

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 6, 2018

7:59 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. 102(EDC)

"An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and relating to limited teacher certificates."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 188

"An Act providing for payment and loan incentives to public school teachers for national board certification."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 102

SHORT TITLE: LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KREISS-TOMKINS

02/03/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/03/17	(H)	EDC
03/01/17	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/01/17	(H)	Heard & Held
03/01/17	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/15/17	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/15/17	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/20/17	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

03/20/17 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/20/17 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
 03/27/17 (H) EDC RPT CS(EDC) 4DP 1NR 1AM  
 03/27/17 (H) DP: TALERICO, PARISH, SPOHNHOLZ, KOPP  
 03/27/17 (H) NR: DRUMMOND  
 03/27/17 (H) AM: FANSLER  
 03/27/17 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106  
 03/27/17 (H) Moved CSHB 102(EDC) Out of Committee  
 03/27/17 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
 04/05/17 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
 04/05/17 (H) VERSION: CSHB 102(EDC)  
 04/06/17 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 04/06/17 (S) L&C, EDC  
 04/11/17 (S) L&C AT 9:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 04/11/17 (S) Heard & Held  
 04/11/17 (S) MINUTE(L&C)  
 01/30/18 (S) L&C AT 1:00 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 01/30/18 (S) Moved CSHB 102(EDC) Out of Committee  
 01/30/18 (S) MINUTE(L&C)  
 01/31/18 (S) L&C RPT 2DP 2NR  
 01/31/18 (S) DP: COSTELLO, GARDNER  
 01/31/18 (S) NR: MICCICHE, MEYER  
 04/04/18 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205  
 04/04/18 (S) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 04/06/18 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 188

SHORT TITLE: TEACHERS: BOARD CERTIFICATION INCENTIVES  
 SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) WIELECHOWSKI

02/19/18 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/19/18 (S) EDC, FIN  
 04/06/18 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REID MAGDANZ, Staff  
 Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 102 on behalf of the sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 102.

BRANDON LOCKE, Senior Director  
World Languages  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 102.

JENNIFER SCHMIDT-HUTCHINS, Principal  
Fronteras Charter School  
Wasilla, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 102.

ALICE TAFF, Affiliate Assistant Professor of Alaska Native  
Languages  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 102.

PEGGY AZUYAK, Representing Self  
Kodiak, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported HB 102.

BOB WILLIAMS, Director  
Educator and School Excellence  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on HB 102.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator  
Teacher Education and Certification  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on HB 102.

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 188.

ELISE SORUM-BIRK, Intern  
Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented SB 188 on behalf of the sponsor.

TARA BIVENS, Representing Self  
Jump Start toward National Board Certification  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 188.

STEVE ATWATER, Representing Self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 188.

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Alaska Council of School Administrators  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 188.

JESSE BJORKMAN, Representing Self  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 188.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[7:59:41 AM](#)

**CHAIR GARY STEVENS** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 7:59 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Hughes, and Chair Stevens. Senators Coghill and Giessel arrived shortly thereafter.

#### **HB 102-LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES**

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of HB 102. [Version 30-LS0237\J was before the committee.]

[8:00:23 AM](#)

REID MAGDANZ, Staff, Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 102 on behalf of the sponsor. He said the bill grew out of discussions that Representative Kreiss-Tomkins and he have had with language immersion programs across the state about how to help with their missions. They heard that one of the largest barriers to successful immersion programs, especially for Alaska Native languages, is the limited pool of certified teachers with the necessary language abilities. The language immersion programs are quality programs, well-liked by parents, in demand, and they produce solid academic results. Learning other languages prepares Alaska students for jobs around the country and the world. HB 102 helps the programs continue to grow to continue to meet parent and student demand.

[8:02:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JONATHAN KREISS-TOMKINS, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of HB 102 said the bill is very much a response to a problem they've identified in conversations with different language programs around Alaska, either in rural Alaska with Native language programs or world languages in the Mat-Su and Anchorage. It is an exciting solution because it bridges both worlds in terms of the rural/urban divide in Alaska.

[8:03:04 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said he is confused about the bill. The testimony for HB 102 shows it seeks to correct the problem with Alaska Native language, but statute exists that allows for Alaska Native language and culture to be taught with a limited teaching certificate. That part of the legislation is already addressed under the law. This goes beyond this to include other languages. He asked why this is relevant and why the current law doesn't work for indigenous languages.

[8:03:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered that the Type M certificate does what Senator Begich describes. HB 102 is in response to immersion language programs, which are a growing phenomenon in Alaska. All subject matter is taught in a certain language. In the Native language it could be Yupik, like at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School in Bethel. Having a teacher teaching not just Yupik but math and other basic subject is important in an immersion language environment. This bill is responsive to that broader scope of instruction.

[8:05:13 AM](#)

MR. MAGDANZ said that when the original limited certificate statutes were put on the books, immersion programs were uncommon. In the last couple of decades, they have become the gold standard for language education, in particular Native language revitalization. HB 102 meets the needs of those programs that have developed since then.

[8:05:42 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said that Mr. Magdanz is saying that the current law allowing for a limited teaching certificate for Native language and culture wouldn't include the vast array of things happening in immersion programs.

[8:06:05 AM](#)

MR. MAGDANZ said that is the interpretation they have from Legislative Legal. Current statutes would only allow someone,

for example, to teach an Inupiaq language class. A kindergarten teacher could not teach science or social studies.

SENATOR BEGICH said the other issue for him is the foreign language requirement. A concern of his is that they continue to find ways to limit the specialties taught by teachers. It is not necessarily an advantage. They might prepare students inadequately because they haven't been taught by teachers who have gone through teacher preparation. He himself went through teacher training. There are skill sets taught to educate students. He asked if Mr. Magdanz can reassure him that this won't lead to a slippery slope of dumbing down teacher requirements instead of trying to recruit quality teachers instead.

[8:08:27 AM](#)

MR. MAGDANZ said HB 102 fully allows for the State Board of Education to require a teacher preparation program for anyone issued a certificate under the bill. He expects that the State Board would. The State Board currently does not require that for Type M but does for Type I. Having spent time immersed in a culture and language is what makes immersion teachers most effective. It is not dumbing down of a certificate. It is allowing the people most qualified to be in the immersion language programs to be there.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said all things are relative in a situation. In previous committees he was struck by testimony from immersion schools that are so desperate for fluent speakers that long-term substitutes are marshalled into classrooms because they need to have fluent speakers. If that is the starting point, this bill is a big step up from that. The Board of Education backstops all of this with approval. He agrees that in the long term the ideal is that they want fully certificated teachers. This is a stepping stone to get there. Right now there's such a need that this is an improvement from where they are.

[8:11:14 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said that is his concern. There is a crying need for these teachers. They don't have the supply because they don't have the incentives for teachers to come teach in Alaska. He's not certain that this bill gets them an incentive. It provides a stopgap. That is part of his concern. That said, he is reassured by Mr. Magdanz's comments.

[8:11:51 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she assumed that immersion programs like Fronteras Charter School in Mat-Su would have certified teachers who could make sure skills needed for going further in education are covered. She asked if they can be reassured that other teachers in the program or building will be certified.

[8:12:43 AM](#)

MR. MAGDANZ responded that the State Board would have complete authority under the bill to require any level of mentorship from a Type A certificated teacher. That is how the Type I certificate works. Persons allowed to have their own classrooms in an immersion would be subject to supervision, guidance, and mentorship from more experienced teachers.

[8:13:32 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said her concern is about teachers who have not gone through training to teach other content areas. Someone with a Type M certificate who is great at conversing may not be trained for teaching math, earth sciences. She asked that if these certificates are issued, would it make sense to require these teachers to be working toward their certificates in the same way that those with Type I certificates are working toward bachelor's degrees.

[8:14:52 AM](#)

MR. MAGDANZ responded that the bill requires that any person issued a limited teaching certificate has to demonstrate subject area expertise. The bill mandates that; the State Board sets regulations for what constitutes subject area expertise. A certificate written under this bill would not be a blanket, someone can teach anything in Spanish. Someone holding a certificate under this bill would be qualified to teach a specific subject in a specific language. They would have to demonstrate subject area expertise under regulations that would be set by the Board of Education.

[8:16:07 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL arrived.

[8:16:10 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she appreciates that subject area expertise would be required separate from the language itself. She asked for the sponsor's view for some sort of requirement because she understands what Senator Begich said about the slippery slope. They want the best qualified teachers for their students. She asked if the bill sponsor would object to requiring Type M

certified teachers to begin training to move on to the I certificate and eventually full certificate.

8:17:01 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered that he agreed and pointed to subsection (e). The one-year probationary period may partly speak to that. It is not for any period of time for any subject. It is a narrow band of subjects that someone with a Type M certificate would teach. It is a one-year certificate. It would be in everyone's interest, the certificate holder, the charter school, for someone to work toward full certification.

8:18:30 AM

MR. MAGDANZ presented the sectional. He noted that the bill is a repeal and reenactment of an existing section of law, so although it looks like new law, most of this is already in law. It has been reorganized with some new language added. Subsection (a) adds paragraph four, which allows the limited certificate to be issued to teachers in immersion programs.

HB 102 repeals and re-enacts AS 14.20.025.

**Sec. 14.20.025 (a)**

The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) may issue limited teacher certificates in certain specialty areas:

- Alaska Native culture; Military science;
- Vocational or technical education;
- Classes taught in non-English languages.

Under current law, limited certificates may be issued for teaching Alaska Native languages or culture, military science, and vocational or technical education. HB 102 adds classes taught in non-English languages to the existing list.

Certificates issued under this section in one of these specialty areas are subject to the provisions of AS 14.20.025 and exempt from certain requirements of AS 14.20.020 or AS 14.20.022.

**Sec. 14.20.025 (b)**

Limited certificates can only be issued to a person if the school board of the district in which the person will teach has requested a limited certificate for that specific person. The limited certificate is valid only in the district that makes the request.

A person may only receive a limited certificate if they demonstrate "instructional skills and subject matter expertise sufficient to assure the public that the person is competent as a teacher." This language is used in current law, and like in current law, the state board of education is empowered to write regulations interpreting it.

The state board of education's regulations may require that a limited certificate holder undertake additional academic training.

[8:19:39 AM](#)

**Sec. 14.20.025 (c)**

A limited teacher certificate must specify the language(s) and subject(s) for which it is valid.

Restates that limited certificates can only be issued to a person if the school board of the district in which the person will teach has requested a limited certificate for that specific person. The limited certificate is valid only in the district that makes the request.

[8:20:19 AM](#)

**Sec. 14.20.025 (d)**

Gives the state board of education authority to write regulations implementing AS 14.20.025. Provides that the regulations can't require a certificate applicant to achieve a minimum score on an exam unless that exam is given in the instructional language the certificate will be valid for (e.g., a teacher who will be teaching only in German or Inupiaq cannot be required to pass an exam given in English).

[8:21:16 AM](#)

**Sec. 14.20.25 (e)**

Limited certificates are initially valid for one year. Terms and lengths of extension and renewal shall be set by the state board of education. In order for a limited certificate to be extended or renewed, the school board that initially requested the certificate must certify that the certificate holder has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction and student assessment.

[8:21:48 AM](#)

BRANDON LOCKE, Senior Director, World Languages, Anchorage School District, supported HB 102. He said the Anchorage School District has a long history of immersion programs dating back to the late 80s. They have 2,500 students in language immersion programs, which include Chinese, Japanese, German, Spanish, and Russian. They are launching a Yupik immersion program for the first time this fall. In immersion, teachers are teaching content in the language. It's about teaching content through the language and by doing so, students are learning language, just like they do their first language. He recognizes that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has heard some of this testimony and now has a world language expert limited certificate, which is beneficial for high school language teachers. It does not speak to the need of having an elementary certification, which is what language immersion teachers need to have. In Anchorage it is always a huge challenge to find qualified teachers. Right now they have five or six Spanish immersion positions available for next year. Finding people who are dually qualified, fluent in a language and fully endorsed in a content area, is challenging.

[8:24:37 AM](#)

MR. LOCKE said he heard the concerns about letting anyone in the classroom. He would say on behalf of the Anchorage School District that they would use this carefully. This would not open the floodgates to let anyone in the classroom. They would use this in a situation where they have tried all other avenues. This will help in those extremely hard-to-fill situations.

SENATOR BEGICH asked what is the barrier to recruiting teachers for unfilled positions.

[8:25:47 AM](#)

MR. LOCKE said that is a tough question to answer. It is hard to recruit teachers to Alaska in general. Finding someone to teach second grade in Japanese is not an easy task. The Anchorage School District is constantly trying to recruit nationwide and in other countries. It is an ongoing struggle and challenge.

[8:27:16 AM](#)

JENNIFER SCHMIDT-HUTCHINS, Principal, Fronteras Charter School, supported HB 102. She said the biggest difficulty when trying to find qualified applicants is simply the limited number of native-Spanish speaker candidates, not only locally but nationally and internationally. The lack of interest in moving to Alaska is key. It's the climate, the pay is a deterrent. The competition is quite high. The most significant barrier they

experience is the process of Alaska's certification. One teacher from Colombia and one from Puerto Rico came to Fronteras fully certified with numerous years of teaching. Even though they are fully certified in their home countries and their credits have been vetted and accepted by the state Department of Education, they must pass the reading, writing, and mathematics sections of Praxis, which is only offered in English. She highlighted the difficulty this presents to native-Spanish speakers.

[8:29:14 AM](#)

MS. SCHMIDT-HUTCHINS said first the native speaker must read everything in English and translate it into Spanish in the time allotted for every single question. They have to write all their responses in English. They can apply for a modification of an additional 20 minutes, which is not much help. Because Praxis is only offered in English, the two Spanish teachers were reduced to substitute pay with benefits removed, but they continued to do the full-time job of a certified teacher. This is wrong. Native speakers bring that rich culture that is such a huge component of their immersion program. Because of the quality of their native-Spanish speaking staff, they are requested more as homeroom teachers than English-speaking teachers because their parents want their children immersed in the target language. She asked them to please consider the gift they would give to every immersion students by voting in favor of HB 102.

[8:31:15 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked what her solution is to the Praxis issue.

[8:31:21 AM](#)

MS. SCHMIDT-HUTCHINS suggested the first thing is to offer the Praxis in other languages. If the Praxis remains only in English, it's critical to have HB 102.

[8:31:51 AM](#)

ALICE TAFF, Affiliate Assistant Professor of Alaska Native Languages, University of Alaska Southeast, supported HB 102. She said she is a linguist affiliated with both the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the University of Alaska Southeast. People have better executive function if they are bilingual or multilingual. They have less dementia and suicide. Native communities which have 50 percent or more conversational use of their ancestral language are healthier. Students will be healthier and smarter if bilingual. They become bilingual through significant immersion in the language. She asked them to give Alaska students a chance to become healthier and smarter.

HB 102 will be a gleaming legacy, especially for Alaska Native students.

[8:37:16 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said he doesn't oppose bilingualism. He wants to assure quality of instruction.

[8:37:46 AM](#)

MS. TAFF said that is her concern also. With HB 102, they can be assured that that will be quality education.

[8:37:59 AM](#)

PEGGY AZUYAK, Representing Self, supported HB 102. She said she is the Director of Rural Schools for Kodiak Island Borough School District and teaches Alutiiq language at Kodiak College. Kodiak has worked hard over several decades to grow Alutiiq speakers. They have their first immersion program. Immersion is so important to their community as they work to grow Alutiiq speakers and strengthen the identity of their youth. Their pool of language speakers and experts is so small. HB 102 will allow them to continue their momentum and build their immersion teaching capacity and move beyond preschool into elementary schools as they work to build their teaching capacity within their language community. They have teachers teaching Alutiiq through Type M certificates, which has been so helpful to them to get the language to their students. HB 102 is instrumental in allowing them to broaden their immersion practices. In all of their language programs, they have language experts work hand-in-hand with teaching experts. HB 102 would allow them to honor the expertise of their cultural and language knowledge and use community resources while building capacity and strengthening language teachers. The pool is so small that those with Type A certificates are working full time to support language programs in addition to other jobs.

CHAIR STEVENS asked DEED to provide a response.

[8:41:37 AM](#)

BOB WILLIAMS, Director, Educator and School Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), testified on HB 102. He said DEED supports immersion schools and efforts to revitalize Alaska Native languages. HB 102 does raise some concerns. It changes the specific nature of the subject matter expert certificate into a certificate that makes a teacher a subject matter expert at any grade level and subject by speaking a different language without providing DEED a mechanism for checking the competency of the teaching in that subject or grade

level unless the competency exam is in the world language. The bill does say that the State Board can require academic training for the limited teaching certificate by regulation but in their conversations, it seems to preclude the requirement of completion or enrollment of a teacher preparation program.

[8:43:05 AM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS said they have mechanisms in place to meet many of these needs. The Type M allows individuals with specific skills to teach specific skill areas and does not require a bachelor's degree. Applicants must document expertise, be sponsored by a school district, complete the mandatory trainings, and pass a background check. The renewable certificate is valid for five years. Those skills currently are military science, Junior ROTC, Alaska Native language or culture, and career and technical education. That can get Native speakers into the classroom. The Type I, the instructional aide or the associate teacher, allows individuals with skills in Alaska Native language and who are also enrolled in a teacher preparation program that will lead to a bachelor's degree, to teach Alaska Native language and the content covered in the teacher preparation program.

MR. WILLIAMS said that applicants must be sponsored by a school district, be enrolled in a teacher preparation program, be supervised and mentored by a certified teacher, complete the mandatory trainings, and pass a background check. It is valid for one year and is renewable. The Type I can be extended when the applicant documents the progress made to complete the teacher preparation program and bachelor's degree. Lower Kuskokwim School District is doing this with many of their immersion schools. Those mechanisms can help meet those needs. Sondra Meredith will testify about how the State Board has responded to immersion schools with a Type W limited certificate.

[8:45:22 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator, Teacher Education and Certification, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), testified on HB 102. She said the Type W, which was just adopted and will go into effect next year, will address those native speakers from outside of the United States who were able to qualify for an initial certification but did not pass the Praxis 1 basic competency exam at the end of year. The limited Type W will remedy that kind of situation. The basic competency exam will be broken into three areas. Those individuals with expertise in language must still take the math in English but can substitute a language-specific exam for the writing and

reading. Those individuals must have or be enrolled in a teacher preparation program and have a bachelor's degree. It is a step to remedy a situation by bringing more native speakers into classrooms.

[8:46:59 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said the committee needs more time with the sponsor and the department to fully vet the bill. He held HB 102 in committee.

[8:47:54 AM](#)

At ease.

### **SB 188-TEACHERS: BOARD CERTIFICATION INCENTIVES**

[8:47:59 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SB 188.

[8:48:41 AM](#)

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of SB 188, said the bill provides incentives for teachers to become nationally certified. One of the goals of the Educator Excellence Committee [for the Department of Education and Early Development's Alaska Education Challenge] was to triple the number of nationally certified teachers in Alaska, specifically in hard-to-staff schools. The studies show that students of nationally certified teachers do better and the teachers have lower burnout rates. The fiscal note is modest. Twenty-seven other states have similar programs. Most of them are significantly higher than this. Many are \$5,000 a year with \$5,000 more for challenging districts. His aide, Elise Sorum-Birk, researched this and it has good return on the dollars.

[8:50:14 AM](#)

ELISE SORUM-BIRK, Intern, Senator Bill Wielechowski, Alaska State Legislature, presented SB 188 on behalf of the sponsor. National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) are a major asset in classrooms. Many of the most successful educational systems around the world focus on and emphasize the professionalism of their teacher workforce. NBCTs are unique in that they are challenging themselves to be the best possible educators they can be. They closely examine their work and observe themselves scientifically. They are trying to actively better their work. National Board Certification is provided by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Research throughout the years has shown this is a good investment for education.

[8:51:55 AM](#)

MS. SORUM-BIRK referenced the list of studies about the impact of NBCTs on pages 8 and 9 of the publication about NBCTs from the National Conference of State Legislators. A 2015 study from Washington state indicated that students taught by NBCTs had up to six weeks of additional learning gains in middle school math and across the board, NBCTs were statistically more impactful on student learning outcomes. A 2012 study from the Los Angeles School District showed that in math, students had up to two months of learning gains and in language arts, up to one month. In Florida, a 2012 showed NBCTs were among the top 25 percent of teachers in their subject area. Evidence also indicates that NBCTs are less likely to suffer burnout and be retained at higher rates. NBCTs are found to be more fulfilled in their work.

[8:54:02 AM](#)

MS. SORUM-BIRK said financial support for NBCTs is not a new idea. Currently, 26 states have financial incentives for NBCTs. They are proposing a modest number compared to many of those states. Some school districts in Alaska, including Anchorage and Kenai, also provide incentives. Washington state implemented their program in 1999. They now have largest proportion of NBCTs in the nation. They invest heavily in NBCTs. They provide \$5,000 stipends to NBCTs and an additional \$5,000 for teachers in low-income areas. One goal of the Alaska Education Challenge is to triple the number of NBCTs in the state, especially in hard-to-staff schools. This could be important in addressing the difficulty of recruiting and retaining quality teachers in Alaska.

[8:56:09 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked what the prerequisites are for taking the exam.

[8:56:41 AM](#)

MS. SORUM-BIRK responded that it is actually a training process, not an exam. Candidates must be a certified teacher with three years of experience to apply for the program.

[8:57:06 AM](#)

TARA BIVENS, Representing Self, Jump Start toward National Board Certification, supported SB 188. The National Board Certification process can last one to five years. Teachers complete four components of a peer-reviewed process. One component is a six-hour exam. The other three are based on work

directly in the classroom. In each of those components they analyze their work in a very specific, targeted way.

9:00:30 AM

MS. SORUM-BIRK presented the sectional for SB 188.

**Section 1:**

Sec. 14.20.225. Establishes incentive and stipend payments for national board certification. Establishes amount for stipend payment to be paid to eligible teachers by school district or department. Outlines additional incentives for teachers in high poverty areas with low performance rates. Establishes the responsibility of DEED to provide sufficient funding for these incentives, in addition to existing state aid, and allows DEED to establish a procedure for school districts to request stipend funds. Allows school districts to offer additional incentives. Provides definitions for "district" and "national board certification."

9:01:42 AM

**Section 2:**

Sec. 14.43.550 Establishes a loan program to provide funding for teachers pursuing national board certification. Sec. 14.43.555 Describes administration of and eligibility for the loan program. States that the loan program will be administered by the Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education. Establishes the award amount, repayment period and interest of the loan. Establishes the responsibilities of the commission for oversight of the loan application process and allocation of loan funds. Establishes eligibility requirement for the loan program. Outlines duties of the commission relating to payment and repayment of the loan. Sec. 14.43.590 Provides definitions for the terms "department" and "district."

9:02:38 AM

STEVE ATWATER, PhD., Representing Self, supported SB 188. He said he is the Dean of the University of Alaska Southeast School of Education, but he was presenting his own views, not an official position. His support for SB 188 comes from two perspectives, one from his work on the Alaska Education Challenge and one from his experience as a teacher and superintendent in Alaska. While the bill is about supporting teachers, it is ultimately about improving the K-12 student learning experience. This bill is one way to do that. The Alaska Education Challenge was an inclusive process designed to

generate recommendations that would lead to systemic coherence for the K-12 system. He was part of the committee on Educator Excellence. Chair Stevens was on that committee, which was facilitated by Dr. Lisa Parady. They spent a lot of time reviewing best practices and exploring how to improve and support teachers. The committee set three goals, including tripling the number of NBCTs, especially in hard-to-staff schools, through salary incentives. Alaska has fewer than 200 NBCTs out of more than 8,000 teachers.

DR. ATWATER said that as a superintendent, he noticed that NCBTs are often the best teachers in a building. The Teacher of the Year often has this certification. A challenge for teaching is that the career trajectory, excluding becoming an administrator, for teachers is limited. This bill provides an incentive to teachers to take a career step that will rejuvenate their practice. All NBCTs will claim that their certification process is the best experience they've ever had. The turnover rate in Alaska is higher than the national average. NCBTs are more likely to stay in their schools and in the teaching profession. He asked them to agree that an incentive for teachers to become NBCTs is important. Consider the fiscal notes with the understood benefits of an increase in student learning and creating a more stable teacher workforce.

[9:06:38 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL said the certification process sounds like the engineering licensure process, where an engineer graduates and works three years under the supervision of a professional engineer, receives approval from the supervising engineer, and then takes an exam to become a professional engineer. The teacher profession has not gone to that level of certification. She thinks of the highest performing schools in the world in Finland, where teachers are highly regarded, the highest educated people, revered and highly paid. This certification process is important and long overdue. She asked how does this fit in with what other countries in the world are doing.

[9:08:23 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER answered that the need to establish a hierarchy of professional development is important. School districts provide professional development and teachers are required to recertify with coursework. The process is not as formalized as in other countries or in other professions. He agrees the formality of that process would be of benefit to the K-12 system. This bill would begin to make that happen.

[9:09:12 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said he appreciated Dr. Atwater's connection of the bill to the Alaska Education Challenge. That was the point of the challenge, to come up with innovative ways to improve education.

[9:10:01 AM](#)

MS. BIVENS said she is a teacher in Anchorage and a candidate support provider, meaning that she works with teachers across the state with the certification process. She is 100 percent certain that this will transform education in Alaska. It has been proven in other states. She was teaching sixth grade in Anchorage in 2000 when she was certified. She could not believe how much the process impacted her as a teacher. She has worked to get information about National Board Certification out to other teachers through grass roots advocacy. Alaska has 187 board certified teachers. They need help in boosting this number. NBCT candidates tend to be involved in wide aspects of their school communities.

[9:13:10 AM](#)

MS. BIVENS said so sometimes teachers have to limit what they participate in. One thing that helps in making the process accessible is helping financially. Washington state had 23 NBCTs when their stipend was introduced in 2000. Now they have 10,000, 18 to 20 percent of their teachers. An incentive makes it easier to make it a priority when trying to make ends meet. Alaska needs the next level of advocacy. Grassroots advocacy is reaching its limits. Teachers pay for their own classes, but this is not so much about expenses as priority. More people need to do this. She thought she understood so many things about teaching, but after the process of analysis and reflective thinking--something rare because of the lack of time for teachers---her level of professionalism and confidence was raised. Her teaching was transformed because of this process and twenty years later she asks herself the same questions she did when she went through the process. This will push education forward in the state. It is affordable. It increases student learning.

[9:19:17 AM](#)

SENATOR GIESSEL asked about the cost of the process. Multiple professions in this state require national certification. She doesn't know that any of them have stipend or loan programs. She asked if she could justify that by explaining the cost of the exam.

[9:19:46 AM](#)

MS. BIVENS said there are teacher certification programs, of course. Some universities are moving toward the evidence-based learning required by the national certification. National certification is a voluntary system based on national standards. The cost is \$2,500 to \$5,000 to go through the process.

[9:22:55 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, supported SB 188. She chaired the Alaska Education Challenge Educator Excellence Committee. Senator Stevens, his aide Timothy Lamkin, Dr. Atwater and many other citizens sat on that committee. The charge was to come up with something transformative. Of the three recommendations, this rose to the top. The research is compelling. There is a fiscal note in tight times, but they need to avail themselves of every good strategy to assist school districts in a time of shortage and they are struggling to retain quality staff. This goes directly to the goals of the Alaska Education Challenge, as well to the greatest needs in school districts. This is a proven idea they need to capitalize on.

[9:25:21 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked what districts spend on professional development. She asked if this could be the professional development, what the funds for professional development could be used for, and whether every single teacher could be required to be nationally certified.

[9:26:03 AM](#)

ACTING CHAIR COGHILL said that is a broad question that Dr. Parady wouldn't immediately have the answer to. That is something they can get back to.

[9:26:27 AM](#)

JESSE BJORKMAN, Representing Self, supported SB 188. He said to speak to Senator Hughes' question, the standards of National Board Certification could stand in for much of the professional development programs and strategies that districts are using. His local school district spends a lot of money on professional development and targets one or two areas of the five core propositions that National Board Certification uses. With NEA-Alaska and other organizations that support National Board Certification, a large network of support exists for teachers who wants this. He doesn't know that this certification is for everyone as it is intensive and requires a lot of effort in looking at practice that may not be appropriate for everyone,

but it is immensely helpful for multiple teachers in a building to gain that certification. They can pass on strategies and methods of pedagogy on to their colleagues. Having a teacher-based professional development system can transform schools. They can have a professional development system from the bottom up, not top down, with more intrinsic teacher buy-in. It is better use of state dollars than going outside to hire consulting firms. They already have the structures to educate themselves as teachers and pass that information on to colleagues. That is the most valuable part of National Board Certification. Being halfway through the in-depth and detailed process has transformed the way he teaches. It is the best professional development he's ever had.

ACTING CHAIR COGHILL held SB 188 in committee.

9:29:46 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Acting Chair Coghill adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 9:29 a.m.