky behaviors, and the ability to learn.

EMILY NENON, Alaska Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society, (ACS), stated her support on behalf of the ACS of HB 128. She explained that ACS is involved in this issue because one third of all cancers are related to lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. She said that ACS's support of this task force is only one of a multi-pronged approach of dealing with this issue; the ACS is working with communities, and participating in city planning. She added that ACS is focusing on schools because that is where children are.

[12:18:07 PM](#)

MS. FLOYD stated that the MSBSD has a task force that addresses the quality of nutrition in schools and that has been trying to bring in more locally grown produce and introduce that into student lunches. She explained that healthy alternatives to using vending machines are being explored. She said that increased funding from the legislature last year enabled the MSBSD to add Physical Education back to middle school, for each student, every day. She pointed out that now, fighting obesity is a community responsibility and, "the minute it becomes a mandate for schools, it's the schools responsibility alone, so we would like the opportunity to continue to work in our community as a task force in addressing what is right for our students."

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON clarified that the MSBSD does not want any unfunded mandates concerning school responsibility with obesity.

MS. FLOYD said that she is pleased with the level of physical education teachers in the MSBSD and their understanding of the importance of good programs for children. She added that these teachers are on top of brain research that shows the importance of integrating fundamental movements in physical education class and in the classroom.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA explained that if a higher amount of Physical Education is mandated in every school district in the state, [it would not be fair because] some school districts don't have the space or the staff to do that. The approach of this bill addresses that and says that ideas are needed from the experts in the community to figure out a way to help maximize the amount of physical education provided. He explained that no mandates would come out of this bill, but that this bill would come out with ideas and proposals. He commented that Representative McGuire, the Department of Education, Carol Comeau and others sat down and tried to figure out a way to move the forward without mandates.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO stated his concerns about passing legislation for increasing physical education. He said that he was curious about how elementary school teachers would be affected.

MS. FLOYD stated that with the current school structure, some part of the curriculum would be displaced but there is room to talk about extended learning opportunities, and other programs that can help improve the physical activity of our students.

[12:23:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARA stated that Physical Education does not have to displace other parts of the curriculum and the aim of the task force bill is to come up with a way to maximize the amount of physical education taught within the existing resources that exist. He mentioned physical education coordinators and how [in Anchorage] they visit schools and strategize with teachers to incorporate more activity into the school day. He emphasized that the point of HB 128 is to ask people trained in physical education to provide ideas and information to better assist issues that arise as a result of obesity and inactivity within schools.

[HB 128 was held over.]

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Education meeting was adjourned at [12:25:32 PM](#).