

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

April 5, 2017

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator John Coghill
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 102

"An Act relating to funding for Internet services for school districts; and relating to the Alaska higher education investment fund."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 103

"An Act establishing the Alaska education innovation grant program; eliminating the Alaska education grant program and the Alaska performance scholarship program; redesignating the Alaska higher education investment fund as the Alaska education innovation grant fund; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 104

"An Act relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; and relating to school curriculum."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 102

SHORT TITLE: INTERNET FOR SCHOOLS; FUNDING

SPONSOR(s): FINANCE

04/03/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/03/17 (S) EDC, FIN
04/03/17 (S) HUS WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE,RULE
23
04/04/17 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/04/17 (S) Heard & Held
04/04/17 (S) MINUTE(EDC)

BILL: SB 103

SHORT TITLE: ED GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIP;INNOVATIVE ED FUND

SPONSOR(s): FINANCE

04/03/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/03/17 (S) EDC, FIN
04/03/17 (S) HUS WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE,RULE
23
04/04/17 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/04/17 (S) Heard & Held
04/04/17 (S) MINUTE(EDC)

BILL: SB 104

SHORT TITLE: EDUCATION CURRICULUM

SPONSOR(s): FINANCE

04/03/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/03/17 (S) EDC, FIN
04/03/17 (S) HUS WAIVED PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE,RULE
23
04/04/17 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/04/17 (S) Heard & Held
04/04/17 (S) MINUTE(EDC)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR ANNA MACKINNON, Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

SEAN DUSEK, Superintendent
Kenai School District
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

CLAIRE HOLLAND LECLAIR, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102.

SIERRA LLOYD, Student
Juneau Douglas High School
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of fully funding education.

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director
Alaska Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

DEENA MITCHELL, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director
Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 103.

LISA SKILES PARADY, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

DR. MARK MILLER, Superintendent
Juneau School District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

TERRIE GOTTSTEIN, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

DAVE HANSON, Representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102 and SB 103.

SAICHI OVA, Director
Student Achievement
University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 103.

JOHN CONWELL, Superintendent

Unalaska City School District
Unalaska, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

TODD SMOLDON, Representing himself
Willow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102 and SB 103.

BRENDA TAYLOR, Parent
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102 and SB 104.

ANDY HOLLEN, Representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

KAITLIN DEMARCUS, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 103.

CHERYL TUTTLE, President
Student Governance Office
Kenai Peninsula College
Nikiski, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102.

MARY NANUWAK, Representing herself
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on the importance of education.

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent
Alaska Gateway School District
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

JIM ANDERSON, CFO
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 103 and SB 104.

JOHN BLAINE, Representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 103.

CATHERINE COWARD, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

BECCA BERNARD, Representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

KATE MEYER, Representing herself
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 102.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:00:30 AM

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Giessel, and Chair Hughes. Senators Coghill and Stevens arrived shortly thereafter.

She noted there would be public testimony on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

SB 102-INTERNET FOR SCHOOLS; FUNDING
SB 103-ED GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIP; INNOVATIVE ED FUND
SB 104-EDUCATION CURRICULUM

8:02:33 AM

CHAIR HUGHES announced the consideration of SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104, sponsored by the Senate Finance Committee.

SENATOR ANNA MACKINNON, Alaska State Legislature, reviewed SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She stated that:

In Alaska we have high achieving students, great teachers, and many high performing schools and districts. Greatness is out there. However, there's an enormous achievement gap for many Alaska students, and outcomes are not where they should be for students to achieve their lives' goals.

SENATOR MACKINNON provided a summary of SB 102:

SB 102 provides E-rate matching money that is leveraged by every dollar that we invest, another \$7 to support broadband in communities across our state and be a tool for schools to use in accessing good teachers for great outcomes anywhere in the world.

[8:03:32 AM](#)

SENATOR MACKINNON explained SB 103:

SB 103 is the source of funds proposed to be used to help support K-12 education. SB 103 phases out the Alaska Performance Scholarship allowing seniors that graduate this calendar year to utilize the grant through all their endeavors in a college experience. Freshmen that are in college now will continue through to achieve their goals, sophomores, as well as juniors, but 2017 would be the last graduating students that would receive this service. It would retitle the program and the remaining money in the fund to become the Alaska Education Innovation Grant Program. The use of those funds will be determined later through school districts working with DEED and providing, through the Governor's office, a request to the legislature to support innovation to help schools across our state and students to achieve their lives' dream

[8:04:49 AM](#)

SENATOR MACKINNON summarized SB 104:

SB 104 provides an opportunity for school districts to take a pause on curriculum review, which costs time and money, and hopefully allocate those resources to work with DEED to look at curriculum and best practices both nationwide and around the world to see if there is a better way that we could do business.

She noted that that the bills are voluntary, with the exception of the APS provision that would change the use of future funds.

CHAIR HUGHES said the bills keep local control. She summarized the three bills.

CHAIR HUGHES opened public testimony on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104.

[8:06:59 AM](#)

SEAN DUSEK, Superintendent, Kenai School District, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. He thanked the legislature for its hard work on efforts to improve schools. He spoke in favor of providing more broadband infrastructure to schools. He voiced concern about losing the APS which has provided results at the

university level and increased rigor at the high school level since 2011. He added that when education was increased to adequate levels in 2011, KPBSD saw a lot of improvement from forward, adequate funding. He pointed out that these bills require a level of support from DEED and the commissioner. He requested that the legislature do their part and fund DEED, so they can do their job.

He stated that KPBSD is working hard to personalize and modernize through curriculum development and will continue to look at standards and best practices. They are moving into the realm of professional development to improve the quality of teachers. He emphasized the need for strong leadership in education, which is the next big impact to student achievement. He hopes the legislature will support best practice efforts through the Alaska Education Challenge. He maintained that educators in Alaska have not given up on their students and they care greatly about improving education.

[8:09:13 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES noted the presence of Senators Stevens and Coghill.

[8:09:49 AM](#)

CLAIRE HOLLAND LECLAIR, representing herself, testified on SB 102. She asked when there would be testimony regarding education funding. She addressed her concern for the loss of the Alaska Performance Scholarship program.

[8:11:37 AM](#)

SIERRA LLOYD, Student, Juneau Douglas High School, testified in favor of fully funding education.

[8:12:49 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director, Alaska Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. He thanked the committee for its efforts. He opined that SB 102 is very helpful to education and will have a dramatic effect on rural districts. He turned to SB 103 and requested to keep the Alaska Performance Scholarship. He stated that it is a program that is working.

He voiced appreciation for the curriculum review in SB 104. Most districts will continue to review their curriculum. He was concerned about having DEED taking on one more task - developing model curriculum - noting the department may be reaching a breaking point.

[8:16:52 AM](#)

DEENA MITCHELL, representing herself, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She began with what she appreciates about the committee's work on education. She spoke in favor of SB 102. Having adequate broadband is something that should be in place. She thought the focus on innovation in SB 103 was good, however, she testified in favor of keeping the Alaska Performance Scholarship. She provided an example of a student who is going to be able to attend college because of it.

She said school districts will review curriculum even without SB 104. She stressed the need for providing autonomy for school districts and local control. She urged the committee to provide professionals with stable, adequate, predictable funding.

[8:22:55 AM](#)

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education, testified on SB 103. She thanked the committee for their creative, thoughtful proposals. She spoke of the shortage of teachers and efforts to provide innovative solutions to address this crisis. She stressed the importance of focusing on programs that offer a solution, such as the APS. She spoke in favor of retaining the APS and offered data to prove its effectiveness. She read the four goals of the APS and listed the outcomes it provided.

[8:26:44 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She said her members have not had sufficient time to review the bills. She hoped that the process will slow down enough to give districts time to work through them. She thanked the sponsor and the committee for their work on the bills.

DR. PARADY first addressed SB 102. She spoke in favor of increasing broadband to all of Alaska. In SB 103 the efforts to support continued innovation is welcomed, however, there is great concern using the APS to fund the new Innovation Grant. She wanted to continue to invest in students with the APS and to continue to partner with the university and find new sources of the funding for the grant.

[8:30:57 AM](#)

DR. PARADY appreciated the curriculum provision in SB 104 as a voluntary option for districts to choose a model curriculum administered by DEED. However, she did not want to take from one program to fund another.

She concluded that DEED has to be funded to support districts with new tasks.

[8:32:41 AM](#)

DR. MARK MILLER, Superintendent, Juneau School District, testified on SB 102, SB 103, SB 104. He stated that no one can argue against any of the innovative ideas in these bills, but they require funding and support. He suggested to figure out a way to pay for them. He was opposed to eliminating the APS.

[8:35:11 AM](#)

TERRIE GOTTSTEIN, representing herself, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She said she sees an approach to education that is wrong. Getting rid of the APS is very wrong. She said you can tell someone's priority by how they spend their time and their money.

She maintained that public education is a resource. She said people are willing to tax themselves for education. She encouraged the legislature to not vote based on their ideology.

[8:38:43 AM](#)

DAVE HANSON, representing himself, testified on SB 102 and SB 103. He spoke in support of the APS. It keeps the best and brightest in the state and has economic value. Businesses want assurance that the state has a good education system. The APS is one of the best tools to show that. It encourages home-grown Alaskans to stay in Alaska.

He said SB 102 is wonderful in that it extends the broadband to all schools, but agreed that it should be prioritized and limited to schools only. He agreed that having good teachers in the classrooms is important.

[8:41:38 AM](#)

SAICHI OVA, Associate Vice President, Student and Enrollment Strategy, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, testified on SB 103. He stated that UA strongly supports the continuation of the APS. UA supports innovation in education, but opposes the use of funds identified for the APS to be used for other purposes. He related that UA believes that the APS incentivizes better postsecondary preparedness, helps the university retain Alaskan students, and results in the need for less remediation. AP recipients take fewer remedial courses than non-recipients, stay in school longer, and earn more credits. He provided data to back this up. Losing the APS sets back post-secondary attendance

at UA and in the state at large. He concluded that the greatest challenge for UA and the state is not from outside colleges and universities, but from Alaskans choosing not to go to any postsecondary program.

[8:44:21 AM](#)

JOHN CONWELL, Superintendent, Unalaska City School testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. He said he has not had much time to review the bills. He spoke of the broadband assistance provided in SB 102 and pointed out that their district is at the limits of satellite broadband delivery and it would take fiber optics to provide more.

He said the curriculum provision in SB 104 is well-meaning, but is something that is already happening in the Unalaska District. It is something their Board believes strongly in and it is the right thing to do.

[8:46:38 AM](#)

MR. CONWELL spoke in favor of keeping the APS program. As a former UA graduate, he loves to encourage his students to strive to go to college and the APS has been the greatest single motivator for students to take rigorous courses for that opportunity. He said his own sons will soon be going to college and he would like to see them go to college in Alaska. He stressed the importance of the APS for students in Unalaska.

He thanked the committee for thinking outside the box, but he encouraged them to watch for unintended consequences. He said to let the Alaska Education Challenge do its job.

[8:49:52 AM](#)

TODD SMOLDON, representing himself, testified on SB 102 and SB 103. He said he has been a classroom teacher and a virtual education teacher and he spoke in favor of increasing broadband access. He spoke of the basic necessities for education, a rigorous curriculum, a desire from the student to learn, and a teacher who is available to answer questions when students need help.

He said his oldest son will be able to take advantage of the APS, but his youngest son will not, but he will be applying for other scholarships. He asked everyone to consider education funding and look at needs, rather than wants.

[8:53:31 AM](#)

BRENDA TAYLOR, Parent, testified on SB 102 and SB 104. She suggested that the committee look at the big picture of education. She described how course offerings and scheduling have changed at Juneau Douglas High School due to lack of funding. She maintained that some classes, like health, should not be offered as on-line courses. She did not want technology to substitute for classroom teachers.

She suggested not to encourage districts to use a model curriculum, but rather to develop their own local curriculum. She appreciated all the work the committee has done.

[8:56:59 AM](#)

ANDY HOLLEN, representing himself, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. He stressed that they must consider the consequences of cuts to education along with these bills.

[8:57:57 AM](#)

KAITLIN DEMARCUS, representing herself, testified on SB 103. She shared her vast experience in education, including her current work with students pursuing postsecondary education. She spoke in favor of keeping the APS and said that students feel very passionately about keeping the APS. She has seen the positive benefits of the APS and she listed them. It encourages students to take rigorous curriculum and prepares them for college. Students who qualify for the APS are invested in their communities and want to stay in Alaska. Taking away the APS would send the wrong message to young people in Alaska.

CHERYL TUTTLE, President, Student Governance Office, Kenai Peninsula College, testified on SB 102. She stressed the importance of keeping the APS. She said to prioritize what is important for the state and the APS is one of them.

[9:03:14 AM](#)

MARY NANUWAK, representing herself, testified on the importance of education. She said reading and local teachers are very important. She appreciated the committee's hard work.

[9:06:11 AM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. He pointed out that there is not a fiscal note for the broadband in SB 102. Without financial support for delivery, his district will not benefit from this bill. He agreed that with online education, it is important to have a good teacher.

He turned to SB 103 and said he is against eliminating the APS.

Regarding SB 104, he said a model curriculum will be good for small districts, but their district has gone beyond needing a model curriculum. They have developed, and review, their own curriculum.

He suggested giving the Alaska Education Challenge (AED) a chance. The task force has expertise and will look at unintended consequences. He stressed the need to work together on the AED and maintained that the three bills put the cart before the horse.

[9:10:41 AM](#)

JIM ANDERSON, CFO, Anchorage School District, testified on SB 103 and SB 104. He thanked the committee for their efforts. He applauded the focus on education innovation in SB 103, noting that ASD is working with UAA to initiate an Alaska Middle College School next year, an ANSEP high school, and a new STEM program. He stated the importance of the APS and asked the sponsor to reconsider doing away with it because it acts as an incentive for students to push themselves, develops more rigor and discipline, and encourages more students to continue their education in Alaska.

He said he looks forward to working with DEED to upgrade curriculum as proposed in SB 104. ASD agrees with previous testifiers that DEED will need many team players in order to tackle that job.

[9:12:42 AM](#)

JOHN BLAINE, representing himself, testified on SB 103. He emphasized the need to keep the APS. He took issue with the damage being done to education and all the efforts that are misdirected. He requested that the legislature consider other ways of dealing with the financial crisis.

[9:14:45 AM](#)

CATHERINE COWARD, representing herself, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She stated that it is difficult to look at the bills without the context of budget cuts to public education. She liked the idea of increased broadband, but opined that more teachers in the classroom and smaller class sizes are more important. She was opposed to the loss of the APS. She concluded that the legislature is balancing the budget on the backs of students and only gives lip service to education.

[9:16:26 AM](#)

BECCA BERNARD, representing herself, testified on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104. She said research has shown that small class size and good teachers are the most important factors in education. Innovation should not replace those basics. Schools also need stable, predictable funding. Cutting the APS will not help keep students in Alaska or improve the number of good teachers. She concluded that online learning is not a substitute for good teachers.

[9:18:50 AM](#)

KATE MEYER, representing herself, testified on SB 102 and SB 103. She spoke against the elimination of the APS. She focused on technology considerations. She shared a personal story about her son and stressed the importance of good teachers and real-life classrooms. Increasing broadband will require considerable funding and IT staff. She listed problems with video conferencing. She concluded that the idea of doing more with less by maximizing virtual education is misguided.

[9:23:18 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES closed public testimony on SB 102, SB 103, and SB 104, and held the bills in committee.

[9:23:40 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Senator Hughes adjourned the Senate Education Committee at 9:23 a.m.