

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 5, 2018

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 64 (EDC)

"An Act relating to the establishment of the Task Force on Reading Proficiency and Reading Instruction for All Students and on the Effects of Dyslexia on Some Students."

- MOVED SCS CSHB 64 (EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 64

SHORT TITLE: READING PROFICIENCY TASK FORCE; DYSLEXIA

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) DRUMMOND

01/20/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/20/17	(H)	EDC
01/30/17	(H)	EDC AT 9:00 AM CAPITOL 106
01/30/17	(H)	Heard & Held
01/30/17	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/10/17	(H)	EDC RPT CS (EDC) 7DP
03/10/17	(H)	DP: TALERICO, PARISH, SPOHNHOLZ, KOPP, JOHNSTON, FANSLER, DRUMMOND
03/10/17	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/10/17	(H)	Moved CSHB 64 (EDC) Out of Committee
03/10/17	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/24/17	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
03/24/17	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 64 (EDC)

03/27/17	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/27/17	(S)	EDC
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 AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
04/12/17	(S)	Heard & Held
04/12/17	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
04/14/17	(S)	EDC AT 8:30 AM BUTROVICH 205
04/14/17	(S)	Heard & Held
04/14/17	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
02/05/18	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

PATRICK FITZGERALD, Staff
 Representative Harriet Drummond
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on HB 64 on behalf of the sponsor.

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
 Senator Gary Stevens
 Alaska State Legislature

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the Senate Committee Substitute for HB 64.

POSIE BOGGS, Member
 Alaska Reading Coalition
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

SERENA ELFTMAN-MOLLENKOPF, Member
 Alaska Reading Coalition
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

MARY CLAIRE KRETZSCHMAR, Member
 Alaska Reading Coalition
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

TARA KEIN, Representing self
 Anchor Point, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

ERIN MCKAY, Member
Alaska Reading Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

JENNIFER HALL JONES, Member
Alaska Reading Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Supported HB 64.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:53 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 Giessel, Begich, and Chair Stevens. Senator Hughes joined shortly thereafter.

HB 64-READING PROFICIENCY TASK FORCE; DYSLEXIA

[8:01:16 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of HB 64. [CSHB 64 (EDC) was before the committee.]

[8:01:53 AM](#)

PATRICK FITZGERALD, Staff, Representative Harriet Drummond, Alaska State Legislature, presented information on HB 64 on behalf of the sponsor. HB 64 is designed to assemble a task force with members from each body of the legislature and members of the public and nonprofits to strengthen reading proficiency and find the best methods possible for teaching students with dyslexia. The goals are to

- to evaluate reading instruction practices for all public-school students in the state,
- diagnose treatment and education for children affected by dyslexia,
- examine how current statutes and regulations affect reading proficiency outcomes,
- and identify evidence-based, multi-sensory, direct, explicit structured and sequential approaches to the instruction of students affected by dyslexia.

[8:03:14 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL moved SCS CSHB 64, version 30-LS0345\N, as the working document.

8:03:37 AM

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purposes of discussion.

8:03:45 AM

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, explained the Senate Committee Substitute. He noted that he had worked with Senator Stevens on a number of task forces and he changed the bill to improve the mechanics for a task force. One of the overall changes was to shorten the bill, starting with the title, and the bill now calls for only one report instead of two.

8:04:53 AM

MR. LAMKIN reviewed the changes from Version J to N in detail [(words added and ~~struck~~):

A. Page 1, Lines 1-2:

The name of the Task Force (TF) was changed from "the Task Force on Reading Proficiency and ~~Reading Instruction for All Students and On the Effects of Dyslexia on Some Students~~" to simply "the Legislative Task Force on Reading Proficiency and Dyslexia."

B. Page 1, Line 7:

The number of Alaskan students reported as failing to meet Alaska's English Language Arts standards was updated to the latest figure of approximately ~~47,000~~ 43,300.

C. Page 1, Lines 11-12:

The statement "results on student assessments ~~demonstrate that the state can improve reading instruction for students~~" was edited to read "results on student assessments indicate reading instruction and reading proficiency for students in the state should be improved;"

8:05:55 AM

D. Page 2, Line 5, INSERT:

A new subsection (5) was added to read: "parents and other caregivers are responsible for ensuring that their children learn to read through the

public school system or other means of instruction;"

[8:06:29 AM](#)

E. Page 2, Lines 5-9:

(6) the residents of this state also hold the legislature, the governor, and the state Board of Education and Early Development accountable for student reading proficiency outcomes ~~because the legislature, the governor, and the state Board of Education and Early Development are responsible for developing and implementing strongly justified education budget proposals~~ and for leading reforms of the state's public education system.

[8:06:56 AM](#)

F. Page 2, Lines 16-31, through Page 3, Line 12:

The "purpose" and duties of the TF were consolidated and rearranged to be more concise and are otherwise kept intact from version J of the bill.

[8:07:22 AM](#)

G. Page 3, Lines 13-18:

The TF will have one final report over the course of about one year, as opposed to both an interim report and a final report over the course of about two years. The deadline for the report was updated to March 29, 2019.

[8:07:47 AM](#)

H. Page 3, Lines 19-31 through Page 4, Lines 1-15:

The task force was reduced to 12 members (from 15 members), detailed as follows:

Six legislators (3 Senate / 3 House)

One K-3 teacher

One School Board Representative

One Administrator (Superintendent or Principal)

One Non-Profit Representative

One Parent

One Student Leader

These changes reflect removing the Commissioner of Education & Early Development, the University of Alaska, and two Non-Profits from the TF. A Student Leader representative was added.

8:11:05 AM

I. Page 4, Lines 16-28:

These subsections were redrafted as follows:

1. (Line 16) to establish this "legislative task force" as being led by the legislature, and provide for the chair being a legislator who is jointly appointed by the house speaker and the senate president. Version J called for a chair being elected from amongst the TF's 15 members.
2. (Lines 17-18) Language specifying the frequency of TF meetings, as well as referring to member(s) potential conflicts of interest and calling on other expert consultants (to presumably settle related disputes or offer alternative testimony on a subject) was struck from the bill.

8:12:46 AM

3. (Lines 25-26) The new version specifies the staff member of the chair of the TF as being the administrative support for the TF, as opposed to version J which identified potentially multiple staff of the "legislative members" fulfilling that role.
4. (Lines 27-28) The new version further clarifies that members are not entitled to per diem or travel expenses, and provides that the TF "may," as opposed to "shall," meet telephonically.

8:13:58 AM

J. Page 4, Line 29:

The sunset of the TF was updated to June 30, 2019.

8:14:29 AM

SENATOR GIESSEL said the improvements in the bill would help to ensure that the task force could produce a product.

8:15:00 AM

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether the staffing change noted in I.3 (Lines 25-26) would add a cost to the bill.

8:15:22 AM

MR. LAMKIN said that it clarifies that it would be the duty of someone already on legislative staff.

8:15:44 AM

SENATOR BEGICH asked for clarification that the bill does reference legislative staff, not a new position that would need to be paid for.

[8:16:09 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN said it would be one single legislative staff member of the chair of the task force.

[8:16:40 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH thanked him for the clarification and for putting that on the record. He asked whether the sponsor supports the changes.

[8:16:57 AM](#)

MR. FITZGERALD said yes.

[8:17:05 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS recognized the presence of Senator Coghill.

[8:17:09 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she wondered whether one year instead of two was enough. She asked why the report deadline is March 29 instead of a later date.

[8:18:06 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN said that in his experience, the deadline is a goal, not a binding date.

[8:19:05 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the task force could issue preliminary and supplementary reports.

[8:19:16 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN said yes.

[8:19:23 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony.

[8:19:42 AM](#)

POSIE BOGGS, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, supported HB 64. She said the legislative task force should result in a consensus for a long-term, statewide reading plan, individualized at many levels--districts, schools, classrooms, and teachers. Legislators on the task force need to become experts on the reading brain. Alaskans cannot afford the cost of low reading proficiency. In 2017, the Education Consumers Foundation projected the cost of low, third-grade reading proficiency for

four of Alaska's largest school districts to be over \$98 million. This is a hidden tax that accumulates over decades of reading failure in Alaska. This can be reduced by enhancing the knowledge of educators. Educators are not being prepared for the science of reading as undergraduates and are not getting enough professional development.

[8:23:02 AM](#)

MS. BOGGS related a story of how a team brought a student from a kindergarten reading level to a second-grade level in eight months. The state can achieve reading proficiency for all students.

[8:23:53 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if Ms. Boggs had any concerns about the condensed time frame and report date.

[8:24:20 AM](#)

MS. BOGGS said they had no concerns about condensed timelines. HB 64, which is the first step, can be short so other steps can happen. Consensus building, educating people, and going forward can be achieved in that time frame.

[8:25:05 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked how the task force's findings might be beneficial to kids not in traditional classes, such as homeschoolers. She also asked whether anything connected to the Common Core standards was behind the bill.

[8:26:11 AM](#)

MS. BOGGS said many parents across the nation are choosing to homeschool because their children not learning to read. She hopes outcomes of the bill will be context-rich, so all can benefit. The knowledge base is the same. This needs to be shared across the whole of Alaska. They are not happy with the Common Core with early reading instruction. It fails kids who are struggling to read. She said she would share an article that explicitly talks about how the Common Core lacks enough foundational information and has no strategies for kids who are struggling.

[8:27:53 AM](#)

MS. BOGGS said the bill came about because a fifth-grade student of hers went to [former] Senator Dunleavy's office and said that he had calculated that he had been in public school for 6,000 hours and that he could only read on a kindergarten level. After 100 hours with a reading specialist, he was independently

reading on grade level. He asked what the state would do to help other kids.

[8:29:07 AM](#)

SERENA ELFTMAN-MOLLENKOPF, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, supported HB 64. She said the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) finds that only 30 percent of kids in Alaska are reading proficiently. When she volunteered in a classroom, she saw a mother's pain about her child's difficulty learning to read. The teacher had excellent classroom management but did not know how to help kids with difficulty reading. Ms. Elftman-Mollenkopf said she got a master's in reading science to learn how to teach reading.

[8:31:35 AM](#)

MS. ELFTMAN-MOLLENKOPF said teachers are not taught enough about how to teach reading. HB 64 must ensure teachers are supported in the science of teaching reading

[8:32:34 AM](#)

MARY CLAIRE KRETZSCHMAR, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, supported HB 64. She said she is a mother of a ninth grader who in first grade had reading difficulties. Interventions did not help. She was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade, but the school would not acknowledge dyslexia. Special ed did not teach her how to read. No one could show research to support the special ed intervention. She wanted her daughter to be taught how to read. Her daughter was falling further behind and then she was expected to read to learn. She paid for private tutoring for her daughter. The process of learning to read is science-based, but higher ed is resistant to the process of learning to read.

[8:35:23 AM](#)

MS. KRETZSCHMAR asked who the advocates are of other students in the state with reading difficulties, either because of dyslexia, poverty, trauma, or being English-learners. Reading is a fundamental expectation of an education. Reading proficiency levels the playing field for all. Those who cannot read will be doomed to struggle for jobs.

[8:36:08 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether districts acknowledge dyslexia now and of the 43,000 students who are not reading proficiently, what is the estimate of the rate of dyslexia.

[8:36:32 AM](#)

MS. KRETZSCHMAR said to her knowledge the Anchorage School District does not acknowledge dyslexia or use the word. Her "guessestimate" of the percentage of school-age students who are not reading proficiently with dyslexia is 70 percent.

[8:38:01 AM](#)

TARA KEIN, Representing self, supported HB 64. She said her 12-year-old son is dyslexic. The school never tested her son for dyslexia. She had him independently tested at a language clinic in Anchorage. The school is trying to help but does not understand dyslexia and does not have teaching tools specifically for dyslexia. She tutors her son at home and he has made progress. The state needs to help other struggling readers.

[8:39:58 AM](#)

ERIN MCKAY, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, supported HB 64. She said she has a similar story to the other parents. Her daughter is dyslexic, and the Anchorage School District still does not acknowledge the existence of dyslexia.

[8:40:51 AM](#)

JENNIFER HALL JONES, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, supported HB 64. She said the leadership needs to better understand the depth and scope of the problem so that an effective plan can be devised to help raising reading proficiency. Well-meaning teachers are unable to deliver the needed instruction. With outside help, her son would not have graduated. The state has some of the highest levels of nonproficient readers in the nation. The educational infrastructure is complex and ingrained. Legislative and regulatory approaches can solve this problem, just as in other states. The state should support teachers with evidence-based instructional strategies. Good reading instruction changes outcomes.

[8:43:05 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES wondered whether it is hereditary when children struggle to read. Perhaps this effort could help parents who are struggling to read. She wondered if that is a hidden need.

[8:44:22 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS agreed that many people cover up reading difficulties.

[8:44:40 AM](#)

MS. BOGGS said there is a genetic component to reading difficulties. If one parent struggled with reading, each child

has a 50 percent chance of having reading difficulties. When each parent struggled, each child has an 87 percent chance.

[8:45:21 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted that the task force fits right into the Department of Education and Early Development's Alaska Education Challenge work.

[8:45:51 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS closed public testimony. [The assumption is that he removed his objection.]

[8:46:11 AM](#)

SENATOR COGHILL moved to report SCS CSHB 64(EDC), N version, from committee with individual recommendations and zero fiscal note. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

[8:46:40 AM](#)

At ease.

[8:47:55 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS called the meeting back to order.

[8:48:25 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Committee at 8:48 a.m.