

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 3, 2019

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Josh Revak
Representative DeLena Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

University of Alaska Board of Regents

John Bania - Wrangell, Alaska
Darroll Hargraves - Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 24

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

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 24

SHORT TITLE: LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

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

02/20/19	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/19
02/20/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/20/19	(H)	EDC, L&C
03/29/19	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/29/19	(H)	Heard & Held

03/29/19 (H) MINUTE (EDC)
04/01/19 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/01/19 (H) Heard & Held
04/01/19 (H) MINUTE (EDC)
04/03/19 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JOHN BANIA, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Wrangell, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

DARROLL HARGRAVES
Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Revak, Tuck, Zulkosky, Story, Hopkins, Johnson, and Drummond were present at the call to order.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): University of Alaska Board of Regents

[8:03:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be the confirmation hearings on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[8:03:45 AM](#)

JOHN BANIA, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, introduced himself and relayed his experience in the field of education in reference to his resume and his personal journey to Alaska. He stated that he has been a "gypsy" in the state, having lived in various areas throughout the state of Alaska. Mr. Bania said he is interested in serving on the board because he "knows the importance of a great education." He commended

the research facilities of the University of Alaska. He said he hopes to bring a perspective to the board that many without an education do not have. He related that he has master's in vocational technical education. He stated that his experience throughout the state in various fields has provided him with a viewpoint that most people do not have.

[8:07:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Bania what he sees, after his experience as superintendent, as important links between the K-12 system and the University of Alaska (UA) system.

[8:08:04 AM](#)

MR. BANIA opined that there should be more contact between the K-12 system and the university in the area of teacher education. He opined that one area that needs to be enhanced is in awareness of what life is like in rural Alaska; people come to the Bush [to work in the school system] without much knowledge of what to expect.

[8:09:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked where Mr. Bania sees UA in the next 20 years, particularly with regard to the role of the university in training and retaining Alaska teachers.

MR. BANIA emphasized the importance of sustainable socio and economic development. He said teacher recruitment outside of the hub cities of Alaska has become more difficult. People used to come to work in rural Alaska for adventure; now they seem more interested in amenities. He suggested using the military's strategy for recruitment - describing the position as more of an adventure than a job. He said he thinks programs need to be brought in high schools in order to recruit people into the field of education. He said the advent of cell phones and social media has made teaching more difficult, because "any little thing that occurs in the school is immediately made public and made out to be, perhaps at times, overly serious than it really is." He said a recruitment program has to show what it is really like to be a teacher. He stated that he thought high school level programs could assist in the encouragement of students to pursue the field of education.

[8:13:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how Mr. Bania imagines his position on the board would assist with the accreditation process of the University of Alaska - Anchorage's (UAA's) education program.

MR. BANIA mentioned likely budget cuts and stated that at the moment, the most prudent decision may be to have accreditation come from the Fairbanks or Juneau branches.

[8:15:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND stated that on and off over the years there has been a teacher mentorship program designed to assist new teachers in acclimating to the culture in remote communities. She asked for Mr. Bania's impression of the future of the program.

MR. BANIA responded that a couple summers ago, the Alaska Humanities Forum was involved in a program with the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, in which there was a culture camp on the Kobuk River. He characterized it as similar to a cultural immersion program for new teachers. He mentioned a mentorship program at the University of Alaska - Fairbanks (UAF), which was helpful to students originally from other states in becoming teachers and principals. He said, "I think it's a great program; I think it needs improvement and should be continued." In response to a follow-up question, he said he kept in touch with many of the students from the culture camp. He said most returned for a second year teaching, some returned for a third year, and a few are still working in rural Alaska.

[8:18:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked whether, during his short time on the board, Mr. Bania has thought about ways UA can prepare teachers for Alaska.

MR. BANIA answered that he had spoken with the chancellor of UAA and offered to meet with those who train future teachers to give them his perspective of what it is like [to teach in rural Alaska]. He said currently people are "inundated with budget talk."

[8:20:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Bania what he thinks the focus should be for UA into the future.

MR. BANIA answered that he wants to support and improve UA's research programs. He said if there are budget cuts, then difficult decisions will have to be made as to which programs may or may not continue. He talked about recruiting students, not just from Alaska, but from the Lower 48 and other countries.

[8:21:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked Mr. Bania how he has interacted with higher education in the last five years.

MR. BANIA responded that he has had indirect interaction by keeping abreast of what is going on in the university and rural school districts across the state. He said he gets phone calls from people with questions and requests for his advice.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked Mr. Bania how he thinks the board may play into Title IX issues, especially at UAF.

MR. BANIA stated that issues should be dealt with "professionally, lawfully, ... prudently, and in a timely manner."

[8:24:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that Mr. Bania raised a child in Alaska, who is going to be a physician in his current hometown. She asked whether Mr. Bania had any experience with the WWAMI Regional Medical Education Program [pronounced "Whammy" and comprising the first letters of the states involved: Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho]. She inquired whether Mr. Bania knew of Governor Mike Dunleavy's plan to cut the program.

[8:24:46 AM](#)

MR. BANIA related that his son was interested in the program but ultimately chose a different program. He said he is aware the governor has advocated the elimination of the program. He opined that the WWAMI program is one of the university's strengths, and he said he would be surprised if it ultimately was eliminated.

[8:26:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS referenced Mr. Bania's experience as a superintendent of the Tanana City School District and asked what experience he had with addressing large-scale budget cuts.

MR. BANIA talked about his involvement getting the Tanana City School District's budget from red to black. He said as superintendent in Kotzebue, he dealt with a budget of approximately \$40 million. He said he feels he has experience, but not at the larger scale being addressed by the governor.

[8:29:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY observed that Mr. Bania had spoken quite a lot about his experience in rural Alaska. She said the governor's proposed budget cuts could have a significant impact on UA's community campuses throughout the state. She asked Mr. Bania to speak to his "support and position" regarding those campuses.

[8:29:51 AM](#)

MR. BANIA emphasized that the current proposed budget is not final. He stated that the rural campuses are an important part of the communities in which they are located; however, "whether or not they'll all be able to remain in operation is a question."

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked what Mr. Bania would do to ensure equitable access to UA programs if the proposed cuts are enacted.

MR. BANIA answered that local communities will have to pitch in, and he suggested that online courses would allow students in those communities to maintain their education.

[8:33:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND stated that there are issues Mr. Bania will become aware of as a member of the Alaska Board of Regents, such as equitable broadband access that would be necessary in order to make the cooperative effort Mr. Bania talked about feasible. She thanked Mr. Bania for his service to Alaska.

[8:34:48 AM](#)

DARROLL HARGRAVES, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, relayed his personal background and time spent

throughout Alaska. He stated he worked as an administrator at UAF and superintendent at schools, including in Ketchikan, Nome, and Tok, during which time he did some private consulting as superintendent. He continued to relay his professional qualifications, including a position as a member of the Alaska Local Boundary Commission.

[8:40:18 AM](#)

MR. HARGRAVES stated that some topics being discussed now were being discussed back in the '70s. For example, he spoke about credit hours and how they are not the same across schools, which creates problems when students want to transfer. He mentioned the budget issue and the issue about accreditation for the Department of Education [at UAA]. He opined that the Teacher Preparation Program is important. He suggested an extension site from UAF for teacher certification.

[8:45:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked Mr. Hargraves to speak about his experience with higher education in the last five years, specifically with the UA system.

MR. HARGRAVES answered that although he has had an extensive history since 1970, he has not had much involvement in the last five years. He mentioned that he tried an online course through the university. In response to a follow-up question, he estimated that took place five years ago. He noted that when he had been involved with the university, there had been a correspondence study in which about 900 students participated. He said he thinks he learned more through his online course than he would have in a classroom setting. In response to Representative Hopkins' question about the role of the board in addressing Title IX issues, he said the UA administration is committed to addressing Title IX issues.

[8:50:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Hargraves what he sees as "the important link between the K-12 system and the university."

MR. HARGRAVES responded that the Community College Act of 1962 made it possible for the school districts and the UA system to cooperate, and he said he thinks "that should be solidified." He expressed support for high school students taking university level classes.

[8:52:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that graduation rates are increasing, and students should be prepared upon graduation. She suggested it could be productive to have collaboration between high school teachers and UA educators to ensure that high school students are prepared and equipped for a college education. She asked Mr. Hargraves to comment.

[8:53:35 AM](#)

MR. HARGRAVES responded that he thinks more of that should be done.

[8:54:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how Mr. Hargraves imagined addressing the issue of deferred maintenance.

[8:54:54 AM](#)

MR. HARGRAVES answered that he hopes the board would get reports indicating "what progress is being established in that area." He said he thinks the budgeting process needs to determine what the priorities are. He said, "You can't defer the maintenance on the kind of facilities that we have on campuses without eventually having to pay the price." He said there should be a dedicated fund rather than the inefficient process of having to ask the legislature for funds.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS, in reference to a previous comment by Mr. Hargraves, noted that President Johnson, in a state of the university address last week, had remarked that the credit transfer process between the university campuses is seamless.

MR. HARGRAVES said he did not want to contradict the president of the university, but he shared his belief that there are different requirements for the same course in Fairbanks, for example, than in Anchorage. He said he thinks there is still work to be done on the issue.

[8:58:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND thanked Mr. Hargraves for his willingness to serve the state.

[8:58:21 AM](#)

MR. HARGRAVES stated that UA is a land grant university, and over the years, that land grant has been "tossed around." He expressed hope that the state would take the lead in making the land grant "come to fruition." He opined that the amount of lands needs to increase, the bulk advance needs to be paid, and he would like to see student tuition cut in half. He stated, "If the university would take care of those lands and put it into the University of Alaska Foundation permanent endowment, we could see enough money generated to help with the tuition that students have to pay." He named the land grant as one of his top priorities.

[8:59:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND affirmed his concern. Then she mentioned land-generated revenues through mineral resources or other land use and pointed out that the land can only be sold once.

[9:00:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY stated that the House Education Standing Committee had reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees to the University of Alaska Board of Regents and recommends that the names of John Bania and Darroll Hargraves be forwarded for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. She said this does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation. [The confirmations were considered advanced.]

[9:00:52 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:01 a.m. to 9:02 a.m.

HB 24-LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

[9:02:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 24, "An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and relating to limited teacher certificates."

[9:02:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND opened public testimony on HB 24. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[9:03:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed her appreciation for an article included in the packet that related the strong record that immersion programs have shown.

[HB 24 was held over.]

[9:04:36 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.