

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 6, 2012
1:36 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Thomas called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bill Stoltze, Co-Chair
Representative Bill Thomas Jr., Co-Chair
Representative Anna Fairclough, Vice-Chair
Representative Mia Costello
Representative Mike Doogan
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Les Gara
Representative David Guttenberg
Representative Reggie Joule
Representative Mark Neuman
Representative Tammie Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Luke Dihle, Parent, Juneau; Patricia Dihle, Teacher, Juneau; Clara Amidon, Teacher, Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, Anchorage; Lisa Parady, Assistant Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, North Slope; Kevin Barnett, Teacher, Lewis Angapak Memorial School, Tuntutuliak; Andi Story, Juneau School Board, Juneau; Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Juneau; Richard Monkman, Chair, Juneau Douglas High School Site Council, Juneau; Lisa Johnson, Teacher, Tudor Elementary School, Anchorage; Peggy Brown, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Denise Daniello, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Aging, Juneau; Sheryl Weinberg, Executive Director, Alaska Educational Resource Center (SERRC), Juneau; John Alcantra, Government Relations

Director, National Education Association-Alaska, Mat-Su; Lillian Worl, Parent, Juneau; Mark Vinsel, Executive Director, United Fishermen of Alaska; Nils Dihle, Parent and Retired Teacher, Juneau; Carl Rose, Executive Director, Alaska Association of School Boards, Juneau; Jennifer LaRoe, Parent, Juneau; Representative Beth Kerttula, Representative Cathy Munoz.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

E. Robert Mackey, Self, Kotzebue; Derek Martin, City of Kotzebue, Kotzebue; Mary E. Green, Lower Kuskokwin School District, Early Education, Bethel; Janet Balice, Head Start, Nome; Lily Ray, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Nome; Linda Divers, Imagination Library, Brevig Mission; Polly Pootoo, Imagination Library, Brevig Mission; Jennifer Charvet, Alaska Brain Injury Network, Anchorage; Jeanne Garhart-Cyrus, Self, Kaina; Michelle Dewitt, Tanana Women's Conference, Bethel; Brittane Perry, Self, Anchorage; John Crews, Self, Anchorage; Ric Nelson, Vice-chair of the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education, Anchorage; Suzi Pearson, Executive Director, Abused Women Aid and Crisis, Anchorage; Jonathan Teeters, Self, Anchorage; Alexander Von Hoffman, Chair, Alaska Psychiatry Residency Steering Committee; Paula Cullenberg, Director, Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, Anchorage; Emily Nenon, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Anchorage; Kristin English, Chief Operating Officer, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Anchorage; David Weaver, Self, Anchorage; Dirk Shumaker, Executive Director, Kids Corps Head Start, Anchorage; Sarah Leonard, Self, Anchorage; Robin Bronen, Self, Anchorage; Jennifer Lincoln, Self, Anchorage; Pauline P. Smith, Palmer; Terri Lynn Draeger, Student, University of Alaska, Anchorage; Matthew Houser, Corrections Officer, Anchorage; Terri Block, Alaska Brain Injury Association, Wasilla; Peter Finn, Self, Anchorage; Bob Lohr, Self, Anchorage; Martin Crowley, Correctional Officer, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

HB 284 APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

HB 284 was HEARD and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

HB 285 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 285 was HEARD and HELD in Committee for further consideration.

#hb284

#hb285

HOUSE BILL NO. 284

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs, capitalizing funds, amending appropriations, and making reappropriations; and providing for an effective date."

HOUSE BILL NO. 285

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

[1:36:47 PM](#)

JUNEAU

LUKE DIHLE, PARENT, JUNEAU, spoke in support of education funding. He stressed that an investment in education was an investment in Alaska's future. He discussed the importance of low teacher-student ratios.

[1:39:02 PM](#)

PATRICIA DIHLE, TEACHER, JUNEAU, urged support for education funding. She felt that arts and low teacher-student ratios were important. She was one of two co-teachers, which worked very well and helped students to flourish. She was worried that some districts were considering cutting nurses, and special programs. She stressed the importance of an increase to the current education increment in order to keep important employees in schools.

[1:40:53 PM](#)

CLARA AMIDON, TEACHER, ALASKA NATIVE CULTURAL CHARTER SCHOOL, ANCHORAGE, vocalized support for education funding.

She currently taught a classroom of 28 elementary students; other elementary school teachers would reach the same classroom size if education funding was frozen for another year. She expressed that the current year had been the most difficult year so far; meeting the needs of all 28 children had been the most challenging aspect of her school year. She urged a K-12 funding increase.

1:42:20 PM

LISA PARADY, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, NORTH SLOPE, spoke in strong support of increased funding for the Base Student Allocation (BSA). She stressed that it was vital to keep the foundation current and to prevent erosion from inflation. It took resources to deliver content to Alaska's students. The North Slope district was facing budget pressures annually and had been forced to make deep cuts. Pressures felt were in health care, energy, utilities, fuel, logistics, food, and other. There was currently a \$3 million shortfall from service levels. The governor's proposed BSA increase of \$125 million would result in approximately \$600,000 in funding to the North Slope School District; it did not meet the district's need, but would help it to close the gap. She voiced support for the Alaska Learning Network. The network operated as the great equalizer across the state and used technology to make education more accessible. The network supported consistency from year to year. She explained that meeting the Alaska Performance Scholarship required courses that were not always accessible in rural schools; the network helped students to have access to the required classes.

1:47:00 PM

KEVIN BARNETT, TEACHER, LEWIS ANGAPAK MEMORIAL SCHOOL, TUNTUTULIAK, spoke in favor of a K-12 education funding increase. He opined that passing a budget reflecting a decrease in the BSA for FY 13 was irresponsible. Costs continued to increase dramatically for rural schools in areas such as heating and computer supplies. The challenges of providing a quality education in villages did not need to be further heightened by failing to provide schools with the necessary resources. Denying students opportunities because resources were consumed paying the school bills restricted students from essential experiences that would allow them to become valuable members of their community.

He wanted students to receive an education that would enable them to take on a rigorous job.

1:49:29 PM

ANDI STORY, JUNEAU SCHOOL BOARD, JUNEAU, urged support for an increase to education funding. She reported that graduation rates at the two high schools in Juneau were 87 percent and 86 percent. The achievement in reading and math had climbed steadily in the past four years. The graduation requirements had been increased in line with the Alaska Performance Scholarship requirements. The schools were focusing on professional development for principals and on staff evaluation. The money in the operating budget was approximately \$5.8 million less for Juneau schools. Under the current funding more than 65 school staff would lose their jobs. She relayed that the loss in jobs would negatively impact the Juneau economy. She stressed that students had complex and varied needs.

Representative Gara wondered whether Juneau school scores had increased because of increases to the BSA in past years. He asked how Ms. Story felt about increasing the BSA versus a one-time BSA funding.

Ms. Story responded that achievement had increased due to past increases in the BSA. She explained that the school had been able to implement specific programs that would not have been possible otherwise. She believed the school district and the legislature could work together to develop a timeframe and a plan for school funding that would create public confidence in schools. When funding was outside of the formula schools were faced with making cuts annually; funding received ahead of time would allow the districts to strategically plan. The Department of Education and Early Development trained special education mentors and provided teacher training; cutting teacher position did not help schools and wasted money spent on training.

1:54:33 PM

BRUCE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, JUNEAU, spoke in support of education foundation formula funding. He emphasized that there would be budget deficits and severe cuts if education remained flat funded. He emphasized the importance of an increase to the BSA over multiple years that would provide predictable

revenue and would allow districts to develop budgets and educational programs in an efficient way. The schools felt a direct impact when funds were redirected to heating, utility, and bus contract costs. He pointed to the success of early learning opportunities for children. He stressed that state must do better if it was to help all young people to realize their dreams. He thanked the committee for its support.

Co-Chair Thomas wondered why schools could not plan for wage costs if allocations had been forward funded in the past. He noted that forward funding now meant forward increment increases to some schools.

Mr. Johnson replied that the legislature had put forward BSA funds to fund 56/80 under the current scenario. There was no question that districts could plan on the 56/80 BSA. The funding was very different from funds provided to other state agencies that had a set increment they could count on. The school district had no way of requesting a supplement. Districts appreciated that money had been set aside, but it did not prevent the agony that was presented when employees had to be laid off. Superintendents hoped to know what the funding increment would be in advance. He furthered that it would be very helpful if the increment took into account cost of living experiences.

Co-Chair Thomas believed that Department of Administration was responsible for negotiating employee contracts. He thought that if the legislature was responsible for teaching negotiations it would be more in touch with the issue.

[2:01:40 PM](#)

Mr. Johnson appreciated the forward funding concept. The 56/80 target was not sufficient to meet growing demands.

Co-Chair Thomas commented that when graduation rates were not at 100 percent that money was lost. He noted that Southeast Alaska was losing students and that putting more money into schools would not help if students were lost.

Representative Wilson asked how much of the shortfall was due to a loss of federal stimulus funding. Mr. Johnson replied that the seven districts he represented had no stimulus carry-over or jobs-bill carry-over in any of the

figures he had provided. Schools recognized that they did not have the right to ask the legislature to continue one-time federal funding that districts had used in a variety of ways.

[2:03:54 PM](#)

RICHARD MONKMAN, CHAIR, JUNEAU DOUGLAS HIGH SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL, JUNEAU, vocalized support for an increase to the BSA. He explained that the process of cutting programs because of the \$6 million education cut was extraordinarily painful. The types of programs that had been cut were some of the most valuable in bringing families and students into the schools. He opined that one of the keys to student success was an involved family. He listed programs the district was faced with cutting including, gifted and talented, music, native cultural paraeducators, nurses and other. He relayed that there were algebra classes with 38 students and science classes that would have 29 or 30 students the next year. He encouraged the committee to increase the BSA.

Co-Chair Thomas wondered how much of the rural safe schools money had impacted the current Juneau school district's budget. Mr. Monkman did not know and deferred the question to Andi Story.

Co-Chair Thomas informed the committee that the rural safe school program provided the Tongass and Chugiak forests with extra money for timber receipts. He believed it had been a significant amount of money at one point.

[2:07:00 PM](#)

LISA JOHNSON, TEACHER, TUDOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, ANCHORAGE, spoke against the flat funding of education that would not address the growing needs of children. She opined that increased standards at the kindergarten level without pre-school were counter to student achievement. She urged the proper funding of schools for all grade levels and stressed the importance of increasing the BSA.

[2:08:15 PM](#)

PEGGY BROWN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA NETWORK ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT, spoke in support for victims service agencies. She thanked the committee for the budget

increment that would help the agencies to cover rising fuel costs. She spoke in support of the public awareness media campaigns. The campaigns targeted different groups of people for different reasons. An increased percentage of victims were young men and teens. She believed the media campaign was working to reach people across the state.

Co-Chair Thomas asked whether Ms. Brown had seen the presentation to the House Finance Committee from multiple department commissioners on the issue several weeks earlier. Ms. Brown responded in the affirmative.

2:11:04 PM

DENISE DANIELLO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING, JUNEAU, thanked the committee for its support of increments for two senior grant programs. The programs provided support for caregivers and helped seniors to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible. There was a significant wait list for senior in home services in Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Nome, Valdez, and Cordova; the additional funding would help to address the needs. She discussed that adult day programs provided services in a structured setting for seniors including nutritional support, caregiver support, personal care support, and other. She reiterated her thanks for the funding.

2:13:49 PM

SHERYL WEINBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER (SERRC), JUNEAU, spoke in support of the Alaska Transition Outcome Project. She appreciated funding support for the project. She stressed the importance of transitional resources for people with disabilities that were critical helping individuals to succeed as an adult. Transition plans were required to focus on employment, education and training, independent living, community participation, and recreation. A myriad of services were provided to teachers and students including, on-site assessments of transition activities, technical assistance, workshops at the annual education conference, and transition camps. The camps had been operating for the past nine years and were currently held in a variety of locations; students focused on a person-centered plan that became the roadmap for the remainder of their high school

year. She believed the program had helped many students to be successful.

Representative Wilson wondered whether SERRC was a non-profit organization. Ms. Weinberg replied in the affirmative.

Representative Wilson clarified that there was a \$150,000 increment in the budget for the programs. Ms. Weinberg replied in the affirmative and thanked the committee for continued support. She added that SERRC had augmented the allocation throughout its years of operation.

[2:19:20 PM](#)

JOHN ALCANTRA, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION-ALASKA, MAT-SU, spoke in support of an increase to the BSA. He thanked the committee for past education funding. The upcoming fiscal year would be another year of flat, frozen, or full funding through the BSA, which represented an actual decrease in real dollars for K-12 foundation and pupil transportation. He urged support for K-12 and pre-K funding. He provided a quote by the philosopher Confucius: "If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children."

[2:20:45 PM](#)

LILLIAN WORL, PARENT, JUNEAU, spoke in support for increased funds for schools. She explained that most teachers supplemented their classroom supply budgets with personal funds. Juneau was looking at a \$5.8 million deficit in the coming year which meant larger classroom sizes and increased fundraising for students to have the ability to participate in after school activities. She referred to the need for technology for students to remain competitive. She was disheartened at the loss of 66 positions in local schools. Vast improvements could not be made when cuts were made to basic programs. She thanked the committee for its time.

[2:23:51 PM](#)

MARK VINSEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA, supported an increase to the proposed budget increment for the Alaska Marine Safety Education

Association in the amount of \$197,000 under the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. He relayed that the program was a critical component for the safety of commercial fishing fleets; it offered hands on training and reached hundreds of communities. There were increased safety training requirements in the commercial fisheries industry. At least 55 fishermen had vocalized that the training had been invaluable when they had faced life threatening circumstances. He explained that a loss of just one of those lives would be a much higher cost to families, communities, and the state. He requested an increase to the governor's proposed increment that flat funded the program and urged the committee to provide full funding.

[2:25:47 PM](#)

NILS DIHLE, PARENT AND RETIRED TEACHER, JUNEAU, advocated for a K-12 and preschool classroom BSA funding increase. He had worked as a teacher and professional counselor; he was also a father and grandfather. He reinforced the idea of short-term versus long-term; he believed it was important to spend more up front rather than spending a higher amount later. He stressed the importance of early education. He explained that an ounce of prevention was worth a pound of cure.

Representative Gara queried the impact of increased class sizes. Mr. Dihle responded that he remembered loving the flu season in Alaska when his classroom had been smaller; it had really made a difference in his ability to work with the students. He added his support for senior services and adult day care programs.

[2:30:57 PM](#)

CARL ROSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS, JUNEAU, thanked the committee for the \$1.2 billion in the education fund. He supported the \$6 million for Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) liability. He stressed that student achievement was on the rise and academic scores were up. He believed educators were doing a good job. The seven largest districts of the state with approximately 80 percent of the student population were facing a serious deficit. He urged support for an increase to the BSA; rising energy costs, pupil transportation, health, insurance increases, salaries and benefits were all paid for with the BSA. He stressed

that education was forward funded if the BSA was considered to be 56/80; schools did use the money to plan and had caused them to be in deficit across the state. He supported HB 284 as amended. He stressed that schools were stretched very thin.

[2:34:35 PM](#)

JENNIFER LAROE, PARENT, JUNEAU, (read into the record by Andi Story):

My name is Jennifer LaRoe. I live 5134 Glacier Highway, Juneau, AK with my children, Lila Quigley (turns 9 this month-third grader at Harborview Elementary), and Miles Quigley (turns 6 next month-kindergartner at Harborview Elementary) and their father, Dylan Quigley.

I moved to Juneau in 1994 after living in Bethel as a volunteer for one year. I have a strong background in children and education, having worked in a variety of non-profit youth programs and educational settings for over twenty years, including working with children with special needs. Since my children started receiving formal education, I have consistently committed time to volunteer in their classrooms on a regular basis. I am a current parent representative on the Harborview Site Council and have been making great effort to build a school garden this year.

I am concerned with the pupil to teacher ratios being affected by proposed budget cuts. Special education positions are being considered to be cut. These staff members were the key ingredient to making a difference in my son's Kindergarten. There are currently three aids that spend time in the classroom daily and help keep the peace and provide important one-on-one guidance to identified students who would otherwise dominate the teacher's time, effort and energy. Neither of my children demands much attention, but they still deserve educational attention from their teachers. Cutting increases to school funding puts my children's education at risk. I am not willing to continue supporting the school system if you are not.

It's up to the State Legislature to provide the financial resources to ensure my children get a great

education here in Alaska. Funding as proposed in the Governor's budget doesn't get the job done.

[2:36:50 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:57:33 PM](#)

RECONVENED

BETHEL, KOTZEBUE, BARROW, NOME, DELTA JUNCTION, OFF-NETS

E. ROBERT MACKEY, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in support of the University of Alaska's budget request. He pointed out that staff had seen a net decrease in pay, which could result in staffing challenges.

DEREK MARTIN, CITY OF KOTZEBUE, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in support of Village Public Safety Officers, the Kotzebue regional community jail and Division of Motor Vehicle funding.

[3:03:03 PM](#)

MARY E. GREEN, LOWER KUSKOKWIN SCHOOL DISTRICT, EARLY EDUCATION, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of early education funding. She observed that they are in the last year of federal pre-school funding, and maintained that children that attend quality pre-schools have higher performance rates and were less troubled.

JANET BALICE, HEAD START, NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of early education funding. She stressed that the average of grade proficient students was doubled with the program. There are 38 students on the waiting list.

[3:05:51 PM](#)

Vice-chair Fairclough reiterated that 50 percent of their students were grade proficient entering kindergarten. Ms. Balice observed that the average for children not attending Head Start was 24 percent. There was a 26 percent increase over the average for children attending Head Start.

LILY RAY, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, FAIRBANKS, NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Resilience and Adaptation program to allow research for local problems by local students. She provided information on successful land

management techniques that came through information obtained by the program.

[3:09:13 PM](#)

LINDA DIVERS, IMAGINATION LIBRARY, BREVIG MISSION (via teleconference), testified in support of the Best Beginnings program. She noted that there were over 50 children enrolled in the program.

POLLY POCTOO, IMAGINATION LIBRARY, BREVIG MISSION (via teleconference), testified in support of the Best Beginnings program. She stressed the importance of early reading skills.

JENNIFER CHARVET, ALASKA BRAIN INJURY NETWORK, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Alaska Behavior Complex Collaborative for training and consultation. She stressed the need for referral services.

[3:14:02 PM](#)

JEANNE GARHART-CYRUS, SELF, KAINA (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Alaska Behavior Complex Collaborative. She noted that the complex offered training for parents as well as treatment and emphasized that the program helped create competent citizens. She pointed out that there were not sufficient services in small communities.

[3:16:54 PM](#)

RECESSED

[3:31:18 PM](#)

RECONVENED

MICHELLE DEWITT, TANANA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of domestic violence and sexual assault funding.

[3:33:25 PM](#)

RECESSED

[4:09:43 PM](#)

RECONVENED

[4:10:10 PM](#)

ANCHORAGE

BRITTANEE PERRY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Alaska Vocational and Technical Education (AVTEC) funding. She encouraged more funding for the Registered Nurses program.

4:12:53 PM

JOHN CREWS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of AVTEC funding. He spoke against cutting funding for the Registered Nurses program.

Representative Doogan was grateful for Mr. Crews' testimony. Co-Chair Thomas stressed that the AVTEC funding was not cut from the Operating Budget. He stated that it was not included as an increment in the governor's proposal.

4:16:36 PM

RIC NELSON, VICE-CHAIR OF THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Alaska Complex Behavior Collaborative. He stated that the Alaska Complex Behavior Collaborative was highly successful, and received referrals from several locations in Alaska. He explained that the Collaborative had recently expanded to include children. He stressed that the Collaborative was a much needed service, and included a team of doctor-level experts that were available to quickly intervene when an individual with harmful behaviors could no longer be served in their home or community. He reported that as of December 2011, Alaskans with complex behaviors were starting to leave the state to seek treatment. He explained that emergency rooms, the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, and the Department of Corrections were not appropriate placement locations for individuals with complex behavior issues.

4:24:57 PM

SUZI PEARSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ABUSED WOMEN AID AND CRISIS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of domestic violence and sexual assault program funding. She stated that the Abused Women Aid and Crisis (AWAIC) had seen an increase in several areas, including health

insurance, which was important to recruit and retain qualified staff. She added that the cost of food was rising, and she stressed that the Alaska Food Bank had limited the number of days that non-profit organizations could use the food bank. As a result, AWAIC was buying more food and incurring more cost. She reported that there had been a slightly reduced cost in utilities, thanks to a state appropriation in 2011.

[4:26:45 PM](#)

Representative Gara wondered if the Abused Women Aid and Crisis (AWAIC) was over-capacity. Ms. Pearson replied that AWAIC was over-capacity.

Representative Gara wondered if there was a plan to deal with the over-capacity issue. Ms. Pearson replied that there were several plans in place, and hoped for further funding to enhance AWAIC.

[4:29:27 PM](#)

JONATHAN TEETERS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), vocalized support of Best Beginnings funding and the 25 Imagination Library affiliates. He felt that the funding would provide the needed resources for community partnerships and connections with parents.

[4:32:53 PM](#)

ALEXANDER VON HOFFMAN, CHAIR, ALASKA PSYCHIATRY RESIDENCY STEERING COMMITTEE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the Alaska Psychiatry Residency. He stated that the Alaska Psychiatry Residency was the best long-term solution to increase the supply of psychiatry in rural and urban Alaska. He stressed that the Alaska Psychiatry Residency was a top work-force priority for the Mental Health Trust and the Department of Health and Social Services. He pointed out that the Alaska Psychiatry Residency was recommended by the Alaska Health Care Commission, and the Alaska Health Work-force Investment Board. He explained that psychiatrists were integral to the health care system, and stated that psychiatrists are doctors who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental, emotional, and addictive disorders. He announced that psychiatrists provide direct-patient care, and consult and supervise other health care workers.

4:35:31 PM

PAULA CULLENBERG, DIRECTOR, ALASKA SEA GRANT MARINE ADVISORY PROGRAM, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of marine safety funding, and the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA).

4:37:54 PM

EMILY NENON, AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY CANCER ACTION NETWORK, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of tobacco prevention funding. She stressed that obesity prevention funding should also be considered.

Vice-chair Fairclough queried the percentage of smokers in Alaska. Ms. Nenon replied youth smoking was at 16 percent in 2009. She stated that there had been a drop in smoking on the national level over the prior fifteen years. She remarked that there was some success in lowering adult smoking, and stated that recently the adult smoking level in Alaska was at 19 percent.

4:41:02 PM

Vice-chair Fairclough wondered if there would be an intention to maintain the low percentage, or if there was an intention to continue to drive the numbers down. Ms. Nenon felt that there needed to be a focus on significant health disparities related to smoking.

Vice-chair Fairclough wondered if there was a possibility to reduce the number of smokers even further, or if the focus should be on maintaining a low number of smokers.

Co-Chair Stoltze wondered if there was feedback regarding regulating the sale of wine and spirits. Ms. Nenon replied that there needed to be recognition of the health benefits of smoke-free businesses, including bars.

Co-Chair Stoltze noted some prior discussions regarding restricting pull-tabs, and felt that, in the extreme, alcohol and tobacco could have negative consequences.

Co-Chair Thomas expressed concern that the fund to restrict tobacco could keep growing, and he feared that there would be continued requests for money to restrict tobacco use.

[4:47:03 PM](#)

KRISTIN ENGLISH, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, COOK INLET TRIBAL COUNCIL, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of AVTEC Registered Nurse funding. She stated that there was a Health Professions Opportunity Grant that targeted Alaska Native and American Indian people that were in-need and/or low-income individuals. She stated the grant's intent was to provide an easy-access career ladder into health professions. She explained that the career ladder could start with Certified Nurse Assistant or Certified Medical Assistant training and certification. She furthered that the ladder could result in Registered Nurse training certification.

Representative Gara asked if the capacity was increased, would there be sufficient dorm capacity. Ms. English replied that most of the RN's were living in their own homes so dorm capacity was not a huge issue.

[4:51:50 PM](#)

DAVID WEAVER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of education funding for the University of Alaska. He recognized that the university had played a part in many of the committee members' lives. The university had helped to prepare him for his experiences and work in the state. Open-enrollment public institutions leveled the playing field and allowed people access to education. He discussed a new retention program at the University of Alaska-Anchorage.

[4:55:33 PM](#)

DIRK SHUMAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KIDS CORPS HEAD START, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of early childhood education funding. He encouraged increased investment in Head Start funding.

Representative Gara queried the impact of early childhood education related to crime later in life. Mr. Shumaker noted a study in the state of Washington related to many long-term positive impacts related to early childhood education.

[4:58:21 PM](#)

SARAH LEONARD, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of investing in early childhood education, such as programs like Best Beginnings, the Imagination Library, and the Parents as Teachers program.

[4:59:50 PM](#)

ROBIN BRONEN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of a graduate programs at the University of Alaska related to climate change. She shared a personal experience related to the Resilience and Adaptation Program.

[5:02:03 PM](#)

JENNIFER LINCOLN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), vocalized support of the increase of funding for AMSEA. She stressed that the program would support increased demand for marine safety. She pointed out that a traumatic injury was the third leading cause of death in Alaska.

[5:04:00 PM](#)

PAULINE P. SMITH, PALMER (via teleconference), testified in support of early childhood education funding. She explained that she was a member of the Alaska Literacy Program, and stressed the importance of literacy programs among young children. She encouraged support of Best Beginnings.

[5:06:49 PM](#)

TERRI LYNN DRAEGER, STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance at the University of Alaska.

[5:07:41 PM](#)

MATTHEW HOUSER, CORRECTIONS OFFICER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified against the staffing cuts to corrections officers. He stressed that the staffing cuts would cause extremely limited supervision.

[5:09:43 PM](#)

TERRI BLOCK, ALASKA BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of mental health funding for complex behavior for brain injuries.

[5:11:45 PM](#)

PETER FINN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), expressed support of the advising component of the University of Anchorage that was removed from the Operating Budget. He felt that the general advising for new students was seriously understaffed. He stated that the three advisors were trying to advise 500 students per semester. He strongly encouraged the committee to add the advising component back into the budget.

Vice-chair Fairclough remarked that she planned to add \$2 million to increase graduation rates.

[5:16:07 PM](#)

BOB LOHR, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Alaska Psychiatric Residency. He shared a personal story regarding his experience with depression while living in Tok, Alaska. He stressed the need for training for psychiatrists in Alaska.

[5:18:37 PM](#)

MARTIN CROWLEY, CORRECTIONAL OFFICER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified against decreasing the correctional officers staffing. He felt that the intent language needed to be stronger in the Operating Budget.

[5:20:24 PM](#)

Co-Chair Stoltze wondered if the issue was a labor negotiation issue. Mr. Crowley felt it was a labor issue, but the administration thought it was not a labor issue.

Representative Costello noted that there was an earlier testifier who had communicated with her office that the change in the correctional officer policy could disrupt families.

HB 284 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 285 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Thomas discussed the following day's agenda.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[5:28:16 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 PM.