

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 30, 2019

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Sara Hannan, Co-Chair
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sharon Jackson
Representative Josh Revak

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 128

"An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 128

SHORT TITLE: TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

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

04/09/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/09/19	(H)	EDC, CRA
04/17/19	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/17/19	(H)	Heard & Held
04/17/19	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/22/19	(H)	EDC RPT 2DP 3NR
04/22/19	(H)	DP: STORY, DRUMMOND
04/22/19	(H)	NR: JOHNSON, REVAK, ZULKOSKY
04/22/19	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/22/19	(H)	Moved HB 128 Out of Committee
04/22/19	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/30/19	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

JOHN SCANLON, Staff
Representative Jonathon Kreiss-Tomkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information on HB 128 on behalf of Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, prime sponsor.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator
Teacher Certification
Student Learning Division
Department of Education & Early Development (DEED)

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during the hearing on HB 128.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Revak, Jackson, Thompson, Kreiss-Tomkins, Hannan, and Drummond were present at the call to order. Representative Claman arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 128-TEACHERS: NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

[8:05:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 128, "An Act relating to national board certification for public school teachers."

[8:05:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS, as prime sponsor, presented HB 128. He said the proposed bill would do two things: First, it would promote national board certification as a gold standard in the teaching profession by publicly recognizing National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) in schools. This is a concept developed in partnership with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), the Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA), and the National Education Association (NEA). It would also set the goal that 4 percent of public school teachers in Alaska would be board certified by 2025. Presently that number is a little over 2 percent.

8:07:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked how the organizations named by Representative Kreiss-Tomkins would benefit from HB 128.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS clarified that the people that would benefit from the focus on excellence in teaching would be the students in Alaska's schools.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON said she believes "we" highly respect education and teachers, and she asked the sponsor if he thinks HB 128 would "give them more respect."

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said he thinks a lot of people respect teachers, and HB 128 would recognize teachers that are nationally board certified.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked whether the proposed legislation would make it easier for national board certified teachers from the Lower 48 to integrate into Alaska's education system.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered that he does not think the proposed legislation would have any impact on "teachers not from Alaska moving to Alaska."

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON emphasized the phrase "national board certification," then asked, "So, is this something that is happening outside of Alaska and now it's time for Alaska to catch up?" In response to the bill sponsor, she expressed that she is unfamiliar with national board certification.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS explained that national board certification is a third-party entity based in Washington, D.C. Teachers in any state in the nation can go through the board's "highly rigorous, lengthy, [and] also financially intensive process to become board certified." He said a lot of data shows that board certified teachers are remarkable educators. The process of getting certified shows that "somebody's really serious about what they're doing" and has "a lot of pride in their profession [and] their craft." He added, "Not to say teachers that are not nationally board certified don't have those things, but ... for those that do, it's generally something that's notable or remarkable." He said national board certification is accepted from state to state but is not a "force of law"; it is a private credential, not "a publicly administered" one. He indicated that the proposed legislation would not affect national board certification.

[8:13:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked why HB 128 is needed.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said he has long been interested in finding ways to promote public education in Alaska. He stated, "The data is overwhelming: the number one way to improve outcomes in education in Alaska is to have really remarkable teachers in every classroom." The question, then, is how to make that happen. He talked about the challenge of creating a "halo" around the education profession and how, in Finland, it is highly competitive to get a teaching job, because that society views the vocation as important. He said he is thinking about ways to recognize people who are good at being teachers, and national board certification is one mechanism by which to do so. Representative Kreiss-Tomkins said things won't fall apart without HB 128, but it would help "with that recognition."

[8:15:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited John Scanlon to describe the board certification process. She noted that HB 128 was heard in the House Education Standing Committee, on which she and Representative Revak sit, and she expressed excitement about the promise of HB 128.

[8:15:24 AM](#)

JOHN SCANLON, Staff, Representative Jonathon Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Kreiss-Tomkins, prime sponsor of HB 128, described national board certification as "a rigorous and valuable and exciting post-licensure certification that one would voluntarily undertake the pursuit of." He said it is "an intensive, reflective examination of one's own work" that has been championed by NEA at the national and state levels. He said there are four components to the process, including an in-person exam. He said a person seeking certification may record themselves teaching in the classroom, with a mentor to help identify how the teacher's classroom practices and environment could be improved. Data suggests the outcome of this process is compelling. Not only are student outcomes better within a national board certified teacher's classroom, but recruitment and retention tend to be higher among board certified teachers. Further, those teachers tend to serve as leaders within their schools and communities.

He said this certification adds value to the school and is something "to uplift."

8:17:32 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked if HB 128 would motivate more teachers to pursue this national certification.

MR. SCANLON answered that he thinks that certainly could be one outcome.

8:18:05 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS concurred with the comment of Mr. Scanlon. He mentioned the visibility of board certification and explained that during his own education, he heard about it perhaps once or twice, and only because he was "a super geek and cared about education policy and ... bothered to ... look up the state database on national board certification." He said most school districts in Alaska have "a handful of national board certified teachers," and having that recognition highlighted in schools could have "a positive secondary effect of promoting more people to pursue it."

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON said she has been involved in teacher recognition events for the last four years, and she indicated that there is recognition and competition in the process. She said she was trying "to see how this stood apart ... from that," and she expressed appreciation for the explanations received [from the bill sponsor and staff].

8:20:02 AM

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON, regarding the 250-400 hours it takes to become board certified, asked how many teachers would miss work in order to get certified.

MR. SCANLON replied that that time is an estimate, and a teacher would pursue the certification on his/her own time. He noted that the certification can be completed in a year, but educators have five years in which to complete it. In response to follow-up questions from Representative Thompson, he confirmed there are four components to the certification process, it would cost a total of approximately \$1,900, and that cost would be paid by the teacher. He offered his understanding that some districts may have incentives, but admitted "that is a significant barrier."

[8:22:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS, in response to a question from Representative Thompson, said in most districts in Alaska teachers with the certification do not earn more, but in other districts, those teachers see "a pay bump." He mentioned that some other states have made the policy decision to cover board certification application costs, because they think it is important. Alternatively, those states may offer a pay incentive. He said he would gladly include such a benefit in the bill if Alaska were not working under a budget deficit currently.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON noted that according to both Forbes WalletHub and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Massachusetts ranks number one in education yet ranks forty-second among states for the number of teachers that are board certified. Further, Forbes WalletHub ranks New Jersey number two for excellence in education, while the state is ranked fiftieth in terms of certification of its teachers. Conversely, North Carolina is ranked on top in terms of board certified teachers but ranks thirty-second in Forbes WalletHub in terms of educational stance. Representative Thompson offered more statistics, including Alaska ranking twenty-sixth in board certified teachers and forty-eighth and fifty-first in quality of education on Forbes WalletHub and NAEP, respectively. He questioned what HB 128 would do for Alaska when there are other problems facing the state.

[8:25:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS responded that the issue of improving public education is complex, including consideration such as funding and the socio-economic status of students and the state. He stated the assumption under HB 128 is that national board certification is "a good thing." He said he hopes committee members would arrive at the same conclusion. With that assumption, the proposed legislation would promote a culture of constant growth and improvement. He indicated that a bill that is "seven lines long" would not turn Alaska into Massachusetts [in terms of rankings].

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked if having more certified teachers would help or hinder retention.

[8:27:47 AM](#)

MR. SCANLON said the research he has seen shows that teachers tend to stay longer in schools after voluntarily having taken on the process [to become certified]. He said there is a study in the committee packet that shows that there has been a better outcome in Mississippi's public schools with the increase of certified teachers.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON clarified that he was not asking these questions in opposition to bill, just to get information. He commented that Alaska ranks low in its education system, and he would like to see improvement but questions whether HB 128 would be "an improvement" or "be a burden to get 1,900 bucks out of teachers to get them certified."

[8:29:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND pointed out that the House Education Standing Committee last week and yesterday heard from Mark Foster, formerly of the Anchorage School Board, that Alaska actually has more growth within the fourth-grade and eighth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing than almost any other state. She said consideration is being given as to how to get the word out to entities such as Forbes, which "just look at raw test scores." She said there are many people working to improve the numbers and the results are showing.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON asked again whether this certification would help.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she thinks it might. She remarked that it is voluntary - "a self-driven pursuit that the school district" does not require, but to which attention is paid. She said the concern is that Washington State is paying teachers up to \$10,000 annually, on top of their regular salaries, to keep them in "high economic needs schools." She said Alaska is "losing teachers to this" and [HB 128] is "the first step in recognizing highly qualified teachers and helping ... to keep them here." She said she didn't think the fiscal note would be large, because currently Alaska does not have that many nationally board certified teachers. She said making improvements to teachers' salaries would encourage them to stay. She added, "But since we don't do that on a statewide basis, that's kind of tricky to figure out."

[8:31:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON recognized both co-chairs are from the education community, and she thanked Representative Thompson for sharing the statistics. She asked whether the bill would be laying foundation "that we're not yet seeing here" or whether a law would require nationally certified teachers get paid more. She said she takes [the creation of laws] seriously. She asked whether Co-Chair Drummond is confident that making a law "will increase that recognition" [of teachers].

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND answered, "Not necessarily, but I don't think we're at that stage in the discussion." She noted invited testimony waiting in the wings.

[8:33:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK said he would like to know from the testifiers why more teachers don't seek the national board certification currently.

[8:33:54 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Administrator, Teacher Certification, Student Learning Division, Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) told Representative Revak that the reason more teachers have not undergone the certification has to do with the time and cost involved. Additionally, she said in rural schools there is no incentive for teachers to get that certification; teachers are getting the certification in urban areas that are offering incentives.

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked whether the certification is viewed as prestigious or is seen as socially advantageous.

MS. MEREDITH answered that she considers there is an element of prestige. Those with the certification are seen as leaders in their schools and districts.

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK asked Ms. Meredith for her opinion on HB 128 and the impacts it might have.

MS. MEREDITH answered that any measures recognizing individuals who have gained additional skills beyond their standard certificate is "a good thing," and HB 128 provides a mechanism for that.

[8:36:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked for statistics showing those school districts that have offered teachers remuneration for attaining their national board certification.

[8:36:52 AM](#)

MR. SCANLON said he does not have that information, and he offered his understanding that DEED does not have that information either.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS suggested "one of the stakeholder organizations" may have that information, and he said he could check.

[8:37:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said having been a teacher and having looked at national board certification, she knows that many districts talk about giving economic incentive for certified teachers in order to maintain teacher retention. She indicated there has been some competition with the State of Washington, which, she said, pays incentive money to certified teachers. She said it was apparent that when [a teacher] pursued the two-year process and invested a couple thousand dollars that he/she was looking either to move to another state that gave an economic incentive or join the international teaching community. To the subject broached by Representative Thompson, she said Alaska has found that the certification does not actually retain teachers because there is no economic remuneration in place. She said when national board certification started, organizations, such as the National Education Association of Alaska (NEA-Alaska) got grants to hold intensive summer workshops and set up the video equipment and adjudicators, but NEA Alaska's grant was "a few hundred dollars to assist you in achieving that component." She indicated that a fee of \$2,000 goes "just to the organization" and does not account for the time and money invested "to produce the components to be judged." She also noted that the teachers trying for the certification had to submit evaluations of their own work.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN told Representative Kreiss-Tomkins that she wanted to know which districts were offering the incentives and what the correlation is between those teachers who have achieved the national board certification and the length of time they stay in the school district. She then asked the bill sponsor whether he had considered offering a resolution rather than a bill. She pointed to bill language that suggested a "goal of

the legislature" [in Section 1, subsection (c), page 1, line 6], and she asked if the sponsor had any indication from Legislative Legal and Research Services that that might be problematic in bill form and better suited as a resolution.

[8:40:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS agreed regarding the value of finding out which districts offer remuneration incentives. Anecdotally, he noted that the board certified teachers in Sitka he knows all had long careers in the district. He suggested a larger question is how the state wants to recognize and incent teachers. He said his focus when having HB 128 drafted was "to find some good, proactive idea that works within the constraints of ... a zero fiscal note." He talked about a perfect scenario wherein Alaska could prevent Washington from "poaching" teachers by offering incentives of its own. As a bigger problem, he said Alaska's lack of competitiveness is something he would like to see the state fix.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS, to the second point made by Co-Chair Hannan, said "the real meat" of HB 128 is found in lines 4-5, which read:

(b) A public school shall display in a prominent location the name of each teacher who teaches at that school who has achieved national board certification.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said that is the part that ultimately will have the most value. He said a resolution in terms of [subsection] (c) "could make sense," but [subsection] (b) was the genesis of the bill. He deferred to Mr. Scanlon to discuss any memorandum that may have come from Legislative Legal and Research Services.

[8:44:30 AM](#)

MR. SCANLON offered his understanding that Legislative Legal and Research Services felt comfortable with the bill upon the addition of Section 2 of the bill, which would repeal the goal language on July 1, 2026.

[8:44:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said generally the legislature gives directives to school districts, but HB 128 is giving a directive to

individual schools. She asked if Legislative Legal and Research Services had addressed that topic. She said, for example, that a new principal may not realize that three of the school's science teachers are going for their certification, and he/she may fail to prominently display the name of the teachers as would be required by law under HB 128. She suggested that the districts be the ones to keep those records and that school boards give the accolades.

[8:46:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS, returning first to Co-Chair Hannan's previous question about bill versus resolution, said he thinks it is a nonissue. He said he thinks the legislature has a goal in terms of renewable energy in law and it is nonbinding and aspirational. Other examples he gave were naming days of the year for certain people or events. To the question of districts versus schools, he talked about the idea of having "a day-to-day visibility in the school" as opposed to via an administrative entity.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked if the bill sponsor was envisioning any punitive measures.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS answered that there would be no punitive measures. He characterized this issue as "proactive and intrinsically motivated." He said under HB 128 the legislature would be codifying the goal that is supported by the educational entities previously listed.

[8:50:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON thanked Co-Chair Hannan for bringing the issue up. He said he never likes to see unfunded mandates in bills involving schools. He said he doesn't have a problem with putting up the names of the certified teachers for recognition, but emphasized the use of the word "shall" in the direction for schools to display those names. [Referring to line 9 of HB 128], he asked if the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is the entity that makes money off teachers paying to get certified and whether they are a nonprofit or for-profit organization.

[8:51:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said he has the same reaction regarding unfunded mandates on school districts, so he

appreciates the sentiment expressed by Representative Thompson. He emphasized working with educational entities to crafting legislation that will be affirmative and well-received. He said what is being asked of school under HB 128 is "a pretty easy thing to do," which "mitigated concern." To the second part of Representative Thompson's question, he said the national organization is a nonprofit entity.

[8:53:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on HB 128. After ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[8:53:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 128 was held over.

[8:54:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked a question concerning the sense of the house and when that might be brought before the committee.

[8:54:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she and Co-Chair Hannan would discuss the issue and let committee members know.

[8:54:59 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.