

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

January 27, 2014
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Vice Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 111

"An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSSB 111(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 111

SHORT TITLE: REPEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS, GARDNER

01/22/14	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/14
01/22/14	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/14	(S)	EDC, FIN
01/22/14	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/22/14	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
01/24/14	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
01/24/14	(S)	Heard & Held
01/24/14	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
01/27/14	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained a change to SB 111 on behalf of the sponsor.

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to SB 111.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:00:31 AM

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stedman, Dunleavy, Huggins, and Chair Stevens. Senator Gardner arrived shortly thereafter.

SB 111-REPEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

8:01:16 AM

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the only order of business would be SB 111. He noted there was a new version of SB 111 before the committee.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for SB 111, labeled 28-LS1113\U, as the working document.

CHAIR STEVENS objected for discussion purposes.

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, explained a change in SB 111 on behalf of the sponsor. He said version U makes one change in Section 6; it phases out the exit exam to allow students who failed the exam prior to July 1, 2014, an opportunity to pass it before it is discontinued entirely. The window to retake the exam would close on June 30, 2017. This language is consistent with the Governor's bill [SB 139] to allow those who have not passed the exam to retake it.

CHAIR STEVENS noted it was the only change in the bill. He asked Mr. Morse to comment on the new transition language.

8:03:10 AM

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, reported that it was important to include the transition language in order to allow

students from 2004 to the current date that may hold a Certificate of Achievement, but did not pass the exit exam, to retake the test within the next three years.

CHAIR STEVENS noted the arrival of Senator Gardner.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY inquired if the bill eliminates both the exit exam and the concept of the exit exam.

MR. MORSE said the bill would eliminate the concept of an exit exam as it currently stands. It does not eliminate assessment requirements at the high school level.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY surmised that future exams would be readiness exams.

MR. MORSE agreed.

[8:05:44 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS opined that competency exams do not affect change. He requested Mr. Morse's opinion.

MR. MORSE replied that when the exit exam was enacted, the educational system was looking for an accountability measure that would be responsive to post-secondary education, as well as to industry. It was a concept that made sense at the time, but now is proving to be a barrier. He maintained that SB 111 attempts to address what makes sense for the next ten to fifteen years.

SENATOR HUGGINS recalled decreased performance results from the exam, beginning in 2009. He wondered what school districts could do if performance continues to decrease.

MR. MORSE reviewed results of the exit exam; reading scores since the first year of the exam increased, writing scores decreased, and mathematics scores increased by ten percent. A positive result was that after passing the exam, students tended to focus on courses that helped them to be successful after high school. The exam also promoted new curriculum for students who did not perform well, especially in writing. It also made aware the need to be more focused on writing and reading at a much earlier age.

SENATOR HUGGINS thought the debate on the exit exam was over and there is a need to focus on larger problems. He noted Alaska's

low rating of 28th or 29th on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

MR. MORSE agreed.

SENATOR HUGGINS said it was not due to lack of funding. Compared to all nations Alaska ranks about 40th.

MR. MORSE agreed.

SENATOR HUGGINS urged Alaska to improve.

[8:11:52 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked whether the statistic regarding 10 percent more students passing math included all students who have passed the exam.

MR. MORSE said those numbers depicted those who passed when taking the exam for the first time in 10th grade. Today, 76 percent passed; 66 percent passed in 2004 when students were first held accountable.

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony. There were no further testifiers.

CHAIR STEVENS agreed with Senator Huggins that it is time move on from the exit exam.

[The assumption is that the objection to adopt CSSB 111 was removed.]

SENATOR DUNLEAVY moved to report CSSB 111, Version U, out of committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note.

There being no objection, CSSB 111(EDC) moved from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

[8:13:30 AM](#)

At ease

[8:15:21 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS noted all members of the committee have signed "Do Pass."

SENATOR GARDNER requested data from the exit exam for the previous five years.

SENATOR HUGGINS said today is National School Choice Day.

8:16:29 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 8:16 a.m.