

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 9, 2014

8:10 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Harriet Drummond

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Sam Kito III (Alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 197

"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."

- MOVED CSHB 197(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 333

"An Act establishing a museum construction grant program in the Department of Education and Early Development."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 197

SHORT TITLE: LITERACY PROGRAM

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LEDOUX

04/02/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/02/13	(H)	EDC, FIN
04/08/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/08/13	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
04/10/13	(H)	EDC AT 9:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/10/13	(H)	Heard & Held

04/10/13 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
02/26/14 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/26/14 (H) Scheduled But Not Heard
04/04/14 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/04/14 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
04/09/14 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 333

SHORT TITLE: MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANTS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HERRON

02/24/14 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/14 (H) EDC, FIN
04/09/14 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 179 as prime sponsor.

LISA VAUGHT, Staff
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the committee substitute (CS) for HB 197, on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative LeDoux.

THOMAS BROWN, Staff
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the presentation of committee substitute (CS) for HB 197, on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative LeDoux.

CARI MILLER
Policy Director
Foundation for Excellence in Education
Tallahassee, Florida

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 197.

BOB GRIFFIN, Volunteer
Alaska Policy Forum
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 197.

SUSAN MCCAULEY, Director
Teaching and Learning Support
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 197.

POSIE BOGGS, Volunteer
Alaska International Dyslexia Association
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 197.

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 333 as prime sponsor.

EVA MALVICH, Director/Curator
Yupit Piciryarait Museum
Association of Village Council Presidents
Bethel, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

JANE LINDSEY, Advocacy Chair
Museums Alaska
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

LANI HOTCH, Executive Director
Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center
Klukwan, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

LACEY SIMPSON, Director
City of Ketchikan Museum Department
Ketchikan, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

EMMIE SWANSON
Valdez Museum and Historical Archive
Valdez, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

MICHELE MILLER
Pratt Museum
Homer, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 333.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:10:35 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN GATTIS called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Representatives Drummond, P. Wilson, LeDoux and Gattis were present at the call to order. Representative Reinbold arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 197-LITERACY PROGRAM

[8:10:48 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 197, "An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."

[8:11:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for HB 197, labeled 28-LS0515\0, Mischel, 2/21/14 as the working document. There being no objection, Version 0 was before the committee.

[8:12:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX, Alaska State Legislature, acknowledged her sponsorship of HB 197 and deferred to staff for presentation of HB 197, Version 0.

[8:12:36 AM](#)

LISA VAUGHT, Staff, Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Alaska State Legislature, presented the committee substitute for HB 197, Version 0, paraphrasing from a prepared document, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 197 requires local school districts to establish intensive reading programs from kindergarten through 3rd grade with the specific goal of ensuring that all students are reading proficiently by grade three.

Research has demonstrated that during K through 3 students are learning to read, after that they are reading to learn. What this means is that if students are not reading proficiently in grade four and up they will fall farther and farther behind each year as their lessons become ever more reading focused. If a student cannot read their science lesson or history book they will not be able to successfully complete these classes and more importantly not learn the basic knowledge and skills required for the 21st century. This is why literacy-based programs are so essential at this stage of education.

HB 197 requires school districts to be accountable for the performance of their students. It achieves this by requiring them to publish annual reports about student progress, their policies and procedures regarding how students are promoted from grade to grade, the number and percentage of students promoted for good cause, and details of any school board policy changes regarding promotion.

HB 197 lays out a literacy-based promotion policy specifically designed for students to successfully demonstrate their ability to read, before entering 4th grade. A literacy-based promotion policy forces schools to organize their curriculum around reading instruction, so that schools focus more time and effort on reading and encouraging parental involvement. HB 197 stresses that schools incorporate a vast array of teaching strategies and interventions and utilize all the resources at their disposal, especially parental involvement.

HB 197 will identify students with significant reading deficiencies early and create systems to address these before they get to the critical stage of 3rd grade. We want to avoid a child getting to third grade, taking their SBA's and are suddenly discovered to be below minimum standards. HB 197 forces the teachers, the parents, THE ADULTS, to focus on student literacy before it becomes a problem. It establishes reading programs early on and reinforces them throughout the years so that by the time they come to 3rd grade the students are prepared.

Currently the Anchorage School District holds back only 0.05% of the student population. Nationally, Alaska rates 51st in low-income 4th grade reading scores, tied with inner-city Washington, DC. According to the NEA, in 2012, Alaska spent more on Education than any other state yet still managed to rank near the bottom. Nearly 90% of high school dropouts are below proficient in reading in 3rd grade. There is a strong association between dropping out of high school and lower income, more dependence on public assistance programs and higher incarceration rates. HB 197 is not about business as usual, retain and repeat, this is about early identification and intensive intervention and instruction.

This is not a punishment, retention is not the goal. It is merely one segment of a strong combination of instruction and intervention techniques coupled with test-based promotion that makes the program successful. The intent of HB 197 is not to hold students back but to give them the tools necessary to become a prosperous, productive member of society.

[8:16:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND observed that the Anchorage school district has already been on board with this concept for some time. Awareness regarding the importance of early literacy is not a new concept, she said, stressing the need for children to arrive at school ready to read at the same level for maximum benefit throughout the grades. She said it would be interesting to know if those children who have not learned to read by third grade, manifesting as social ills and incarceration in adulthood, show a connection to a lack of early childhood education, as well.

[8:17:48 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS interjected that the data would be good to have and could possibly be obtained from the [Department of Public Safety].

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said that longitudinal studies, as compiled by the Head Start agency, indicate the relevance of early literacy/learning and the connection to societal success as an adult. She indicated a lack of interest in supporting Version 0, offering her view that it represents redundancy.

[8:19:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX pointed out the need to employ many approaches, and said that Version 0 will provide another tool for addressing early childhood education.

[8:19:27 AM](#)

THOMAS BROWN, Staff, Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of the prime sponsor, pointed out that Version 0 is a measure to specifically address the area of early reading literacy.

[8:20:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said Alaska has a huge waiting list for early education programs and the legislature has not been financially supportive. The data indicating the importance for early learning already exists. Unfortunately, she offered her belief that without financial support for providing early literacy programs, children are often in homes providing little exposure to books. One program receiving state funding, Best Beginnings [Alaska], has compiled data specific to high quality early childhood education, she offered, and said this information should not be ignored. She asked about a fiscal note.

MS. VAUGHT responded that a fiscal note is being developed.

[8:23:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX offered her belief that debating the merits for early childhood education is not relevant to Version 0. She pointed out that waning literacy scores are identified with families at every income level and social strata, and are not restricted to low income households or Head Start eligible children.

[8:23:47 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony on HB 197.

[8:24:03 AM](#)

CARI MILLER, Policy Director, Foundation for Excellence in Education, state support for HB 197 and said an effective K-3

{kindergarten to third] grade policy is important. The fundamental principles should include: kindergarten screening; parental notification when deficits are identified; development of an individual reading plan designed in conjunction with the parents; third grade assessment to determine the need for intervention/retention; possible exemption for special needs or students with ESL challenges and options for demonstrating proficiency to allow promotion; and a retention component that requires an additional year of experience, which may be satisfied by attendance at a summer reading camp. Identified students will be monitored frequently to ensure that each individual is receiving the attention and support necessary. Nine states have adopted these fundamental principles and the data indicates broad success with literacy percentages showing significant increases, and attainment of benchmark reading achievements. Florida has been using this technique for ten years, she finished.

[8:34:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND requested the supporting data that was mentioned and asked about further history regarding the use of the program.

MS. MILLER responded that Florida has been using this program for just over a decade and other states for three years or less.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND requested a cost analysis.

MS. MILLER indicated that Florida has repurposed funding to cover the costs. The drop-out prevention funding was earmarked for summer reading camps. Additionally, professional development monies were redirected to support the K-3 literacy program. She offered to provide further financial information.

[8:38:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX said many Alaskan school districts already practice a number of these fundamentals, but not the retention aspect, and asked whether the elimination of social promotion alone might create a fiscal burden.

MS. MILLER agreed that having a child in school for an additional year does add cost. However, she explained, to fund one additional school year is cost effective considering societal costs to support a student who develops into a drop-

out; often requiring welfare, food stamps and other social funding.

[8:42:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted the number of the mentioned fundamentals that would include a cost factor, such as summer reading camps or extending the school day, week, or year for identified students. She agreed that retaining a child could add cost to a school district, and suggested the same money could be as useful if directed towards highly effective pre-school programs. Further, she asked what the ten year cost has been for operating the summer reading camps, small reading groups, and day/week/year extension programs.

MS. MILLER offered to provide further information. She acknowledged that these aspects of the fundamental program carry a cost and indicated how Florida handled the redirection of funding to meet the need; repurposing of the drop-out prevention funds has been the primary source.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that with the fourth year of flat or reduced school funding in Alaska, many of the schools have closed summer programs, which were intended as drop-out prevention measures.

[8:44:58 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Volunteer, Alaska Policy Forum, testified in support of HB 197, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

As a longtime advocate for improving public education, HB 197 is the number one priority for legislation that I'm supporting in Juneau this year. Early childhood literacy is at crisis proportions in Alaska. In the 2013 NAEP test scores for low-income kids we dropped to 51st (behind low-income kids in DC) in 4th grade reading. Our upper and middle income kids are not doing much better. In 2013 they dropped to 49th in NAEP testing when we were 44th just 10 years ago.

I have attended dozens of K-12 education conferences all over the US and I have not come across a more effective method of improving student outcomes than legislation setting the standards for minimum 3rd grade literacy.

Large quantities of research indicate that when kids do not attain basic literacy by age 9 or 10 they are unlikely to catch-up later. Social promotion of illiterate students at the critical transition of using reading skills to learn is not doing any favors to those children.

Nearly identical legislation is already in effect in a dozen states and it has been producing fantastic results. Florida, was the first to try this legislation back in 2002. In the 2003 NAEP testing Florida was 28th in low-income 4th grade reading. By 2013 they were 1st.

According to 2013 NAEP test scores, low income Hispanic 4th graders in Florida read at a higher comprehension level than the average Alaskan 4th grader.

It's interesting to note that according to the latest NEA publication, "Rankings and Estimates," Alaska was 1st in per capita K-12 funding in 2010 and Florida was 48th.

Our kids are bright;
Our teachers are dedicated;
Our parents are loving;
There's no reason we can't do better.

[8:48:20 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked how first and second grade students demonstrating literacy challenges are being addressed.

MR. GRIFFIN answered that with known accountability at the third grade level, the earlier grades appear to focus effort on getting students more prepared for third grade.

[8:50:07 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked how early literacy is currently addressed in Alaska, and what should be occurring.

[8:50:19 AM](#)

SUSAN MCCAULEY, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), said that the state has an established policy. Alaska took a step further last year in requiring early literacy screening for kindergarten-second grade. Third grade assessments have been in place and the need for early literacy is understood. She directed attention to page 5, lines 13-25, requiring the department to monitor and audit on specified time lines. She said the department will be looking at these two requirements to determine the best means to respond/comply.

[8:53:38 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked whether the department supports Version O.

MS. MCCAULEY said the department considers that the bill is consistent with what is understood to be helpful for students.

[8:54:42 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS considered the rural areas that may not have sufficient staff available and asked how the department will address these situations.

MS. MCCAULEY pointed out the bill does not require or permit the department to trump local district literacy decisions. The department will be monitoring districts but it will need to be made clear what elements are to be monitored. Certainly EED will provide districts the necessary professional development opportunities and make recommendations as necessary.

[8:57:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked whether data, from the regulations adopted in [2013] establishing early literacy screening, have been compiled.

MS. MCCAULEY answered no. She explained that the regulation requiring the screening assessments, to be conducted at a minimum of once a year, had the first assessment window beginning April 1 [2014]. The department will receive this initial literacy data as part of [each district's] annual submission in July [2014].

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that the Anchorage School District begins kindergarten classes on a one week delay from the other grades. She reported that the delay is to allow

parent/teacher/child the opportunity for 1:1 meetings/readiness assessments, and asked if early literacy screening occurs at that time.

MS. MCCAULEY responded that the [Alaska Developmental Profile] is required for students throughout the state. She explained that it is a broad readiness assessment, not specific to early literacy. However, she added, the new screening requirements include specifications addressing literacy, which includes letter recognition and sounds.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND queried whether the screenings indicate if a child has experienced any type of preschool program, which may give them a level of readiness.

MS. MCCAULEY offered to provide further information.

9:00:07 AM

CHAIR GATTIS inquired about the specifics of the [2013] regulation.

MS. MCCAULEY answered that it is specific to, and explicitly, an early literacy screening assessment.

CHAIR GATTIS stated her understanding that a child may demonstrate proficiency of letters and sounds, but inquiries pertaining to the source of early learning are not necessarily explored.

MS. MCCAULEY answered she is correct.

9:00:52 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND suggested the value and importance for including pre-school information in the screening.

MS. MCCAULEY agreed. Although the district isn't able to confirm the action, it is possible that districts are including pre-school experience as part of the developmental profile.

9:02:10 AM

POSIE BOGGS, Volunteer, Alaska International Dyslexia Association, stated support for HB 197 and stated many features of this measure are excellent. However, retention might need to be considered for first grade and expressed concern for teacher

training. Teacher reading instruction competency tests exist and this is an area that should not be overlooked, she said. A literacy rich pre-kindergarten home is helpful, but parents cannot be expected to understand how to identify reading problems. Teacher training programs need to include science based literacy teaching techniques for best results, she finished.

[9:07:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND pointed out that pre-school is not a component of the bill, although, she offered her belief that it is still a valid line of questioning, and indicated interest in receiving further information regarding the teacher competency tests. She asked about the current state of identifying and teaching dyslexic students in today's public schools.

MS. BOGGS responded how research indicates the ability to identify dyslexia as early as late pre-school and kindergarten, and remediation can begin in the early stages. However, this has not been translated via the higher education department for training teachers. The research is solid that intensive remediation is successful, when dyslexia is identified "early, early, early." She reported that in individual education program (IEP) meetings, the professionals refrain from using the term dyslexia, and offered her belief that this represents a denial of science; representing a core problem in the system.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND concurred. She recalled that addressing dyslexia was a problem from 1994-2003, during the Representative's tenure on the local school board, and apparently it hasn't been resolved. She asked about the percentage of early learners that are identified as dyslexic.

MS. BOGGS said in the nation at large a ratio of 1:5 or 15 percent of children will have some level of dyslexia, and "it's going to drive the bus." The problem of dyslexia is fixable, but the teacher's knowledge needs to be upgraded. In five years this could be accomplished, she said, and shared her vision for repurposing professional development funds to this end.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND surmised that, given the dyslexia issue, retaining literacy challenged students in third grade would prove helpful.

MS. BOGGS suggested retention for a dyslexic child in the third grade is too late, and reiterated the need for early

identification/intervention, and opined for first grade retention.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND agreed, and asked for copies of the research regarding dyslexia.

MS. BOGGS added that the support a dyslexic child requires is no different than what is necessary for all children - only intensified.

[9:15:03 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony on HB 197.

[9:15:10 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease at 9:15 a.m.

[9:15:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to report the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 197, Version O, labeled 28-LS0515\O, Mischel, 2/21/14, out of committee with individual recommendations and the [forthcoming] fiscal note.

[9:15:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND objected.

[9:15:52 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives LeDoux, Reinbold, P. Wilson, and Gattis voted in favor of CSHB 197. Representative Drummond voted against it. Therefore, CSHB 197(EDC) was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee by a vote of 4-1.

The committee took an at-ease from 9:16 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.

[9:20:33 AM](#)

HB 333-MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANTS

[9:20:46 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 333, "An Act establishing a museum construction

grant program in the Department of Education and Early Development."

[9:20:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BOB HERRON, Alaska State Legislature, briefly introduced HB 333 as prime sponsor and then deferred to state museum facility staff for further presentation.

[9:23:07 AM](#)

EVA MALVICH, Director/Curator, Yupiit Piciryarait Museum, Association of Village Council Presidents, testified in support of HB 333 paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]: in packet

The Yupiit Piciryarait Museum, a tribally-run and managed museum, is the only museum for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, and is roughly the size of Oregon. We support HB 333, the enabling legislation to support construction or renovation of museums and cultural centers around the state.

Our area is home to Yup'ik and Cup'ig Eskimos and Athabascan Indians. We've lived here for millennia, and our museum collection is full of objects showing how we lived over time, valuable objects that are priceless and are full of information. In fact, Dr. Paul John, from Toksook Bay, is on the museum steering committee. He is a respected elder, who lived at a time when people moved from camp to camp, following the food source. He wants the kids from our area to be able to study the tools we used, how they were made, and how they were used to catch food. He said by doing this, we can become 'real' Yup'iks again.

In addition, we want people to know we are still relevant. Although we live in a western society, we want people to know we are still here, and have adapted over time. Our livelihood may have changed, but we still value our subsistence lifestyle and continue to live off the land. Our fish traps are now made out of chicken wire instead of wood, but we still use them in winter to catch fresh fish. Our drums, traditionally made from gut skin, are made out of plastic or airplane fabric, but it is still a drum and is used for Yup'ik dances.

The facility that houses the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum is owned and operated by the Kuskokwim Campus. When it first opened in 1996, the museum staff had access to two offices, a large storage room, in addition to our gallery and back rooms. The Kuskokwim Campus staff took over one office, and a large storage room, therefore we are running our program with much less space than originally planned. In addition, the HVAC system, which controls our relative humidity, was shut off over 12 years ago by our landlord, because in their words, it was too expensive for them to maintain. Our collections of ivory and animal skin are susceptible to irreversible damage because we have no control over our environment.

Our organization, the Association of Village Council Presidents, have been working closely with the Nunaleq Project in Quinhagak. Nine thousand objects have been uncovered so far from a sod house that was ambushed during the bow and arrow war. The objects have been brought over to Aberdeen, Scotland, so the staff there can catalog the objects. The people from Quinhagak have stated that they cannot afford to keep the objects in their community, and would like them in Bethel, instead.

In addition, the Lower Kuskokwim School District and AVCP have recently entered into an agreement, in which teaching material for Yup'ik language curriculum will be collected by school staff and sent to our museum to be archived in our facility.

The people from this region should not have to travel to Fairbanks or Juneau to view objects from his/her hometown, the cost of an airline ticket from village to Bethel, to Anchorage and Juneau or Fairbanks is sky high, not to mention the need to rent a car, and hotel room.

[9:27:27 AM](#)

MS. MALVICH added that to travel from her home to visit the State Museum represents a cost of \$1,300.00, she then continued paraphrasing:

With this enabling legislation, we can build another facility and become a federal repository. With this designation, we would be eligible to house objects that are taken out of federal lands in our area. We would be able to take care of objects in our own region, and with more staff, become a resource for archaeology projects around our region. With our coast lines eroding, we know there are historical sites in danger of becoming lost to the Bering Sea every year.

Please support HB 333. This enabling legislation will allow our museum to grow to meet our customer's needs. We will be able to provide the right environment for our priceless museum objects. The collection would be housed in Bethel, much closer and easier access than Juneau or Fairbanks.

[9:28:25 AM](#)

JANE LINDSEY, Advocacy Chair, Museums Alaska, testified in support of HB 333, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Good morning, my name is Jane Lindsey, I work for the Juneau-Douglas City Museum and am here as an elected board member of our statewide group, Museums Alaska, where I serve as the advocacy chair.

I would like to thank Representative Herron for sponsoring HB 333 and all of you for the work you do on behalf of the state of Alaska and our fellow Alaskans.

As a board member of Museums Alaska, yearly our museum community meets at an annual conference to share best practices in preserving, interpreting, and exhibiting our cultural history.

In Alaska, we have over 65 museums, cultural centers, historic houses and sites that have been operating for many years in their communities as anchor institutions that care for our primary Alaskan cultural history, deliver education services, research opportunities, exhibit local art and culture; provide public programs, and generate revenue through cultural tourism.

A 2014 McDowell survey for the Foraker Group has been made available to the committee that demonstrates critical infrastructure needs for our institutions. Of the 36 museums contacted, 27 or $\frac{3}{4}$ have identified significant capital improvement needs within the next five years. Exhibition space expansion or improvement; increase in facility size; collections storage expansion; and security improvements are rated among the top four priorities for these institutions. These are all specialized needs for museums and cultural centers that care for, and exhibit our Alaskan collections.

Building expansions and new construction are difficult undertakings to fund raise for and as demonstrated in the Museum profiles in the McDowell survey, many of these museums have limited staff to fundraise while attending to other full-time duties. Museum staff and personnel are often tasked with raising funds that are equal to or double the size of their yearly budgets.

HB333 provides a pathway for a growing number of institutions that will need to realize funding for the health of our museums, cultural centers and our Alaskan collections.

Like the state's model for library construction projects, HB 333 can provide a ranking mechanism for these critical capital projects while partnering with funding formulas from local, non-profit, and federal granting agencies. A system like this can build-in forward thinking in sustainable energy initiatives for our museums that desperately need specialized environments.

Museums Alaska looks forward to providing information to the committee as needed and answering any questions that you may have. Thank you for your time.

[9:31:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX commented that the small museums are an excellent draw for tourism.

[9:31:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND questioned how artifacts become distributed around the world.

MS. MALVICH responded that there are 800 people.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND remarked that a world class museum in Bethel will be a good resource and promote tourism in the area.

[9:32:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked why the artifacts go to Scotland rather than elsewhere in Alaska.

MS. MALVICH answered that when artifacts were discovered it was the Scotland museum that responded with help.

MS. LINDSEY added that the infrastructure needs do not allow the in-state museums to accept challenges of this size for preservation.

[9:34:58 AM](#)

LANI HOTCH, Executive Director, Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center, noted the educational and visitor organizations that she has worked with in her capacity to illustrate the integral part that the Heritage Center plays in the community. She said funds are put to good use and stretched for maximum results, and recounted the construction phases of the facility and the need for further funding needed to finish the inside and provide heat. The small communities are in need of museum/cultural center support, she finished, stressing that it is a responsibility to preserve the local history.

[9:41:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked what private sector funding sources are being approached.

MS. HOTCH described the fund raising efforts and the budget components. Other funding sources are sought, but without legislative backing, sponsors such as the Rasmuson Foundation will not pledge without an understanding of the state allocation. She described other outreach efforts/proposals that have been tried or are planned, but again, matching funds are often a requirement.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how much has been provided to date by the state, and for further clarification on the costs for this fiscal year as well as for future needs since sustainability is a concern.

MS. HOTCH answered \$3.5 million for this fiscal year and \$750,000 for ongoing costs, possibly more. She offered to provide the information. Regarding sustainability, she said once completed, that is the expectation. Partnerships with tourism agencies are being developed.

[9:49:19 AM](#)

LACEY SIMPSON, Director, City of Ketchikan Museum Department, stated support for HB 333 and stressed the state obligation for the artifacts that are held in public trust. She cited several deficits that exist in facilities, including humidity control or ability to display artifacts. Many smaller facilities are housed in buildings that were never designed as museums. The need is growing and the state has been generous. Communities are enriched by having museums.

[9:52:50 AM](#)

EMMIE SWANSON, Valdez Museum and Historical Archive, offered her strong support for HB 333. The Valdez museum faces a deteriorating infrastructure and adequate space for the program, she said. She highlighted a few key points, such that the Valdez Museum occupies two buildings, with the primary location being a centennial building that is inadequate for museum services and programs. She focused on the primary concern, the second location, which is a warehouse that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (U.S. ACE) constructed in the mid-60s when Valdez was rebuilt after the 1964 earthquake that was never intended to be a museum facility. Still, this warehouse houses a 75,000 piece collection, archives and contains a small theatre space. With the need for specialized equipment for display and climate control, she stressed the importance for financial support. She described the situation as it exists in Valdez, stating that the Valdez museum is over capacity for the storage of large artifacts and no room exists to bring in new artifacts.

MS. SWANSON related that some artifacts are stored in two locations maintained by the City of Valdez's Parks and Recreation department as well as noting several large artifacts in outside storage are exposed to the elements. Further, several large artifacts are currently stored in the workshop

adjacent to the "Remembering Old Valdez" exhibit and several more are housed in a small building near the softball field, behind the community college. She emphasized that the cultural heritage should stay in regional locations. In 2012, the Valdez Museum Board adopted a five-year strategic plan, which included the need for a major capital improvement program. This is rooted in the goal to continue to preserve the valuable cultural resources for communities of Valdez, Copper River Basin, Prince William Sound, and the state. Most of Alaska's museums are small in size and budget and museums all have a difficult time fundraising for capital improvements. It's also difficult to ask for donations in this small community of 4,000 people with over 70 nonprofit organizations, yet the museum does manage to provide over 45 percent of its budget through donations and grants. These grants are strictly program related and support education and are not supportive of operations or facilities' management. She thanked members for hearing concerns of museums in Alaska. She hoped the committee will support passage of HB 333.

[9:56:51 AM](#)

MICHELE MILLER, Pratt Museum, testified in support of HB 333, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

My name is Michele Miller, and I serve on the Museums Alaska Board of Directors and work at the nationally-recognized Pratt Museum here in Homer.

I speak in support of House Bill 333, establishing a museum construction grant program.

The Pratt Museum serves as an anchor institution on the Kenai Peninsula, educating children and adults, and contributing to our community's sense of place and identity through history, art, and culture; and through exploration of the natural environment. Like museums all over Alaska, the Pratt contributes to the state's economy through employment and cultural tourism.

Thank you, Rep. Herron for your sponsorship of this bill, which provides the structure for establishing a systematic approach to prioritizing museum capital project funding requests in Alaska.

The Pratt Museum is one of the 50 [percent] of museums in Alaska currently fundraising for a new facility.

With the passage of this legislation into law, construction projects will be funded by the merits of their projects, prioritized by their ability to match state funding, and where they are in the construction process.

Similar to the library construction statute, which has helped build 14 new libraries through \$50 million of awards, this legislation will allow museums to plan to protect valuable collections well into the future.

Again, I thank Representative Herron for his sponsorship of House Bill 333, and I look forward to working with his office on the legislation this interim.

[HB 333 was held over.]

[9:59:08 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.