

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 19, 2020

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Representative Chris Tuck  
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative DeLena Johnson  
[One vacant seat as of 1/25/2020]

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 155

"An Act relating to eligibility for the Alaska performance scholarship program."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 181

"An Act relating to mental health education."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 155

SHORT TITLE: AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

05/09/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/09/19	(H)	EDC, FIN
05/10/19	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
05/10/19	(H)	Heard & Held
05/10/19	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
02/19/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 181

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CLAMAN

01/21/20	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/20
01/21/20	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/21/20	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/17/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/17/20	(H)	Heard & Held
02/17/20	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
02/19/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MARY HAKALA, Staff  
 Representative Andi Story  
 Alaska State Legislature  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 155 on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor.

DEBORAH RIDDLE, Division Operations Manager  
 Innovation and Education Excellence  
 Department of Education & Early Development  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information during the hearing on HB 155.

MISSY FRAZE, Acting Director  
 Career and Technical Education  
 Anchorage School District  
 Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director  
 Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director  
 Association of Alaska School Boards  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

SHAWN ARNOLD, President  
 Alaska Superintendents Association; Superintendent  
 Valdez City School District  
 Valdez, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

DOUG WALRATH, Director  
Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center  
Nome, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

CATHY LECOMPTE, Director  
Division of AVTEC - Alaska's Institute of Technology  
Department of Labor & Workforce Development  
Seward, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 155.

SOPHIE JONAS, Staff  
Representative Matt Claman  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 181 on behalf of  
Representative Claman, prime sponsor.

TAMARA VAN WHYE, Division Director  
Innovation and Education Excellence  
Department of Education & Early Development  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB  
181.

RICHARD NAVITSKY, MD, Director  
Pediatric Emergency Medicine  
Providence Health & Services  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 181.

CRIS EICHENLAUB  
Eagle River, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on HB 181.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:03:05 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Hopkins, Tuck, Story, and Drummond were present at the call to order. Representative Zulkosky arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HB 155-AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY**

[8:03:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 155 "An Act relating to eligibility for the Alaska performance scholarship program."

[8:04:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 155, explaining that the proposed legislation would provide for high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) credits to count towards eligibility for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). She noted that CTE helps prepare students for a variety of postsecondary paths, including college, apprenticeships, other postsecondary training, or entering the workforce. She noted that there has been a decline in APS applications in recent years and that HB 155 would potentially increase the number of APS applicants. She cited that students who participate in high school CTE programs have improved graduation rates. She explained that CTE "concentrators" - students who take two or more credits in a single CTE program of study or career cluster - are 19 percent more likely to graduate than their counterparts. She explained that the bill would provide two options for students to incorporate CTE into their APS applications: first, under the math and science option, students would be allowed to replace one credit of social studies with one credit of CTE; and second, under the social studies & language arts option, a student would be allowed to replace two years of world language with two years of CTE, one year of which includes courses of increasing rigor within a career cluster. She defined "one credit" as one year or two semesters of course work.

[8:07:40 AM](#)

MARY HAKALA, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 155 on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor. She highlighted contents of the committee packet and explained their relevance to HB 155. She noted that the fiscal notes would be amended and provided to the committee subsequently.

MS. HAKALA referred to the packet item "HB 155 modified APS-Award-Checklist" as what students use to track their coursework. She explained that the items highlighted in green demonstrate the proposed CTE credit replacement for eligibility for the APS.

[8:09:25 AM](#)

MS. HAKALA described the committee packet item entitled "CTE Concentrator vs Non CTE Graduation Rate over Time," which underscores claims that CTE is a predictor of higher graduation rates. She referred next to the committee packet item which expounds on career clusters when considering fields of study within CTE programs. She noted letters of support and testimony submitted in support of HB 155. She noted that additional committee packet items include more statistical data and CTE program reporting that demonstrated the value of CTE programs.

[8:11:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether the substitution value of CTE for social studies would be the same as for math and science.

[8:11:54 AM](#)

MS. HAKALA answered that there are two distinct options for credit substitution with CTE, and social studies may not be replaced. She noted that foreign language requirements could be replaced with CTE credits to encourage an increasing rigor for concentration in a career cluster. She noted that a school district has the purview of determining what counts as a semester and therefore as a credit.

[8:13:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that the language in the bill is included under social studies and language arts requirements and under the math and science requirements separately and intentionally.

[8:14:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS inquired whether graduation requirements that may include foreign language requirements would still require those credits for the student to graduate.

[8:15:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY indicated that graduation requirements vary from one district to the next; however, the intention of the proposed bill is to not interfere with existing graduation requirements.

[8:15:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted apprenticeship programs in his district work closely with the schools' CTE programs. He asked whether this program would work with the local trade association programs.

[8:16:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY agreed to follow up with a validated answer for Representative Hopkins.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) would be required to cover any costs of the program.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND indicated that a representative from ACPE was available to testify and would answer the question when called to testify.

[8:16:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether a student could change field of study, or career cluster, and still meet the two-year requirements under the social studies and language arts substitution option.

[8:17:30 AM](#)

MS. HAKALA suggested that a student who changes field of study is referred to as a "dabbler" and does not experience the same achievements as "concentrators" in a field.

[8:18:25 AM](#)

DEBORAH RIDDLE, Division Operations Manager, Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education & Early Development, explained that a "concentrator" enjoys additional benefits such as certifications or additional experience in their field which will carry forward into postsecondary development, whereas a "dabbler" does not enjoy the same benefits.

[8:19:46 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:19 a.m. to 8:20 a.m.

[8:20:29 AM](#)

MISSY FRAZE, Acting Director, Career and Technical Education, Anchorage School District, testified in support of HB 155. She explained that CTE - once known as vocational education - has evolved beyond traditional vocations and includes higher quality and more specialized and technically sophisticated coursework and can train Alaska's growing workforce in fields that support several of Alaska's industries. She noted that a key differentiation between traditional vocational education and CTE is that CTE fields require some postsecondary education or training component. She extolled the CTE program's alignment of students' skills and characteristics with the demands of the workforce, which allows students to make informed experiential decisions to pursue a career path. She cited that CTE program concentrator graduation rate is 95 percent, and thus graduates avoid accumulation of student debt in fields that are subsequently dropped. She noted that 41 percent of Alaska CTE participants are economically disadvantaged. Ms. Frazee shared an anecdote of a student who boasts a 3.8 grade point average and is held in high esteem by her teachers and administrators. She explained that this student has strong, marketable skills in business development and aspires to attend college; however, she does not qualify for APS because CTE is not a qualifying credit.

[8:27:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the Anchorage School District (ASD) offers career clusters of increasing concentration.

[8:28:07 AM](#)

MS. FRAZE answered that ASD offers CTE in all 16 career clusters and all clusters offer concentrators. She named King Tech High School as an equal-access institution that supports CTE concentrators. She related that the CTE program produces approximately 456 concentrators annually.

[8:29:19 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether the approximate 400 student concentrators are only within King Tech High School.

MS. FRAZE noted that the 400 are from schools throughout the district, not only from King Tech High School.

[8:29:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that in her experience in and around education, children typically know their desired field as early as the second grade. She asked whether any Anchorage trade and industry members visit schools to connect youth to career opportunities.

8:30:27 AM

MS. FRAZE noted that the Associated General Contractors of Alaska and other partners work with Anchorage CTE for career exploration with students as young as in the sixth grade. She noted that ASD has a summer program that engages students in intensive career cluster exploration in six career clusters. Ms. Frazee emphasized that CTE programs allow students to make career path choices based on experiences in the field as compared to the idea of the field.

8:32:30 AM

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, testified in support of HB 155. She paraphrased the letter of support from the ACPE, [included in the committee packet] which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide communication regarding HB 155, which would expand the eligibility requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) to include a high school career and technical education (CTE) pathway. The Commission is very aware of the need to expand CTE opportunities in Alaska and supports CTE as integral to the future success of our Alaska students and our state.

The Commission's next meeting is in April, and the agenda includes consideration of a formal resolution in support of HB 155.

If passed, HB 155 will allow more Alaska students with the opportunity to be eligible for the APS, and will specifically expand options for high school CTE students. Creating this high school pathway aligns with the existing APS CTE award. A CTE pathway is becoming increasingly urgent, based on data that 65% of Alaska's best jobs in 2025 will require a

postsecondary credential, including a high need for an Alaska workforce with CTE credentials.

MS. BUTLER added that the proposed bill would send a message to students in Alaska that CTE is valued. She thanked the committee for its commitment to ensuring Alaska students have an opportunity to pursue their education goals.

[8:34:27 AM](#)

MS. BUTLER, referring to Representative Hopkins' earlier query, stated that there is no increase in cost for ACPE to administer the changes proposed by HB 155.

[8:35:06 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, testified in support of HB 155 and in support of CTE in particular. He shared anecdotes from his time as Kodiak Island Borough School Board president. He recalled that CTE had lost value in academia and was relegated to students who were not academically inclined. He suggested that this approach to education was a mistake in Alaska and nationwide, as all students are not bound for traditional, four-year colleges. He recalled that, during the construction of the Alaska Pipeline, Alaska suffered a lack of skilled workforce and many workers commuted from the Lower 48. He stated that Alaska will always have a need for workers skilled in mechanics, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, heavy equipment operation, among many others. He shared his personal experience in working in skilled trade following his military service and noted that the jobs in skilled trade are well-paying jobs. He suggested that HB 155 would acknowledge the value of CTE fields of study and would be good for Alaska's students and economy, and he spoke in support of the bill.

[8:39:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND shared her personal experience of having received training at the Bronx School of Science, an academically rigorous school, in "scientific techniques lab," which was effectively a woodshop class. She stated that the practical skills that she learned in that class continue to be of value to her.

[8:40:57 AM](#)

SHAWN ARNOLD, President, Alaska Superintendents Association; Superintendent, Valdez City School District, testified in support of HB 155. He applauded the bill's intent of expanding eligibility requirements to extend to students who choose CTE fields of study. He referred to previous testimony extolling the benefits of CTE and underscored the increased graduation rates among CTE students. He suggested that CTE availability may encourage students who might otherwise leave high school to stay in school. He added that the programs offered in his district prepare students by offering hands-on experience in fields that they may pursue in postsecondary education and certifications. He noted that 10 students who completed the rigorous millwright program in their district had continued on to certification and have since been hired locally, at high salaries. He stated that the Alaska Superintendents Association portends that CTE is beneficial to a variety of labor market needs and contributes to Alaska's economic growth and stability.

[8:45:38 AM](#)

DOUG WALRATH, Director, Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center, testified in support of HB 155 and echoed previous testimony extolling the benefits of CTE. He suggested that CTE supports a different learning modality with hands-on training, which provides beneficial learning experience to some students who might not otherwise benefit from more traditional book learning.

[8:48:13 AM](#)

CATHY LECOMPTE, Director, Division of AVTEC - Alaska's Institute of Technology, Department of Labor & Workforce Development, testified in support of HB 155. She described her experience in workforce development and training and has observed the benefits of CTE directly with students of the programs. She claimed that 90 percent of students at AVTEC graduate, and 90 percent of those graduates are placed in jobs. She added that CTE programs are a supplement to academic pathways for students after high school.

[8:51:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND suggested that the committee arrange a tour of the Division of AVTEC - Alaska's Institute of Technology facility.

[8:52:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on HB 155. After ascertaining that no one wished to testify, she announced that she would leave public testimony open for the next hearing on HB 155.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 155 was held over.

**HB 181-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION**

[8:52:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 181 "An Act relating to mental health education."

[8:52:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 181. He cited the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) 2017 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, which showed that of the 1,343 ninth-through twelfth-grade students in forty high schools across Alaska, one in three students experienced a depressive episode in the twelve months preceding the survey. He cited the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in which estimates show that in 2015 and 2016, 15 percent of adolescents aged 12-17 reported that they had at least one major depressive episode in the 12 months preceding the survey. He noted that both surveys are included in the committee packet.

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN said that HB 181 would require the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development to develop guidelines for instruction in mental health education, in consultation with DHSS counselors, educators, students, administrators, and representatives from state and national mental health organizations including rural native health organizations. State and national organizations include but are not limited to: the National Council for Behavioral Health, Providence Health & Services Alaska, Southcentral Foundation, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Inc., North Star Behavioral Health System, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Alaska. He said DEED would then be responsible for the implementation of the guidelines statewide through the

health education curricula, and DEED, DHSS, and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault - Alaska would provide technical guidance to districts in the development of curricula. He asserted that the State of Alaska is obligated to treat mental health problems facing Alaska's youth as a serious public health issue. He suggested that HB 181 would reduce stigma associated with mental illness and increase student knowledge by having conversations on and around this issue.

[8:55:38 AM](#)

SOPHIE JONAS, Staff, Representative Matt Claman, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 181 on behalf of Representative Claman, prime sponsor. She stated that the intent of the legislation is that the Board of Education & Early Development would develop guidelines for instruction in mental health in consultation with mental health organizations. She stated that under the proposed legislation, AS 14.30.360 would be modified to remove the word "physical" when referring to health education instruction and add "mental health" as a curriculum item to be included in district health education programs. She said that under the proposed legislation, AS 14.30.360 would clarify that health guidelines developed by the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development must provide standards for instruction on mental health and shall be developed in consultation with DHSS and representatives of national and state mental health organizations.

[8:56:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY referred to student testimony in support of HB 181 provided on February 24, 2020, and recounted their expressed shared need for mental health education. She asked how the "subject matter expert contractor" listed in the fiscal note and the individuals representing the variety of professional organizations listed in the bill would be selected.

[8:58:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN answered that the fiscal note for a contractor was unexpected, and he suggested that it was unnecessary due to the assumption that the state has adequate resources to conduct the facilitation described therein. He referred to committee packet items showing current standards, and he said the proposed changes are not substantive enough [at the state level] to warrant a contracted facilitator for implementation. He suggested that local districts would develop

curricula based upon their local circumstances and needs. He acknowledged that statewide conferencing might require some coordination; however, he opined that limited conferencing could be coordinated with existing resources.

[9:02:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY requested that a representative from DEED provide a response to her question.

[9:02:28 AM](#)

TAMARA VAN WHYE, Division Director, Educator and School Excellence Division, Department of Education & Early Development, answered that the fiscal note includes funds that would be used to update standards in health education. She noted that the department's "Skills for a Healthy Life" have not been updated in more than 20 years. She noted that health education standards are voluntary, and that a minor change would likely not result in widespread adoption of the changes; therefore, the minor change would likely not have widespread impact across the state. She noted that there is a process for standards review and update panel member selection including open calls to credentialed individuals to participate.

[9:04:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked what the selection process itself and contractor selection process would entail.

[9:05:24 AM](#)

MS. VAN WHYE answered that regional and grade level representation credentials are taken into consideration in selecting individuals from outside organizations in order to represent all of Alaska. She added that a facilitator would be selected after development of scope and subject matter expertise and would be solicited through state procurement processes.

[9:06:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY allowed that the standards are "clearly outdated"; however, also taking into consideration advances in technology, she opined that the wholesale review of standards in order to meet the needs of this bill is a "peculiar" fiscal requirement.

[9:07:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked about the goal of school health and safety within Alaska's Education Challenge, whether mental health education [as proposed by HB 181] furthers the advancement toward that goal. She asked whether the department has a schedule for updating standards, and why the standards have not been updated in excess of 20 years.

[9:08:49 AM](#)

MS. VAN WHYE answered that regarding the health and safety goal, mental health education and trauma informed schools would advance that goal. She indicated that there is a schedule for updating standards prioritized by need, and that those for math, language arts, and science are standards which contribute to test scores and are therefore higher priority. She would need to investigate health and safety standards timeline for update. She added that since health education standards are voluntary, they are updated at a lower priority.

[9:11:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND requested copies of Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Schools in Alaska for the committee members.

[9:12:55 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:12 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

[9:15:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN played a YouTube film produced by Mental Health Advocates Through Storytelling (MHATS) in support of HB 181.

[9:19:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether HB 181 would make mental health education mandatory. She added that it seems that students in Alaska are asking to make this mandatory.

[9:19:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN answered that under current statute, districts are not required to follow health education

guidelines. He suggested that the committee may amend the bill to include language to make mental health education mandatory.

[9:20:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY expressed support for HB 181, along with concerns regarding effective implementation through the existing health education guidelines, recognizing reduced school funding statewide. She noted that HB 181 would require implementation of mental health education through school counselors and existing health educators, and that, for example, the Juneau School District has only 1 counselor for 450 students and 1 for 500 students, for the two high schools, respectively. She suggested that implementation of the bill would be akin to an unfunded mandate. She stated her belief that the proposed legislation is very important, and the implementation is equally important. She suggested that education of students cannot effectively take place without addressing underlying mental health issues among students.

[9:22:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN noted that there has been discussion about adding counselors and adding social workers into districts; however, HB 181 would be implemented by health teachers into the classroom. He added that budget cuts have precipitated a decline in resources throughout the state resulting in fewer counselors and social workers.

[9:24:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY suggested that without mental health education, students can and would seek information on their own, which puts them at risk for misinformation.

[9:25:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opined that HB 181 could be implemented throughout many academic curricula. She asked Representative Claman whether he was aware of any curricula developed and implemented for mental health in any district in Alaska.

[9:25:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CLAMAN answered that there is caution in conversations about the implementation of the proposed bill as to avoid an unfunded mandate. He suggested that curricula is

best left to the discretion of local jurisdictions to develop and implement the most effective curricula for their community.

[9:26:58 AM](#)

RICHARD NAVITSKY, MD, Director, Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Providence Health & Services, testified in support of HB 181. He echoed the messages conveyed in the MHATS video audio, and he explained that the emergency department is the "final destination" for youth that have had mental health issues. He referred to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data that reflects a 31 percent increase in the total suicide rate from 2001-2017 across all age groups, and in teenagers in particular. He suggested that peer to peer support and early intervention is beneficial to youth mental health and could reduce morbidity and mortality associated with suicide, and in turn would result in lower health costs.

[9:29:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND thanked Dr. Navitsky for his expert testimony and invited him to contact the legislature to offer invited testimony.

[9:29:57 AM](#)

CRIS EICHENLAUB testified that he was unsure that a bill is the most appropriate mechanism through which to address mental illness among youth in Alaska.

[9:32:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND closed public testimony HB 181.

[9:32:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 181 was held over.

[9:32:37 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.