

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

February 9, 2006

3:19 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Tom Anderson
Representative Carl Gatto
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Vice Chair
Representative Vic Kohring

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Bonnie C. Gaborik - Fairbanks
Dr. Linda L. Gillam Black -
Craig Baker - Kodiak

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 408

"An Act relating to the definition of 'child abuse and neglect' for child protection purposes; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 408(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW: NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG DEPENDENCE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 408

SHORT TITLE: CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT/DISCLOSURE/PFDS

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/30/06 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/30/06 (H) HES, FIN
02/07/06 (H) HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106
02/07/06 (H) Heard & Held
02/07/06 (H) MINUTE(HES)
02/09/06 (H) HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

BONNIE GABORIK, Appointee
to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission
North Pole, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: As appointee to the PTPC, answered
questions.

LINDA GILLAM BLACK, Appointee
to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: As appointee to the PTPC, answered
questions.

CRAIG BAKER, Appointee
to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Kodiak, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: As appointee to the PTPC, answered
questions.

JOANNE GIBBENS, Program Administrator
Office of Children's Services (OCS)
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an amendment to HB 408.

STACIE KRALY, Chief Assistant Attorney General
Statewide Section Supervisor
Human Services Section, Civil Division
Department of Law (DOL)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on HB 408.

MATT FELIX, MS, Executive Director
National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (NCADD)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview of the NCADD.

JESSICA PARIS

National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (NCADD)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the "Protecting You, Protecting Me" (PYPM) curriculum.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:19:57 PM](#). Representatives Wilson, Anderson, Gardner, and Cissna were present at the call to order. Representative Gatto arrived immediately thereafter.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be the confirmation hearing of the governor's appointments to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

BONNIE GABORIK, Appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, informed the committee that she has been in Alaska most recently since 1977 and has been teaching at Salcha Elementary in the Fairbanks School District since 1980. She related that currently she is a teaching principal. She also related that last year she was appointed to fill a vacant position on the PTPC, which she found to be very challenging and important work that she would like to continue.

[3:22:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO inquired as to the type of work performed by the PTPC, specifically is the PTPC faced with teachers who have been severely reprimanded.

MS. GABORIK answered that during her time on the PTPC such a scenario hasn't occurred, although there was a teacher who struggled to maintain his own private religious views from what is appropriate to express in the public school. In the aforementioned case, the teacher was given the benefit of the doubt with a very strict warning to maintain his private views separate from what he expressed at the school. Ms. Gaborik then recalled the last meeting of the PTPC during which the bulk of the cases were related to school districts who are forced to

hire teachers who don't have certification due to the shortage of teachers. Although most of the aforementioned cases were solved and didn't necessitate a hearing, ensuring that people are properly certified and teaching in their field seems to be the focus of the PTPC.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO inquired as to whether Ms. Gaborik would view a teacher found guilty of driving under the influence during his/her time off duty as qualified to be in the classroom.

[3:25:12 PM](#)

MS. GABORIK answered that it should be addressed on a case-by-case scenario. She opined that the teacher is probably qualified to be in the classroom, but she opined that she wouldn't want to ignore a repeat offender. She noted that each district may already have specifics in place with regard to how to handle such situations. The bottom line, she stated, is to keep students safe.

[3:26:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if Ms. Gaborik has any ideas as to how the commission could be improved.

MS. GABORIK replied no, and added that she has been quite impressed with the caliber of those on the commission and the seriousness with which everyone takes the job.

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REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA moved that the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee forward the name of Bonnie Gaborik to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

[3:28:30 PM](#)

LINDA GILLAM BLACK, Appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, informed the committee that she has spent the last three decades of her life working in the public schools in Alaska, particularly in the Anchorage area. She related that she is currently involved in higher education. In fact, the academic dean nominated her for this position. She explained that she is interested in serving because educators should

maintain the highest ethical standards and serve as models to the students and those in the community. Dr. Black opined that she would like to help improve education in Alaska.

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DR. BLACK, in response to Representative Gatto, specified that she worked out of the central office for "SOS" and then traveled to rural Alaska. She further specified that she first worked with the children's cache that began preschool programs and then worked with various Title 1 programs doing teacher and teacher's aide training.

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REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA informed the committee that she has spent a number of hours speaking with Dr. Black because she was a principal in a school in her district and did a superb job.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA moved that the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee forward the name of Linda Gillam Black to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

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CRAIG BAKER, Appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, began by informing the committee that this would be a reappointment for him as he has been a member of the PTPC for the past three years. He said that of the many commissions and boards on which he has served, the PTPC is the most interesting.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if Mr. Baker has noticed a change in the issues that the PTPC has addressed over the past three years.

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MR. BAKER answered that he has not observed any changes in the way the PTPC operates. However, he mentioned that he is constantly seeing new issues come before the commission. In further response to Representative Gardner, Mr. Baker opined that what is coming before the PTPC has stayed much the same, although licensure issues may have increased. In the rural areas, there are situations in which teachers don't return to their positions after the holidays. In response to Chair

Wilson, Mr. Baker confirmed that he is aware of the statewide mentoring program.

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REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA moved that the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee forward the name of Craig Baker to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

HB 408-DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

[3:36:20 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 408, "An Act relating to the definition of 'child abuse and neglect' for child protection purposes; and providing for an effective date."

[3:36:55 PM](#)

JOANNE GIBBENS, Program Administrator, Office of Children's Services (OCS), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), stated departmental support for the proposed amendment [later labeled and adopted as Amendment 2] as it addresses issues previously discussed in committee [February 7, 2006], and reflects current reporting practices to OCS. That amendment [Amendment 2] read [original punctuation provided]:

Page 1, line 8, following "thereby;":

Insert **"child abuse or neglect" includes a determination, at delivery, by a health care provider that a child has been adversely affected by, or is withdrawing from exposure to, a controlled substance or alcohol;**"

Page 1, lines 9 - 12:

Delete all material.

Page 1, line 13:

Delete "**(B)**"

Insert "**(A)**"

Page 2, line 2:

Delete "**(C)**"

Insert "**(B)**"

3:38:13 PM

CHAIR WILSON pointed out that [Amendment 2] is the definition of child abuse or neglect with the inclusion of "or alcohol." However, this change does not effectively alter how these issues are currently being handled by OCS or statewide medical facilities.

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDERSON posed a scenario in which a social drinker who is not aware of her pregnancy takes measures upon her awareness of being prenatal, but subsequently births a child with fetal alcohol syndrome disabilities (FASD). He asked if the parent(s) would then be faced with having the infant reported to OCS. He related that he has received a broad spectrum of opinions regarding alcohol affects on unborn children and expressed his concern for the possibility of an unwitting situation.

MS. GIBBENS explained that this bill addresses situations when a health care provider has a reason for concern, and that a report to OCS does not mean a child will be remanded by the state.

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CHAIR WILSON reiterated that this bill does not change anything in current practice in the state, but simply provides state statute for what is already occurring and to conform to federal language and requirements.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER pointed out the possibilities that may be looked at as options to state remand: no action may be required, following a family assessment; supportive home services may be employed; spousal presence in the home may be made conditional; or whatever may be deemed necessary and available to assure the safety of the child.

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REPRESENTATIVE GATTO pointed out that on page 1, line 1, the word "and" disagrees with the remaining language of the bill and should be changed to "or" to maintain consistency.

STACIE KRALY, Chief Assistant Attorney General, Statewide Section Supervisor, Human Services Section, Civil Division,

Department of Law (DOL), pointed out that the title does need to be amended to "or" to remain consistent with AS 47.17.290(2) and the remainder of the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO moved to adopt Amendment 1, deleting the word "and" from page 1, line 1, and inserting the word "or." There being no objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[3:45:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER offered Amendment 2 [text previously provided] and explained that this amendment effectively redefines the abuse statute. She pointed out that child abuse includes exposure, withdrawal, and adverse effects of controlled substances or alcohol, but that the fact that a child has been exposed does not mean harm has occurred, or that a child is experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDERSON reiterated his concern for an unwitting situation that results in, or a suspicion of, an FASD infant and the possible consequences.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER reminded the committee that if OCS is called and a report made, it does not mean the child is removed from parental custody; rather an assessment would be made to ascertain the welfare of the child.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDERSON maintained his concern for the judicial aspect of the bill.

[3:49:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA expressed concern that [by the time a report is made to OCS] the mother and child may have already "fallen off of a cliff." She reminded the committee as to the need to address programs that take proactive preventative measures.

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CHAIR WILSON asked if statute is in place that will ease the concerns of the committee.

MS. GIBBENS said that there is statute addressing the appropriate protocol for contacting OCS in a situation in which

a parent who is abusing a substance that interferes with the proper care of his/her child(ren).

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDERSON said he agreed with Representative Cissna that there is no need to focus on tougher penalties but rather proactive/preventative programs to curb recidivism.

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CHAIR WILSON, upon determining there was no objection, announced that Amendment 2 was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDERSON moved to report HB 408, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note. There being no objection, CSHB 408(HES) was reported from the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee.

[3:53:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA reiterated her concern with regard to prevention. She highlighted the language she gave to committee members regarding an effective state program. She indicated that legislation based on the language she provided to the committee proposes the use of public health nurses to do healthy family training, assessments, mentor parents, and work proactively for the child.

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CHAIR WILSON commented that the aforementioned is something that one must consider in terms of how the state can address such. She further commented that are some prevention monies that she hoped would stay in the budget in order to achieve such [prevention activities].

OVERVIEW: NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG DEPENDENCE

[3:56:24 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the final order of business would be the presentation by the National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence.

MATT FELIX, MS, Executive Director, National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (NCADD), informed the committee that NCADD has about 96 affiliates throughout the nation. He noted that NCADD performs a number of duties, all of which revolve around the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse, safety, health promotion, and disease prevention. He explained that NCADD is part of a state system that uses a public health model, which utilizes the three prongs of prevention, treatment, and environmental strategies. The NCADD is the prevention portion of the equation.

MR. FELIX stated that the reason NCADD has existed since 1965 is because of the tremendous problem with alcohol abuse and alcoholism in Alaska. He then directed attention to the chart entitled, "U.S. and Alaska Consumption Comparison." The aforementioned chart illustrates that Alaska consistently drinks over a half-gallon of alcohol more than the national average. In Alaska, the drug of choice is alcohol as evidenced by the fact that more Alaskans drink and less Alaskans are completely abstinent. Since prohibition was repealed, about one-third of the nation doesn't drink at all while in Alaska only 25 percent of Alaskans don't drink. Furthermore, 50 percent of the drinkers in Alaska are categorized as heavy drinkers. The average Alaskan drinks about 526 drinks a year and about 18 percent of the total population of Alaska drinks 76 percent of all the alcohol. This population is impacting the state's health and judicial systems, he stressed.

MR. FELIX then informed the committee that NCADD was founded by the first woman in Alcoholics Anonymous and her focus was to overcome the stigma attached to alcoholism and to establish a system by which individuals entered treatment and recovery rather than being treated in the criminal justice system. The NCADD is supported by the Smithers Foundation and in Juneau by various city, state, and federal funds. As the system has evolved in the state, more people have promoted treatment and less have promoted prevention. However, Mr. Felix opined that prevention is where the focus should be because for every dollar spent on prevention, \$5-\$10 spent on treatment could be saved.

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MR. FELIX informed the committee that NCADD operates the following programs: the therapeutic court in Juneau; Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP); alcohol-related intervention services, public education; statewide media campaign; statewide school system teacher training campaign; tobacco cessation;

teens against tobacco in the school system; seatbelt use, driver training system; and community- and school-based prevention. He mentioned that NCADD is a rather large agency for the size and population of the state.

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MR. FELIX highlighted that the focus on schools is becoming more prominent throughout prevention because of the tremendous amount of acceptance of heavy drinking in the state. The desire is to reduce Alaska's per capita consumption of alcohol to closer to the national average because all the [problems] correlated with heavy use will drop as well if the next generation can be transitioned into less use. Although there is a zero tolerance policy in schools and other deterrent programs exist, studies show that postponing the first use of alcohol reduces adult problems [associated with alcohol abuse]. Therefore, the curricula in the school system tries to stop children from drinking, to understand the consequences, physical and otherwise, and to resist peer pressure in order to postpone the first use of alcohol.

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JESSICA PARIS, National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (NCADD), explained that she would be discussing the "Protecting You, Protecting Me" (PYPM) curriculum, which was developed by Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD) when it added the component of preventing underage drinking to its mission. The NCADD is able to spread this curriculum in Alaska with the help of a grant from the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Alaska Highway Safety Office (AHSO). In response to questions, Ms. Paris related that the curriculum is used in first through fifth grades and has been presented in the Juneau School District. The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District has had training for its counselors. She noted that the Anchorage School District is the next district to [receive training on PYPM].

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CHAIR WILSON related her understanding that Native populations have a higher rate of alcohol abuse, and therefore she questioned whether such areas will be targeted.

MS. PARIS answered that NCADD doesn't have a plan to focus on the rural areas, although there is now an on-line training

option that will make it easier and cheaper to provide training throughout the state.

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MR. FELIX related that the PYPM program primarily trains teachers to use it. He then reviewed the various models that can be utilized. He pointed out that the organization doesn't have staff that can go to every school and thus the teacher training model has proven to be of most use with the PYPM program. He noted that the PYPM program includes a safety aspect as well.

CHAIR WILSON recalled her time as a school nurse during which she experienced many drug and alcohol prevention programs. She recalled that it was easier to illustrate the effects of smoking versus alcohol. She expressed interest as to how the program relates the dangers of alcohol.

MS. PARIS then turned to the PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Protecting You Protecting Me." The two curriculum goals are that elementary students learn the effects of alcohol on the brain and that they learn how to protect themselves when forced to ride with a driver impaired by alcohol.

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MS. PARIS reminded the committee that the PYPM program is utilized in first through fifth grades. Although this may seem to be a young age to begin the discussion, a survey of Juneau [teens] reported that 31 percent of 13-year-olds reported riding at least once in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. In 2003, a national [survey] reported that 209 children under age 14 were killed while riding in the car with a driver who had been drinking. Further supporting the need to teach elementary students about the importance of not drinking before age 21 is that the Alaska YRBS reports that 23 percent of Alaska students report they had their first drink of alcohol before age 13. The aforementioned [percentage] is consistent across the nation and that in middle school there is a huge leap in use. Again, any delay in the first use of alcohol is important. In fact, for every year delayed an individual is 15 percent less likely to develop alcoholism.

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MS. PARIS then turned to the question of how an adult's brain is different from that of someone under age 21. The general philosophy used to be that the brain completed development at birth. However, recent technology has shown that the brain continues to develop past the age of 21. This development is about the wiring, organization, and function of the brain occurs [from birth into the early 20s]. Furthermore, there is [research showing] that the brain develops on a schedule. Although 40 percent of brain development occurs during the pre-natal period, the majority of brain development occurs well into the 20s with key development times. In fact, a peak of brain development occurs during ages 1-5, particularly during age 2.5. There is also peak in brain development around age 14 or 15.

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MS. PARIS continued with the question as to how alcohol impacts the brain of someone under age 21. To that, she stated that alcohol impacts the developing brain differently than an adult brain. Given all the same criteria other than age, alcohol impacts the brain differently and it impacts those [21 and younger] more negatively. However, there is no way to quantify the impact of drunk teens beyond data obtained from MRIs [Magnetic Resonance Imaging] performed on drunk rats and [self-reported] teen drinkers and non-drinkers. Ms. Paris related that what is being shown is that alcohol disrupts development between the neurotransmitters and receptor sites and thus development along the proper path can't occur. She further related that research shows that brain damage occurs once the individual is sober as the brain attempts to recover from the impacts of the alcohol. Therefore, during the brain's peak development it's at its greatest vulnerability to be damaged. However, she noted that there is potential for damage throughout an individual's 21-plus years. She reminded everyone that alcohol impacts the brain and the body that the individual must use for the rest of his/her life.

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CHAIR WILSON related her understanding that if an individual begins drinking at say age 13, that individual's maturity level seems to remain at that level until the individual stops drinking [at which time] the individual continues to mature again.

MS. PARIS said that she wasn't sure whether the aforementioned scenario of emotional arrest is more of a psychological question

or has to do with the structural changes to the brain. The question as to how much alcohol is too much, she pointed out, remains. Furthermore, whether the brain damage is permanent or long term is also a question that remains. The aforementioned questions result in the view that since there is no known safe amount, there should be zero tolerance. Moreover, there is also the suggestion that occasional binge drinking is very damaging as well and shouldn't be dismissed.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER suggested that teens seem to fit into the binge drinking category because they seem to drink in excess, although not every day.

MS. PARIS noted her agreement and highlighted that some of the predicted consequences of teen binge drinking are problems with addiction, memory, learning, decision-making, judgment, and impulse control.

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MS. PARIS explained that the Protecting You, Protecting Me curriculum is based on this brain research. Although there are many alcohol prevention curricula available, the PYPM curriculum is unique in that it really focuses on how alcohol impacts the brain in a more tangible way. Furthermore, the curriculum highlights and explains why it's very different for a teen to have a few beers versus his/her mother having a few beers.

[4:26:55 PM](#)

MS. PARIS informed the committee that PYPM has been tested in 3,500 schools over a five-year period and has been named a model program by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The PYPM is also an Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) model program. Ms. Paris explained that PYPM is classroom based and requires that the instructor be trained by the developers of the program. As mentioned earlier, PYPM targets students in grades 1-5. There is a total of 40 lessons during an 8-week program. She discussed the resource material for the various grades, including books, videos, workbooks, and culturally relevant curriculum for Alaska Native students. This curriculum emphasizes the risks/dangers of underage alcohol use and teaches vehicle safety and other skills. Moreover, the curriculum meets standards in many content areas.

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MS. PARIS explained that the curriculum can be implemented in various fashions. Classroom teachers, counselors, and high school students can be trained to teach the curriculum to the students. The curriculum can also be implemented with community prevention specialists. In Juneau, it has worked well for the counselors to teach the curriculum. She then turned attention to graphs included on PowerPoint slides 19-20, which compare [students] who had received PYPM curriculum with those who had not over a five-year period. The aforementioned testing found that those who had received PYPM had greatly increased/improved knowledge of brain development, vehicle safety skills, and attitude regarding underage drinking. Ms. Paris opined that much of the goal of the curriculum is to build on the negative attitude that elementary students already have regarding underage drinking. The curriculum also improves stress management and decision-making skills, she noted.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER inquired as to what studies report with regard to the real goal of PYPM, which is to reduce teenage drinking.

MS. PARIS reminded the committee that PYPM was developed in 1998, and thus there is not data to track how effective it has been. Since that's the case, it's important to recognize the PYPM does meet the criteria as a model program based on what is known to be effective. She then informed the committee that the alcohol use of the high school students who teach PYPM was evaluated prior to and after teaching other students and compared with other high school students in peer leadership classes. The rates of alcohol use, binge drinking, riding with drunk drivers, and drunk driving of those high school students who taught PYPM was less than that of their teenage peers who had not taught PYPM.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER surmised then that the evidence available indicates that the drinking behavior of the PYPM student teachers may have been impacted. However, at this point there is no knowledge as to whether the drinking behavior of the students receiving the PYPM curriculum have been impacted during their teen years. Therefore, she suggested that the organizations classifying PYPM as a model program may have "jumped the gun."

MR. FELIX interjected that there is knowledge that such curricula does delay the first use of alcohol, which is critically important with regard to use later in life. He emphasized that the worst choice would be to do nothing and allow students to enter the teen years without knowledge of the potential damage and consequences of early use.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER agreed that the policy of doing nothing doesn't serve anyone well. However, she submitted that there are other avenues to address this such as funding schools to a level that any children who want to play sports can. She suggested that when children have something to do, they aren't idle and are provided an alternative to drinking. She then inquired as to what it costs to implement PYPM in a school.

MS. PARIS reiterated that currently there is a grant from DOT&PF and AHSO. She specified that it costs between \$400-600 to train a PYPM instructor. She mentioned that on-line training is also available for about \$400, which includes three hours of training time and the curriculum to use for five grades.

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CHAIR WILSON commented that today's children face different challenges than she did as they have parents and other adults who drink in excess.

MR. FELIX noted that Chair Wilson didn't grow up in Alaska. He reminded the committee of the high prevalence, availability, and acceptance of alcohol in Alaska. He also reminded the committee that in Alaska it's legal for a parent to serve alcohol to his/her child, under age 21, in his/her home, which is contrary to most states.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER related her belief that part of the attraction with underage drinking is that the underage individual is getting away with something illegal. She recalled her teen years in England where she didn't recall drinking being an issue, which she attributed to the lack of it being a taboo.

MR. FELIX informed the committee that research shows that the taboo effect doesn't promote drinking, rather the availability

of alcohol does. He opined that if it was legal for 18-year-olds to drink, more would be drinking. In fact, since raising the drinking age to 21, teen fatalities in traffic accidents has dropped by 38 percent.

MS. PARIS relayed that the World Health Organization (WHO) performed a study a year or so ago of 16-year-old European students and compared the rates of binge drinking. The study, she reported, found that the rate of binge drinking among 16-year-olds in England and Germany was much higher than in the U.S.

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REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER questioned whether [the use/view of alcohol] has changed over the decades.

MR. FELIX said that there are cultural, religious, and geographic factors. For example, he related that he grew up in a Portuguese family in the wine country of California and wine was on the table every day, but drinking was regulated. Still, the data relates that it's much better to delay the onset of drinking.

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CHAIR WILSON suggested that had the knowledge that is available about alcohol been available 30 years ago, it probably wouldn't have been allowed to be legal.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER pointed out that prohibition didn't work.

MR. FELIX mentioned that this chemical has been around and accepted since the 1400s. He then pointed out that during the 10-year period of prohibition, which he characterized as a desperate response by Congress, there was a 22 percent decline in public health institutional occupancy. Mr. Felix encouraged the committee to help maintain the prevention increment in the budget.

[4:50:33 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON concluded the meeting by emphasizing the need to perform prevention.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [4:51:03 PM](#).