

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 21, 2018

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair
Representative Justin Parish, Vice Chair
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Jennifer Johnston
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative David Talerico

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Lora Reinbold (alternate)
Representative Geran Tarr (alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5 AM
Proclaiming March 2, 2019, as Alaska Reads Day.

- MOVED SCR 5 AM OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 21
Proclaiming March 27, 2018, as Alaska Education and Sharing Day.

- MOVED HCR 21 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Steven Joey Sweet - Anchorage (Student Representative)

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

Tiffany Scott - Kotzebue

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SCR 5

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA READS DAY

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) GARDNER

02/24/17	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/17	(S)	EDC, STA
04/03/17	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
04/03/17	(S)	Heard & Held
04/03/17	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/12/17	(S)	EDC RPT 3DP
04/12/17	(S)	DP: HUGHES, BEGICH, COGHILL
04/12/17	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
04/12/17	(S)	Moved SCR 5 Out of Committee
04/12/17	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/06/18	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/06/18	(S)	Heard & Held
02/06/18	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/15/18	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/15/18	(S)	Moved SCR 5 Out of Committee
02/15/18	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
02/16/18	(S)	STA RPT 4DP 1AM
02/16/18	(S)	DP: MEYER, GIESSEL, COGHILL, EGAN
02/16/18	(S)	AM: WILSON
03/01/18	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
03/01/18	(S)	VERSION: SCR 5 AM
03/05/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/05/18	(H)	EDC
03/21/18	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HCR 21

SHORT TITLE: MARCH 27, 2018:AK EDUCATION & SHARING DAY

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) DRUMMOND

02/19/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/18	(H)	EDC
03/21/18	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JACOB TATUM, Staff
Senator Berta Gardner
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of SCR 5, introduced the legislation on behalf of Senator Gardner.

ERIN MCKAY

Alaska Reading Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of SCR 5, testified in support of the resolution.

DAVID NEES

Alaska Policy Forum
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of SCR 5, testified in support of the resolution.

JOHNANNA SCHULTZ, Staff
Representative Harriet Drummond
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of HCR 21, presented the resolution on behalf of Chair Drummond.

RABBI YOSEF GREENBURG

Lubavitch Jewish Center of Alaska
Alaska Jewish Campus
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of HCR 21, testified in support of the resolution.

RABBI ROBIN MENDY GREENBURG

Alaska Jewish Campus
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing of HCR 21, testified in support of the resolution.

STEVEN JOEY SWEET

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, Student Representative, discussed his qualifications and answered questions.

TIFFANY SCOTT

Kotzebue, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, discussed her qualifications and answered questions.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:54 AM](#)

CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Talerico, Kopp, Parish, Zulkosky, and Johnston were present at the call to order. Representative Spohnholz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

ALASKA READS DAY

[8:03:41 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be SCR 5, ALASKA READS DAY.

[8:04:50 AM](#)

JACOB TATUM, Staff, Senator Berta Gardner, Alaska State Legislature, stated that Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 5 is a step in addressing substandard reading proficiency in the State of Alaska. The goal of the resolution is to connect readers of all ages with a wide network of services, and with organizations and advocates with reading proficiency at the core of their mission. In order to coincide with the Read Across America movement, March 2, 2019 will be recognized as Alaska Reads Day, and it is envisioned that Alaskan communities will promote all things related to reading and literacy, he described. Research [included within the bill packet] emphasizes the critical milestones of reading proficiency prior to entering the fourth grade, and this resolution is a way to bring awareness in how to build a more robust reading culture in this state, he offered. The passage of this resolution would result in the first recognized Alaska Reads Day, and it is important to emphasize that this resolution does not require more funding because there are organizations tirelessly working to spread the gift of literacy. It is the hope that Alaska Reads Day will be another reason that literacy advocates can bring attention to their efforts. For example, dyslexia affect tens of millions of Americans and it is notoriously underdiagnosed. The hope is that Alaska Reads Day can serve as an opportunity for the broader public to understand that the barriers of literacy can ultimately be overcome. After researching the issues in this resolution, it became clear that the low proficiency rates among children who are dual language learners experience 93 percent low reading proficiency rates. Given the diversity of Alaskan communities and the growth of this demographic, it is important to bring attention to the needs of dual language learners, he

pointed out. Similarly, there are many programs and resources at public libraries and other community centers that already exist which provide valuable services to readers of all ages. Unfortunately, those services are underutilized simply because the public is not aware of those opportunities and Alaska Reads Day can serve as an opportunity to publishes the services and give readers a day to look forward to and circle on their calendars. Similar activities on Alaska Reads Day could include: parent-teacher association story telling events; grandparents volunteering to read at schools; children volunteering to read in senior homes and the Pioneer Homes; book giveaways; and good old fashion reading buddies, he related. The sponsor's intention, he said, is that Alaska Reads Day will inspire Alaskans to see reading not only as a critical tool that is used in the classroom, but also as great fun that can be experienced at the dinner table with family and a manner in which to explore all that this world has to offer.

[8:08:23 AM](#)

SENATOR BERTA GARDNER related that she attended an Education Conference where a group of retired military generals, admirals, and such, offered a presentation and discussed how the lack of reading proficiency is a national security issue. Unfortunately, she advised, they could not assume that all of their recruits could read well enough to follow instructions and understand manuals, so these retired officers became involved in the movement to promote reading proficiency. Alaska Reads Day is fun, and she described it as easy, valuable, free, and the hope is that parents, grandparents, librarians, teachers, school volunteer advocates, and everyone, will get involved in encouraging children, and showing them all the fun in reading.

[8:09:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP offered his enthusiastic support for Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 5. He noted that he does not often quote former Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, who said that the inability of the nation's youth to read is our highest national security risk. Secretary Clinton basically said that there is a dumbing down of America due to the inability to read our Founding Fathers' documents, to understand the Constitution of the United States, and our National Bill of Rights. Secretary Clinton continued that the concern is not just about cursive any longer, but about having the ability to read those documents in simple print, the United States is at risk of losing our way as a people. He opined that the social reasons

often discussed in this committee include: the ability to succeed; provide for yourself; stay out of jail; and hundreds of other reasons this resolution is important. This is a wonderful opportunity to partner with the private sector because many nonprofits and faith-based groups are looking for ways to help with Alaska's largest needs. He suggested that possibly after school programs could spring up to highlight this critical need for our youth to read proficiently at grade level.

[8:11:08 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that NorthStar Elementary School has been a Title 1 School for many years. Regularly, she offered, the Rotary Club, run by Gordan Glaser, would invade the school during a school day to read to the kids. She asked why this resolution does not proclaim every March 2, as Alaska Reads Day.

SENATOR BERTA GARDNER advised that she believes there is value in the legislature looking at it every year because it brings attention to the issue, and if it is simply on the books it is easier to not give it the attention it so requires.

[8:12:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH pointed out that this committee has often discussed the importance of proficiency in school. He then referred to SCR 5, page 2, lines 6-8, which read as follows:

WHEREAS students who are not proficient readers in the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school and to generate increased social services and incarceration costs for the state; and

REPRESENTATIVE PARRISH commented that he found it interesting that being a proficient reader in the third grade is predictive for a person's overall success in life. In addition to the resolution, he asked whether there is anything else Senator Gardner would like to highlight as a potential remedy.

SENATOR BERTA GARDNER answered that in her life, her parents turned off the television and read to the children which was also her remedy. She explained that when she was growing up her mother would not allow a television in the house until she was in high school. When raising her children, they kept the television out of their reach by design, and when they began school through high school, there would be no electronic entertainment Monday through Friday night.

8:14:05 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO thanked Senator Gardner for bringing Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 5 forward because he has read to all of his children and grandchildren. Reading to children peaks their interest in reading and shows them that reading is important.

CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on SCR 5.

8:15:24 AM

ERIN MCKAY, Alaska Reading Coalition, advised that as a member of the Alaska Reading Coalition and a parent in Decoding Dyslexia Alaska, she is testifying in support of the resolution because it is important to work together until all of Alaska's children have the opportunity to learn to read. March 2 is Dr. Seuss Day, and this day enables reading and literacy organizations to have a day of unity, and reading instruction goes far to create the collaborations necessary to improve reading proficiency in Alaska. She pointed out that this resolution is an excellent tool to build consensus about the importance of reading and the importance of bringing instruction across all sectors of the state. Ms. McKay then provided an anecdote about a friend from her high school.

8:18:19 AM

DAVID NEES, Alaska Policy Forum, advised that the Alaska Policy Forum is much impressed with the continuation of Dr. Seuss Day, and making it Alaska Reads Day. He suggested immortalizing March 2, as Alaska Reads Day from here on out of every year rather than in a recurring resolution. The idea behind Dr. Seuss Day, he explained, was created one time, and then teachers took it on by wearing the hats and reading to the children. He reiterated his suggestion of putting March 2, into the Alaska Calendar each year because it would allow businesses to incorporate it into their business calendars and get the chambers of commerce to recognize the day. The Alaska Policy Forum has always advocated for increased reading levels and mastery tests at the 3rd and 4th grade levels as one of the abilities a student must possess, he offered. This is a great first step because it does make it important that March 2, each year is recognized as a good day to read to a grandchild, a neighbor child, volunteer at a school, and volunteer at a hospital.

[8:20:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND, after ascertaining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on SCR 5.

[8:20:08 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at ease.

[8:20:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH moved to report SCR 5, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, SCR 5am moved from the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:20:53 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:20 a.m. to 8:23 a.m.

HCR 21-MARCH 27, 2018:AK EDUCATION & SHARING DAY

[8:23:16 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HCR 21, "Proclaiming March 27, 2018, as Alaska Education and Sharing Day."

[8:23:35 AM](#)

JOHANNNA SCHULTZ, Staff, Representative Harriet Drummond, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HCR 21 and noted that it proclaims March 27, 2018 as Alaska Education and Sharing Day. This resolution focuses on the importance and recognition of values, ethics, and character development, as part of a student's education so they become engaged, caring, and responsible citizens. She advised that this is a companion resolution to SCR 15, sponsored by Senator Shelley Hughes, which is scheduled for a floor vote this morning. She said that HCR 21 is aligned with national proclamations that have occurred since 1978, when Congress set aside the anniversary of the birth of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson as Education and Sharing Day U.S.A. Rabbi Schneerson dedicated his life to the promotion of education as a cornerstone of humanity and held that, in addition to academics, the discussion of morals should not be neglected. Through the establishment of educational and social service institutions

across the country and world, Rabbi Schneerson thought to empower young people and inspire individuals of all ages. Rabbi Schneerson's legacy was encouraging Americans to teach and share with the next generation the values that make good citizens, a strong nation, and a better world. She noted that for 40 years, every United States President, regardless of political stripes or religious affiliation, has honored this vision by proclaiming National Education and Sharing Day. Education for Alaskan students occurs here at home and it is a privilege to honor this vision in Alaska. She requested the committee's support of HCR 21, in setting aside March 2, as Education and Sharing Day to celebrate hard work, service, and commitment to learning, as cornerstones of a bright future for the youth in Alaska.

[8:26:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP asked Ms. Schultz to recite for the committee the seven Noahide laws [Seven Laws of Noah].

MS. SCHULTZ explained that the Noahide laws are similar to the Ten Commandments, they are a basis of fundamental rights, but she could not list the laws. [Not to worship idols, Not to curse God, To establish courts of justice, Not to commit murder, Not to commit adultery, Not to steal, Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal.]

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP noted that he is familiar with the story of Noah who was a good and righteous man. It is his belief that it is important to highlight those laws because they are part of this resolution, he said.

CHAIR DRUMMOND noted she looks forward to hearing the Noahide laws from upcoming witnesses.

[8:27:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ referred to the March 27, 2018 date proposed in HCR 21, and asked why that date was chosen over the April 7 date listed in the 3/28/17 Proclamation, together with the dates in the past depicted "in the sort of history we have."

MS. SCHULTZ responded that the date of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson's birth was on the 11th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, and the United States uses a different calendar so it changes every year.

[8:28:47 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND related that she grew up in a Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx and the Jewish calendar is quite different from the "Western calendar." The Jewish calendar does go along with the Greek Orthodox calendar, and Greek Easter always follows Passover; however, Greek Easter does not always follow Western Easter, sometimes it is on the same Sunday, sometimes it is seven days later, and in every fourth or fifth year, it is one month later. Yet, Passover and Orthodox Easter are on the same calendar because whenever Passover moves, Greek Easter moves. She described that it is fascinating how these ancient cultures operate on a different calendar than the nation currently. Growing up in a Jewish neighborhood, her school was 95 percent local Jewish students and they took Jewish holidays off, and 95 percent of the students were at shul because education was incredibly important to the Jewish communities all over the world. Children did not simply stay home and watch television, they went to shul and studied their religion and their Jewish language, she explained.

[8:31:01 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on HCR 21.

[8:31:16 AM](#)

RABBI YOSEF GREENBURG, Alaska Jewish Campus and the Lubavitch Jewish Center of Alaska, pointed out that the shootings that took place in Florida, Maryland, and across America, are confusing to children. There is no doubt America is going through something and that Americans are looking for answers. This may be the ultimate answer (audio difficulties) spiritual giant of our time and our nation who was a great advocate for education, he offered. Rabbi Schneerson believed that it was not enough to educate children to be ready for the Creator, but that it is important to make sure they are ready to be good citizens. He explained that the Noahide laws are similar to the Ten Commandments, such as, Thou shalt not murder, and Thou shall not steal. Those universal values, he explained, talk about respect for humanity, human life, animals' pain, law, and all of humanitarian laws given by God (audio difficulties), and given to Adam and Eve. A person will realize when reading the Bible in Genesis, where the (indisc.) are hiding, he noted that some are clear and some are hiding between the lines, where the basic universal laws offer society goodness and kindness.

[8:33:47 AM](#)

RABBI GREENBURG explained that the Jewish calendar goes by the moon cycle of the year, and the secular calendar follows the sun cycle. He explained that they are both ancient calendars and "the Jewish calendar had this leap year where once in four years to add another month to make sure the Passover should not go away more than one month." Rabbi Schneerson's birthday is always three days before Passover on the Jewish calendar, and in the secular calendar that could move around between March and April, and back and forth. He reiterated that both the Jewish calendar and the calendar America uses today, are ancient calendars and "we combine them both together in the Jewish calendar."

[8:35:18 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked the year of the current Jewish calendar.

RABBI GREENBURG answered that the Jewish calendar is 5778.

CHAIR DRUMMOND commented "I've always observed, I believe that the Last Supper that is celebrated before Easter was a Passover Seder."

RABBI GREENBURG responded that is what is in some stories and that is what he heard, but he is not an expert.

[8:36:27 AM](#)

RABBI ROBIN MENDY GREENBURG, Alaska Jewish Campus, related that he echoes his father's testimony because Americans see what is taking place in their country. This resolution depicts the importance of this concept wherein one day a year should be dedicated to focus on a gateway of an entire year for parents and educators to truly think about the meaning and purpose of education. Our children could be great readers and great intellectuals with great academic knowledge. He stressed

that a little more than 70-years ago, the Holocaust took place, and not by third-world country but by a progressive and up-and-coming country of doctors, scientists, and the fathers of the minds of the modern world, and yet, it somehow made sense to inflict such terrible crimes on humanity. These atrocities to humanity point out how important it is and crucial that, with all of our intellect and our academic studies, to have a foundation in charity for our children. A custom in the Jewish tradition, and what Rabbi Schneerson encouraged, is that every

person has their own charity box, and that every child has their own charity box with their name on it. The idea, he offered, is not to raise a lot of money, but to actually educate children and people to be giving and charitable. Each day, by giving just one penny and one minute to charity, it becomes part of our nature and thinking about others, thinking about a greater cause and not just about ourselves, but about our obligations to society.

[8:39:34 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND, after ascertaining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on HCR 21.

[8:39:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP spoke in support of HCR 21, "it makes the profound statement that education is so much more than knowledge," and lays a foundational character in a person's life, ethical values, moral truths, upon which a person builds their own life. He related that it is beautiful to make a connection with our Jewish community because Judaism has done more for the life of the mind in connecting faith and reason in modern society than any other faith group, by far. He noted that Raoul Wallenberg [Swedish diplomat in Nazi-occupied Hungary saved the lives of nearly 100,000 Hungarian Jews] is the sole recipient in the Guinness Book of World Records of having saved the most human beings, single-handedly, in history. Mr. Wallenberg was passionate about saving lives and possessed a master intellect, it was not just that he loved the Jewish

people, but that he had been educated in Israel at a Jewish Center and knew that the life of the minds of our future civilization was literally at stake. He added that there more was being done in that community to connect faith, reason, natural law, and moral law. Mr. Wallenberg literally believed that the future of humanity depended upon every life that he saved. Representative Kopp related that he is proud to put his name on this resolution.

[8:41:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PAISH moved to report HCR 21 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCR 21 moved from the House Education Standing Committee.

University of Alaska Board of Regents
Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

University of Alaska Board of Regents
Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

[8:44:37 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the next order of business would be Governor Bill Walker's appointments to the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development, and the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

CHAIR DRUMMOND invited Steven Joey Sweet, Governor Walker's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, Student Representative, to testify.

[8:44:48 AM](#)

STEVEN JOEY SWEET advised that he would like to be a member of the Board of Regents due to the current changes in the university, such as the Strategic Pathways initiative. He pointed to the 12/14/2016 creation of a single Alaska College of Education administered by the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) as another change. It was through Strategic Pathways and important changes to the university that he first started to pay attention to what was taking place on campus, during his undergraduate degree in political science. He noted that he is currently pursuing a master's degree in Public Administration. He pointed out that these changes are affecting students, staff, and faculty, and that he had tried within his capacity as a regent to do his best to understand the full impact that these types of changes have on each of those particular groups. Prior to his experience as a member of the Board of Regents, it was not something he had previously given thought to in terms of how these types of changes can affect staff and faculty. Previously, he advised, he focused on how changes at the university affected the students, and he has since learned throughout his tenure on the Board of Regents, that the university has many stakeholder groups and it should work those groups into the decision-making process.

[8:47:15 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Mr. Sweet began college at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and then moved to

Anchorage. Considering what the university is currently going through, she asked what he could advise about his different experiences.

MR. SWEET responded that he spent his Freshman and Sophomore years at UAF, and made the decision to transfer to the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) in part to be closer to his family and in part to shake things up for himself. He related that he did not necessarily feel connected or involved on campus at UAF, and clarified that the reason was not on the institutional and campus level as there were many opportunities to be involved and engaged. The UAF maintains an active student government, many clubs, and social events to keep a student on campus. He noted that he had wanted to take a gap year, but his parents did not agree so he attended college directly after high school.

CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that the decision appears to have worked if he is moving toward serving on the Board of Regents.

[8:49:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY referred to Strategic Pathways and asked Mr. Sweet to offer his philosophy about the access to university opportunities at community campuses throughout rural Alaska. She further asked how he would approach decision-making as it relates to limited resources, and also making sure there is equitable access throughout the state.

MR. SWEET responded that that issue is something he tries to pay attention to because it is easy to make decisions based on the three main campuses, and noted that he has not had a lot of experience with community campuses at this point. One of the Strategic Pathways phases did examine ways to try to reduce costs and operate more effectively for the community campuses, he advised. Although, he related, he is not familiar with what the possible decisions were with regard to the outcomes of those committees. He offered to follow up and provide more specific information to Representative Zulkosky. He said that he does want to pay attention to maintaining access and affordability at our community campuses, especially within rural Alaska. He said that he knows the university will be instituting a 25 percent tuition discount for certain low technical programs housed in community campuses, except he is not sure, off the top of his head, whether those were statewide or just within certain major administrative units (MAU).

[8:51:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked the current most serious threats to the university system.

MR. SWEET offered his belief that it may be low morale within the system. For several years, the university has seen the effects of the budget cuts, thereby making it easy for students and faculty to be critical when programs are cut with the decline in enrollment, and so forth. The energy of the campuses has been declining and the feeling that the university will face budget cuts year after year has taken its toll among students and faculty. This issue contributes to the declines in enrollment as students leave to attend schools in the Lower-48 because they feel their education is on the chopping block. He pointed out that that sort of feeling is powerful and pervasive within the system, and how people feel about their education goes a long way toward determining whether they will finish their education at the University of Alaska. The feeling of low morale and a general sort of cynicism is what he considers to be the most significant issue currently, he reiterated.

[8:53:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked what Mr. Sweet would do about the low morale if confirmed as a student regent.

MR. SWEET responded that when he has conversations with student government leaders, he tells them that if students come to them with particular problems, to understand that the student leaders have resources at their disposal to address problems. For example, it was recently noticed that student employees at UAA they were paid \$8.50 per hour, which was below the state minimum wage of \$9.84. As a federal institution, the University of Alaska is exempt from the requirement of paying the state's minimum wage because they can stay in line with the federal minimum wage. These employees reached out to their student government of which wrote resolutions about the wage disparity, and they reached out to the Board of Regents and himself to raise awareness about the issue. Over the course of approximately five to six months, they brought the decision to the attention of the statewide administration that examined the problem and found that the university could afford to bump up that \$8.50 per hour wage to the \$9.84 per hour wage, and those wages will soon be changed. In the event those student leaders and the student union had simply noticed the problem but decided not to take an active step to reach out to their student

government, in all likelihood the wage would have continued at \$8.50 per hour. He related that tries to tell people that he understands the reasons for cynicism and low morale currently, but to not let that be their last destination, if they see a problem to bring it forward and try to solve the problem.

[8:55:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked that after speaking with his peers, what are their main considerations as to whether they choose to attend the University of Alaska.

MR. SWEET replied that anecdotally, it is whether they feel they know people within their academic field. For example, biology students want to know and have social connections with other biology students. Speaking from personal experience as a political science undergraduate, he noted that they had dinners and all students in the political science program were invited, usually on a once per semester basis at the beginning and end of the academic year. Anecdotally, he offered, what generally keeps students in the institution is how well connected they feel and whether they know people within their discipline. Research suggests that a student is happier if they have a job on campus and meet with an advisor preferably more than once a semester, he suggested.

[8:57:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON congratulated Mr. Sweet for his activism and leadership because as the world is transforming it is refreshing to hear someone who understands that it is society's responsibility to be part of that change.

[8:58:36 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the next order of business would be Governor Walker's appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

[8:58:52 AM](#)

TIFFANY SCOTT advised that she is here on behalf of our children and their futures, and she hope to create a better future through her work on the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development. She related that she has been married for eight years, they have two children, one is in second grade and the other child is in kindergarten at June Nelson Elementary School.

Both of her children were students at the Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat Inupiaq Immersion School, and have since aged out and are attending June Nelson Elementary School. Her children participated in the 21st Century Community Learning Center Spelling Bee this year and the Battle of the Books just ended. Ms. Scott advised that she is a 2003 graduate of Colony High School in Palmer, she attended both rural and urban schools, and spent some of her elementary years at the Kotzebue Elementary School. In a former life, she offered that she worked in government affairs for NANA Regional Corporation and its business arm, NANA Development Corporation, which is where she learned to follow and analyze legislation closely, specifically examining its impacts to the shareholders of the NANA Region. During that period, she also served on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board where she was first appointed to a vacancy and was subsequently elected to that position the following year. She said that some of her duties included: working on the district's budget; performing a curriculum review; transitioning through different bargaining units through collective bargaining; worked with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly on the Joint Committee on School Issues; and networked with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), which involved flying into Juneau and advocating for students' interests in the district and the state. Currently, she offered, she is a registered nurse in the emergency department where she had spent a few years as a technician, she also provides volunteer time at the local Alaska Technical Center within the Health Occupations Program; and she serves as a peer-mentor to nursing students and pre-nursing students who have demonstrated an interest in pursuing a career in nursing.

[9:03:24 AM](#)

MS. SCOTT explained that she would like to be on the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development in order to support the main themes of the Alaska Education Challenge, increasing student success, supporting responsible and reflective learners, as well as cultivating safety and well-being amongst Alaskan students. She said that in working in the emergency department she is no stranger to some of the adverse childhood experiences some Alaskan students are unfairly subjected. Through her work as a nurse, she is aware of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and if a child's physical needs are not met, such as food, shelter, clothing, and safety, they cannot progress into higher tiers of needs, such as love, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization, which Maslow describes as being at the point in which a person knows who they are and acts on those beliefs.

She noted that President James R. Johnsen, University of Alaska, advised during a recent Board of Regents meeting, "Think about your role on this board and what you can bring to it." She pointed out that today is "World Down Syndrome Day" and this is an opportunity to raise public awareness for a single global voice advocating for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of those with Down Syndrome.

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CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that Ms. Scott, as an emergency nurse, sees the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) on her patients. The House Education Standing Committee and the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee held 6.5 hours of intense testimony and presentations from the two departments that are working hard to capture, support, and educate Alaskan children, which included asking mothers to look into their family history 12 months before becoming pregnant. She related that it is critical to pull all of these efforts together through the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development and through the Department of Health and Social Services to provide critical services to Alaskan communities. The intent of these two committees was to look at what was being done for Alaska's youngest children in an effort to get them ready to learn when they begin school. Although, wading through ACEs, other issues, and issues children are exposed to in the womb and as newborns, is difficult, she remarked.

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REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY noted that it is no small journey to travel all the way from Kotzebue, and she thanked Ms. Scott for her moving testimony. She said that she appreciates Ms. Scott's background and experience in both urban and rural school settings, and her children will more than likely thrive in their public school due to being enrolled in an immersion program. Clearly, she noted, everyone knows that nursing is not for the faint of heart with the long hours and days, and Ms. Scott is a mother who cares about the future of Alaskan children and is willing to step forward, she related,

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REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ offered that in listening to Ms. Scott's testimony, another real element of expertise and value that she will bring to the board is her knowledge and experience with her children's language immersion school and program. The

importance of the role of language and the preservation of a culture is well known, together with the importance that the preservation of daily living our culture is in helping Alaskans achieve some of that higher self-actualization, satisfaction, and confidence, of which Alaska's schools have not always supported. She stressed that this knowledge will be a real asset to the board as legislators try to understand and integrate language into Alaska's public school system statewide. She said she is excited about Ms. Scott's nomination appointment.

[9:10:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON (audio difficulties) requested Ms. Scott's perspective on the Alaska Education Challenge and whether she plans to participate in that transformation.

MS. SCOTT responded that she worked with the two Elders who happen to be her Godparents, who were part of the movement to establish and create the Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat Inupiaq Immersion School. She related that her duty and responsibility on the board is to participate fully and make sure there are proper consultations and collaborations with the stakeholders who have done so much over decades to help bring the state to this point for its students, not only in her region, but throughout the entire state. She said she looks forward to the tribal community ownership portion of the Alaska Education Challenge.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON requested the status of Camp Sivu.

MS. SCOTT opined that due to some trying financial times with Nanna Regional Corporation, she does not believe Camp Sivunniqvik has taken place during the past few years. Although, making up for that problem, there have been other private and public moves throughout the school district camps to get students, as well as those who have moved into the region, out to culture camps. The Villages of Noatak and Kiana have provided some camps, so while Camp Sivunniqvik might not be a consistent opportunity every year, others have stepped in to help meet the needs, she explained.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON commented that she hopes something will transpire because it is a beautiful spot.

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REPRESENTATIVE PARISH advised that the House Education Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the names: Steven Joey Sweet, as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents Student Representative, and Tiffany Scott, as appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, be forwarded to a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives for consideration. This does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:13 a.m.