

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

February 3, 2006

1:28 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Fred Dyson, Chair
Senator Lyda Green
Senator Kim Elton

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Wilken, Vice Chair
Senator Donny Olson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING:

Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services - Karleen Jackson

CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 177

"An Act eliminating the requirement that persons using titles or descriptions of services that incorporate the terms 'psychotherapy,' 'psychotherapeutic,' or 'psychotherapist' be licensed by the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners."

MOVED CSSB 177(HES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 235

"An Act relating to a public school performance incentive program; and providing for an effective date."

BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 177

SHORT TITLE: PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY

SPONSOR(s): HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES BY REQUEST

04/15/05	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/15/05	(S)	HES, L&C
04/20/05	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/20/05	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
01/25/06	(S)	HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

01/25/06 (S) Heard & Held
01/25/06 (S) MINUTE(HES)
02/01/06 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/01/06 (S) -- Rescheduled to 02/03/06 --
02/03/06 (S) HES AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

Karleen Jackson, Acting Commissioner
Department of Health and Social Services
PO Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99801-0601
POSITION STATEMENT: Confirmation candidate.

Anne Henry, Chair
Board of Professional Counselors
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development
PO Box 110800
Juneau, AK 99811-0800
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 177.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR FRED DYSON called the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:28:31 PM. Present were Senators Kim Elton, Lyda Green, and Chair Fred Dyson.

CONFIRMATION HEARING: COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

CHAIR DYSON announced the confirmation of Karleen Jackson to be up for consideration.

KARLEEN JACKSON, Acting Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), informed members that she came to Alaska in the mid-1960s. She returned to school after raising her children and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in community development, and a Ph.D. in human services. After completing her education, she served as manager of Beyond Shelter; director of Emergency Outreach and Support Services, and executive director of Catholic Community Services. She accepted her recent position as deputy commissioner of DHSS at the request of the former commissioner, Joel Gilbertson. She remarked that she feels very fortunate to work with the

incredible management team at DHSS, without whom she could not fulfill her duties as acting commissioner.

[1:36:53 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON asked if Acting Commissioner Jackson planned to make any changes to the staff.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that she was not planning to make any such changes and that her directors made a commitment to her to stay with the department.

CHAIR DYSON asked her to describe the subject of her doctoral thesis.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that she wrote her thesis on how social networking assists homeless people in acquiring and maintaining housing.

[1:38:35 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked if that was the basis of her book.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that she used her dissertation as the basis of her book when a publisher told her he'd like to use it in a series on children in poverty.

CHAIR DYSON asked if her book is available in any of the state's local libraries.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that it is available in the state library in Anchorage and online for purchase.

[1:39:22 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON asked her to explain the high turnover rate among employees working for the Division of Child Protective Services (CPS). He asked whether the department has plans to correct this situation.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that many factors contribute to the high turnover rate, one of the main ones being that it's dangerous, stressful work. She added that while the turnover rate for CPS is high, it is comparable to the national average for such services. She said the department is making efforts, such as working with the University of Alaska, to improve recruitment and retention.

1:41:53 PM

SENATOR ELTON asked if prospective CPS employees face a higher standard of employment criteria than other DHSS employees and, if so, whether these standards are an obstacle to recruiting in that area.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that there are criteria, but she would get him more detailed information about it.

SENATOR GREEN asked if she could offer the committee information or suggestions regarding its efforts to reform its Certification of Need.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that the department is not yet able to suggest an alternative to the current certification process, but she is working on it with legislators and other interested parties.

SENATOR GREEN said it is in everybody's interest to improve the efficiency of the system by updating its antiquated elements.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON agreed and acknowledged that while the department has made some recent progress in updating the system, she recognized the need for additional improvement.

SENATOR ELTON remarked that he'd like to participate in the improvement of the system. He expressed his concern over the department's consideration of lease payments in determining whether or not someone exceeds the monetary cap for certification.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON responded that the administration is currently trying to gather information in order to establish a well-informed dialogue with all interested parties regarding the subject.

1:46:31 PM

CHAIR DYSON noted that earlier this year the governor mentioned his interest in extending a direct subsidy to hospitals to help them recover the cost of providing emergency health care to indigent people. He asked whether DHSS was making any efforts on behalf of this interest.

1:47:26 PM

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that the governor is concerned that overall health costs rise when hospitals absorb the cost of charity care. She said the department is considering how these costs can be managed more appropriately.

CHAIR DYSON asked what the department is doing and who is doing it.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON replied that the FY 07 budget has an increment item for these expenses and that Janet Clark, assistant commissioner of DHSS, is the point person.

CHAIR DYSON asked whether it is possible for the department to preclude this form of cost shifting through regulation or if it must be done in statute.

ACTING COMMISSIONER JACKSON said she didn't have enough information to answer that question.

CHAIR DYSON said that at some point he'd like to know how the department arrived at the figure used in the budget increment. He also commended the department for its efforts to find a better way to cover these expenses.

[1:49:48 PM](#)

SENATOR GREEN moved to forward the name of Karleen Jackson to the full Senate for consideration. Without objection, it was so ordered.

CHAIR DYSON thanked Acting Commissioner Jackson for her service to the people of Alaska.

SB 177-PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGY

[1:51:05 PM](#)

CHAIR DYSON announced CSSB 177(HES), version G, to be up for consideration.

CHAIR DYSON remarked that the committee has, at least temporarily, abandoned its intent to use this bill to combine two of the mental health boards. He said members of the committee are concerned that one impetus of this bill is to qualify more mental health professions for third-party payments.

ANNE HENRY, Chair, Board of Professional Counselors, explained that this bill should not qualify more mental health professionals for third-party payments because insurance companies make reimbursement decisions based on the type of license that a practitioner holds; this bill will not change any of the licenses that the state issues to mental health workers.

[1:57:05 PM](#)

SENATOR ELTON moved to report CSSB 177(HES), version G, from committee with attached fiscal notes and individual recommendations. There were no objections and it was so ordered.

CHAIR DYSON adjourned the Senate Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting at [1:59:21 PM](#).