

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 25, 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 (via teleconference)
Representative Mike Prax

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative DeLena Johnson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Education & Early Development

Keith Hamilton - Soldotna
Lorri van Diest - Palmer

- CONFIRMATION(S) HEARD & HELD

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Lem Wheelles - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) HEARD & HELD

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Cachet Garrett - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 153

"An Act relating to early education programs provided by school districts; relating to funding for early education programs; and relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 153

SHORT TITLE: PRE-ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS/FUNDING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) DRUMMOND

05/07/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/07/19	(H)	EDC, FIN
03/09/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/09/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/09/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/11/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/11/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/11/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/14/20	(H)	EDC AT 1:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/14/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/14/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/25/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

KEITH HAMILTON, Ph.D., Appointee
Board of Education & Early Development
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Education & Early Development.

LORRI VAN DIEST, Appointee
Board of Education & Early Development
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Education & Early Development.

LEM WHEELS, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

CACHET GARRETT, Student Regent Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:37 AM](#)

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

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

[8:04:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be the confirmation hearing for appointees to the Board of Education & Early Development.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited Dr. Keith Hamilton to testify. She noted he is a re-appointee to the Board of Education & Early Development.

Board of Education & Early Development

[8:05:08 AM](#)

KEITH HAMILTON, Ph.D., Appointee, Board of Education & Early Development, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), stated he currently serves as the first vice chair of the board. He said he has lived in Alaska for 19 years and is beginning his twentieth year serving as the founding president of Alaska Christian College, a Native-serving, accredited institution that mainly serves students from rural Alaska; serving 104 students this year. The college hits head-on many of the barriers that are talked about at the kindergarten to grade 12 ("K-12") level. Alaska's Education Challenge has brought the college close to reaching a lot of the issues statewide. Because of lower test scores, developmental classes are required when students come in and the college has an amazing team that helps get that done.

DR. HAMILTON noted he was recently re-appointed to the Alaska Commission for Post-Secondary Education (ACPE) on which he has served as a commissioner for five years. He also serves on the

Alaska State Personnel Board. His wife Debbie is chair of the Alaska Board of Professional Counselors and is executive director of the New Hope Counseling Center on the Alaska Christian College campus. Governor Parnell asked him to serve as someone who could connect the K-12 folks and the various education folks. Governor Walker put him into the position to be the liaison for the board between the K-12 and the colleges. He was part of a task force involved in joint meetings with the University of Alaska regents several times a year until it was halted two years ago.

DR. HAMILTON stated he wants to serve on the [Board of Education & Early Development] because he wants a healthier and more educated state, and he jumped right in with Alaska's Education Challenge. With his experience in higher education, he was able to look at that with folks across the state and the results are being worked on today. As an ACPE board member he went through the [federal 2015] Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) approval to make sure the state was meeting the criteria for that. As a volunteer firefighter emergency medical technician (EMT) for 41 years, he added, it is good to see results coming out of the Cultivate Safety and Well-Being section of the Alaska Education Challenge. He hopes to see higher scores each year as the board works as a team at DEED. Graduation rates are inching upward, which he wants to see continue. Because of the Alaska Education Challenge the K-12 schools are better able to serve students.

[8:09:42 AM](#)

DR. HAMILTON noted that the current members of the Board of Education & Early Development ("state board") have been together for about one and a half years, providing consistency and momentum from not having to replace people every year. He said face-to-face meetings are down to one or two a year. The board hasn't seen the Mt. Edgecumbe High School for two to three years. When it comes together face-to-face once or twice a year the board only has time for maintenance, and it is difficult to be unable to dream and scheme together. There are many challenges [given] the fiscal notes. He is a local control guy, and he wants to give power back to the districts so they can do the best jobs possible to ensure their students can succeed every day, which is the department's mission.

[8:11:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY requested Dr. Hamilton provide more background about the halting of meetings between the state board and the

university. She inquired whether they are important and, if so, how Dr. Hamilton is going to start them again.

DR. HAMILTON replied he thinks it is a critical subcommittee that the board has always attempted to have. The person leading that went off the board and the momentum slowed rapidly at that point. He was changed over to another committee and doesn't know where it has been since then. "We're not talking to each other," he continued. The university regents and state board used to meet face-to-face once a year for half a day, but that hasn't happened in about four years, so there is a disconnect.

[8:12:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY noted Mt. Edgecumbe is made up of students from all over the state. She asked whether thought has been given to having Mt. Edgecumbe taken over by a separate board.

DR. HAMILTON responded that the state board has a liaison to an advisory board that meets more regularly about Mt. Edgecumbe. The advisory board is comprised of local Sitka folks and statewide folks, mainly alumni, but has no power to make decisions that the state board is sometimes asked to make. He said he feels irresponsible when things are brought before him to be voted on because he hasn't been on site or spoken with folks on the advisory board that the state board has never met. Two different organizations are speaking into Mt. Edgecumbe as a process and neither one is able to effectively do the job that is required of them.

[8:14:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY inquired how Dr. Hamilton ensures that he is in touch with the issues between K-12 given much of his work is at the private college level. For example, visits with schools in Soldotna and visits with district leaders and being in the classroom to get hands-on-the-ground information.

DR. HAMILTON answered that he recently met with the Kenai Central High School Site Council, which he attempts to do on a regular basis. His children are alumni of that school. He has met with the principals of the high schools on the central Kenai Peninsula, Homer, and Seward; they welcome him to reach out at any time. He attends functions at the school when possible and meets with the district school board about every half-year.

[8:15:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited Ms. Lorri Van Diest to testify. She noted Ms. Van Diest is a re-appointee to the Board of Education & Early Development.

8:15:53 AM

LORRI VAN DIEST, Appointee, Board of Education & Early Development, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), stated she was re-appointed by Governor Dunleavy and currently serves as the second vice-chair to the third judicial seat for the board. She was previously appointed by Governor Walker to serve the remaining two years of Mr. Harmon's term. As a life-long Alaskan growing up in Seward she chose to follow her dad's footsteps and join the teaching profession. She earned a B.S. in Mathematics with a teaching credential from Seattle Pacific University and began her first teaching job at Seward High School from which she graduated.

MS. VAN DIEST related that after marrying she moved to the Matanuska-Susitna ("Mat-Su") Valley and was part of the original staff that opened Colony High School. During her 11 years at Colony she taught high school math, became a secondary guidance counselor, and coached girls' basketball. Later she transferred to Teeland Middle School and was the lead counselor who helped open this new school. She spent her last six years in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District office working as the curriculum coordinator and was part of the curriculum team that established a district curriculum review cycle and developed guidelines for the curriculum review steps. Her job was to facilitate the teacher leaders in updating and writing content area standards and selecting the classroom materials to assist in teaching those standards. In 2010, she retired from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District to become a full-time teacher to her three children.

MS. VAN DIEST said that four years ago she became a substitute guidance counselor filling in for absent secondary counselors. Currently she is an elementary counselor at a high needs Title 1 school in the Mat-Su. Having boots on the ground in a local school gives her direct insight into the daily workings of the school. This perspective is what she brings to the state board. She has spent most of her career in public education as a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, coach, and curriculum coordinator. Her lens and focus have been, and continues to be, the health, safety, and wellbeing of Alaska's students. Students must feel safe in their school environment and have a

connection to their school. Establishing relationships and building connections between students and staff is a critical component to the safety and wellbeing of students. Without students feeling safe and connected, the learning of reading, writing, and mathematics doesn't happen well.

MS. VAN DIEST noted that after being seated on the Board of Education & Early Development she learned about the development work of Alaska's Education Challenge. She was pleasantly surprised to find that one of the five trajectories of this challenge states, "Improve the safety and wellbeing of students through a school partnership with families, communities, and tribes." Along with the safety component, she continued, the other four areas are: support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade; increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs; close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources; prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals. The state board adopted Alaska's Education Challenge and this framework has guided its work. The board has directed the commissioner to focus the efforts of DEED on the components of this challenge. The board believes that all of Alaska's 128,800 students deserve an excellent education every day.

[8:20:14 AM](#)

MS. VAN DIEST addressed current legislation that corresponds to the goals of Alaska's Education Challenge. She said HB 153, the Alaska Reads Act, sponsored by Representatives Drummond, Story, and Hopkins, and its companion bill, SB 6, give Alaskans hope that their children can achieve the goal of reading by the end of third grade. With the school readiness piece, pre-K skills, and evidence-based reading knowledge and practices utilized in Alaska's schools, students' reading proficiency will increase. She said HB 155, Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility, sponsored by Representative Story, clearly shows the importance of career and technical education courses, as they can count toward the eligibility requirements of the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). She specified that HB 181 contributes to improving the safety and wellbeing of Alaska's students by developing mental health standards, which will be taught through the K-12 health curriculum. These bills, along with others, show direct ties to the strategic priorities of Alaska's Education Challenge.

MS. VAN DIEST stated that during her next term on the Board of Education & Early Development she wants to continue with the strategic work the board has adopted. She is currently chair of the Regulations Committee, which has been reviewing the education regulations one by one. The committee works with DEED staff on regulation specifics and determining whether a regulation needs to remain as is, or be revised, or be removed. When stakeholders express a need for a regulation change the Regulations Committee reviews it and makes recommendations to the full board. The revised regulation then goes through the review process by all stakeholders prior to being adopted.

MS. VAN DIEST explained that her goals for the education future of Alaska are aligned with the framework of Alaska's Education Challenge and the state's system of school success. She said that the indicators outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act dovetail nicely with Alaska's Education Challenge. She wants to see the proficiency rate increase in grade three language arts, she wants to see continued academic growth and academic achievement in English language arts and mathematics. Components in the Alaska Reads Act are geared toward increasing students' reading achievement and performance, particularly at pre-K through grade three. She wants to see Alaska's graduation rate increase from 80 percent and the chronic absenteeism decrease from 29 percent.

MS. VAN DIEST specified that she also wants to see Alaska's university system graduate more and more Alaskan teachers. Alaska has a teacher shortage, she pointed out, and teachers are needed for the education of Alaska's children to be successful. Once Alaska gets those teachers the state needs to keep them. In addition to supporting the goals and indicators of Alaska's Education Challenge, she continued, she wants to work to support stable and affordable funding of education with a fiscal discipline of those funds. The passage of a sustainable, predictable, and affordable budget is critical to demonstrating a collective commitment to Alaska's students. The Board of Education & Early Development will continue to use Alaska's Education Challenge strategic plan to help it focus its efforts and navigate this challenging time. She is excited about her opportunity to continue serving as a member of the board.

[8:24:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY noted there are several known social determinants within rural areas of Alaska that may be contributing to lagging indicators for reading proficiency and

graduation rates. She requested Ms. Van Diest to provide her perspective about flexibility if that may be required in order to best support rural school districts.

MS. VAN DIEST replied that a great conversation starter is happening on the legislative side with regard to where Alaska's Education Challenge talks about having tribal compacting and helping to close the achievement gap. She has not ever lived in remote Alaska, but knows there are tremendous challenges there. At the recent Alaska Close Up in Juneau with her daughter many of the participating students were from remote Alaska. Those students talked about the teachers that don't stay, which is a huge issue. A big concern of hers is teacher training and retention. Having a different teacher every year plays a huge part in students not being able to read and achieve. Sometimes a teacher doesn't even come back after winter break.

[8:26:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether the board has discussed what it takes to retain teachers once they've been attracted to rural Alaska.

MS. VAN DIEST explained that the board has had off-the-cuff conversations, but no conversations as an agenda item before the whole board. She said it was a crushing blow when the University of Alaska Anchorage lost its teacher accreditation. If Alaska could grow its own teachers, she opined, those students who have lived in rural Alaska would know what it's like and understand the challenges, and would also know the joys of living remotely. She recently looked at some great suggestions made in a presentation by the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance that she would like to take to the board to discuss about how to get these young people to become teachers in their hometown.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND requested Ms. Van Diest to provide her with further information regarding the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance's presentation.

[8:29:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK stated that last year the legislature had a difficult time from the Board of Education & Early Development giving a budget. He asked what Ms. Van Diest thinks her role is serving on the board and her responsibilities to the legislature

as far as determining what funding needs should be provided for Alaska's public schools.

MS. VAN DIEST said she is unsure how to answer the question. The Board of Education & Early Development, she continued, doesn't necessarily speak to the budget and say what should happen and what should be funded. Qualifying that she is speaking for herself, she said the board doesn't have that level of detail and expertise. Chair Fields is continuing to speak with legislators to understand and decide what would be the most appropriate and helpful role that the board could have in the budget process each year. The legislature is working with the budget head-on and legislators and the board must be able to work together on what should be funded in education. The stakeholders need to be heard. Alaska's Education Challenge is used by the board as its strategic plan to help focus its efforts, which is why the board is excited about the Alaska Reads Act and tribal compacting, but those do come with fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK maintained that a tradition was broken last year. He said that when working on the budget the legislature relies on the Board of Education & Early Development to help make proper decisions. The bills mentioned by Ms. Van Diest were introduced by legislators themselves, but legislators also look to the board for leadership and for direction of where the state should go as far as public education. He said he hopes last year's decision by the board to not work with legislators, or to sit on its hands, doesn't happen again. Since Ms. Van Diest was serving on the board at that time, he added, he is concerned about how things are going to be in the future.

[8:32:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked what Ms. Van Diest sees as the board's role. He further inquired about Ms. Van Diest's specific ideas for addressing the budget challenge that the legislature is going to be facing over the next few years of setting priorities within what are becoming limited resources.

MS. VAN DIEST replied she doesn't have a direct answer to say what the board's role is in the budget. She offered her belief that it is inappropriate for her to give her opinion. Regarding last year, she said there are apparently two statutes that contradict each other, and one set of lawyers advised, "This is what should happen," and another set of lawyers advised, "This is what should happen." She deferred to Chair Fields for an

answer because he is the board member who helps give direction and works with legislators. The board has priorities, she added, and is going with the Alaska Education Challenge. The board is hoping the bills that have been put forth are passed. It is a challenging time for the state given the COVID-19 situation, she pointed out, so the efforts and focus of the DEED staff have been on helping school districts learn how to do remote learning, which is a huge learning curve for schools and for her as a counselor.

[8:34:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY noted that several weeks ago the House heard a presentation on teacher retention provided by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) and another group from the Pacific Northwest. She said she would provide this presentation to the Board of Education & Early Development to review and discuss as an agenda item. She requested Ms. Van Diest's thoughts on working with the University of Alaska and whether an autonomous Mt. Edgecumbe school board would be better than a state board.

MS. VAN DIEST answered that Mt. Edgecumbe's advisory board gives recommendations to the state board and during her two years on the state board those recommendations have been followed. Why Mt. Edgecumbe doesn't have its own onsite board is also a question of hers. The advisory board has representation from several areas throughout the state, including a state board member serving as a liaison. She said she thinks it is something the state board could look at, but that it may be in statute, not regulation, and therefore it is something the legislature must change. Regarding the University of Alaska, Ms. Van Diest said there hasn't been a combined meeting with the Board of Regents during the two years she's been on the state board. She related that during last year's teacher accreditation situation, several state board members said it would be a good thing for the state board to meet collectively with the Board of Regents. Regarding the teacher training and retention presentation, she said those are the slides she looked at, but she must have gotten the entity wrong.

CO-CHAIR STORY urged that the entire state board view these presentations because there are definitely some policy and revenue funding implications that should be looked into by the board. She said she agrees with Representative Tuck that the state board and the commissioner should be making informed recommendations to the legislature.

8:40:40 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY expressed her disappointment with how slowly the Department of Education and Early Development has been working on tribal compacting. She said the department hasn't provided the legislature with any indication of what may be included in the considerations it may be making about tribal compacting, explicitly with regard to what that legislation might look like. While it's worthwhile to talk about tribal compacting moving forward, she opined, no meaningful progress has been made in this current session. She requested Ms. Van Diest to address what flexibilities or support may be needed within HB 153, the Alaska Reads Act, regarding English language learners who are Indigenous or are learning in a rural K-12 education environment where turnover is quite significant.

MS. VAN DIEST explained that the state board is split into four committees and she isn't part of the Tribal Compacting Committee. Because her work has been with the Regulation Committee and Standards and Assessment, she can only speak about tribal compacting in very broad terms. She offered her understanding that DEED is still talking with stakeholders and not yet ready to come forward with a piece of legislation. She deferred to either the commissioner or deputy commissioner to answer how the Alaska Reads Act will impact the state's Indigenous language learners. She apologized for not having an answer.

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

8:43:51 AM

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the next order of business would be the confirmation hearing for the appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited Mr. Lem Wheelles, a new appointee, to provide testimony.

8:44:01 AM

LEM WHEELLES, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), stated he was born and raised in Anchorage where he graduated from Dimond High School. Upon earning a B.A. in Political Science with minors in Communication and Sociology and an M.A. in Teaching, from the University of Alaska Anchorage

(UAA), he got his dream job at Dimond High School. For his entire 16-year teaching career he has taught social studies, including World History, U.S. History, Alaska Studies, and Advanced Placement (AP) Comparative Government. Currently he is teaching AP United States Government, AP United States History, U.S. Government, Economics, and Student Government. For the past decade he has also taught online courses in U.S. History and U.S. Government for the Anchorage School District (ASD). For the past week he has been working on the team leading the Anchorage School District's transition to online education in the wake of the statewide school closure. He has received several recognitions: the 2018 Alaska History Teacher of the Year, Teacher of Excellence awarded by BP, Teacher of the Year awarded by the Alaska World Affairs Council, and twice awarded Advisor of the Year by the Model United Nations of Alaska.

MR. WHEELLES said he also provides opportunities for students to develop their interests and leadership skills as the sponsor of Model United Nations Club and Christian Club. For a decade he has been the student government advisor and under his leadership Dimond's student government has been awarded the National Gold Council of Excellence and Dimond is the only school in Alaska to currently hold this top national distinction.

MR. WHEELLES noted that in addition to his work with students he has served on the Anchorage School District Assessment Inventory Steering Committee, as the elections chair for the Anchorage Education Association, and as the parliamentarian for the National Education Association (NEA)-Alaska Delegate Assembly. For the past year he has served as a subject matter expert for the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistics in Schools program. He is currently a Statistics in Schools ambassador, helping to promote the census to educators and students through appearances on national podcasts and by speaking with local and national media.

8:46:50 AM

MR. WHEELLES shared his thoughts about education issues and why he is excited for the opportunity to serve on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC). He said his mission, as an educator, is to inspire all his students to be engaged citizens. He empowers his students to be politically active by teaching them about their government and its history, and by providing them with opportunities to engage with their government. In his classroom he has hosted a sitting governor, members of Congress, members of the Alaska legislature, U.S. ambassadors, and foreign consuls. His students have applied

what they've learned as campaign volunteers, legislative and congressional staffers, delegates to United Nations conferences, and candidates for public office. His ultimate objective is to challenge his students to not just learn about their government, but to be an active part of it.

MR. WHEELLES related that as a government teacher he is often asked about his political views. When his students ask, he tells them he doesn't share his views with students because it would be unethical for him to do so and potentially sway their views. Similarly, he tells his students he doesn't care what their political views are, but he cares that they form political views and that they can articulate why they believe what they believe. He teaches his students about a variety of political beliefs and ideologies so they can form an educated opinion and engage in civic discourse with each other. The members of this committee, he continued, come from different political parties and have a variety of political beliefs, and yet committee members meet regularly, respect one another, and engage in thoughtful discourse with the end goal of doing what is best for Alaska. His goal as a teacher is to prepare his students for those conversations, whether in their homes, on social media, in their workplaces, or for some of them someday in Alaska's state capitol.

MR. WHEELLES stated that his goal as a teacher leader and member of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) is to hold his colleagues to these highest standards as well. As a recess appointee to the commission, he has served during the last two meetings of the PTPC. During the most recent meeting, he proposed including in the PTPC newsletter reminders to educators about appropriate ways to deal with politics in the classroom, especially in this presidential election year. He has advised colleagues on numerous occasions about the proper way to deal with such subjects. He has also advised many students and a few parents on how to approach situations where they feel a teacher has crossed the line and pushed a particular view. His goal is to be pro-active and address the issue before it arises to the level of a complaint before the PTPC, but if it reaches that level he is prepared to react appropriately.

MR. WHEELLES explained that as a quasi-judicial body, the PTPC is asked to adjudicate complaints against certificated educators, including teachers, counselors, principals, and superintendents. This is a role he does not take lightly. He said he appreciates that the legislature saw fit to create the PTPC over 50 years ago so that educators could hold their colleagues accountable,

but also so that a jury of their peers can judge them. When he teaches about the importance of jury duty, he tells his students that if they are smart, then they might be able to talk their way out of being put on the jury. He then challenges them with this thought - "If you are ever accused of a crime ... would you want your jury to be made up of only the people who are left after all the smart people have talked their way out of it?" He said that if he were ever the subject of a complaint to the PTPC he would want to be judged by his peers who have a good grasp on what it means to be an educator in 2020. The PTPC, he added, is made up of five teachers, a principal, a superintendent, a representative from higher education, and a representative from DEED. This group of educational professionals understands the challenges of being an educator and wants public education to be esteemed throughout Alaska.

[8:50:30 AM](#)

MR. WHEELLES pointed out that, as a body, the PTPC works to promote professional and ethical behavior by all Alaskan educators through pro-active education and outreach and by responding to complaints when a violation has occurred. The current state budget crisis, he noted, has hampered the ability of Alaskan school districts to attract and retain quality educators, making the role of the PTPC all the more important. As districts hire new-to-Alaska and new-to-the-profession educators, it must be ensured that they are educated on the professional teaching code of ethics and the potential consequences for violations. As a member of the PTPC, he vowed, he will work to increase the commission's education and outreach efforts to ensure that all educators are familiar with the code of ethics and understand what it means for their professional practice. He said that as a lifelong Alaskan and career educator with connections throughout the state, he is an ideal nominee for the PTPC. He added that he is well informed on current education issues in the state and is well respected by educators throughout Alaska.

[8:51:36 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that Mr. Wheelles' description of being neutral and giving students the tools to assess how to make decisions is very much needed.

University of Alaska Board of Regents

[8:52:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be the confirmation hearing for the student regent appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited Ms. Cachet Garrett, student regent appointee, to provide testimony.

[8:53:06 AM](#)

CACHET GARRETT, Student Regent Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, stated she is a lifelong Alaskan, learner, and volunteer. She noted she has extensive leadership experience as a student representative and in her career. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Alaska Southeast and is now in graduate school at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

MS. GARRETT related that she is excited to serve as student regent. She explained that she went through an election process by her student body to be nominated to the governor for appointment. The governor's team then vetted and appointed her, and her nearly one year of service on the Board of Regents has been the most worthwhile effort of her life. Alaskans, she opined, can cherish and be proud of Alaska's universities. This past year has undoubtedly been the most challenging year in the university's history.

MS. GARRETT said that during her service she has supported the processes of the board as it attends to the tasks assigned to it by the governor, while prioritizing her representation of the 26,000 students enrolled in the Alaska university system. She has met and communicated with students across the state and will continue to ensure that their concerns are conveyed to the Board of Regents. Right now, the students are under great pressure and she only wishes to continue serving them and lifting them up during the remainder of her term, which concludes in May 2021.

[8:56:13 AM](#)

MS. GARRETT stated that it takes a person of great resilience, courage, and deep affection for the University of Alaska to step into leadership of Alaska's state university at this critical time. Her courage, bolstered by her whole heart of service orientation, will keep her serving in this role of student regent, she said. Other qualifications, she added, are her passion for communication and how she fully engages this passion

as a member of the board and as a representative of the students of Alaska. She encourages the students to count on her for open communication and she extends this invitation to all 60 members of the legislature.

MS. GARRETT pledged that after her confirmation she intends to increase her connection to and representation of the students. She said it's important for the students to know they have a representative completely in service to them and wholeheartedly in love with them, and with serving them and the needs of the state through them. As well, it is important to increase the morale on the university campuses.

MS. GARRETT stated she knows she has served her constituents well and in an exemplary manner because she has heard many positive reports from students, staff, faculty, and the board. There is more she can be doing, she continued, and it is piecing itself together naturally right now as the university faces a dire situation. Now is the time to come together to support the mission of the university, which is to support the state's missions and needs. She encouraged the legislature and the board to utilize her this next year towards the betterment of the state. She offered her appreciation to legislators for their attention to state matters and accountability.

[8:59:50 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 8:59 a.m.

[9:00:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony for all appointees. She closed public testimony after ascertaining that no one wished to testify.

[9:00:33 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:00 a.m.

[9:01:00 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND recessed the House Education Standing Committee at 9:01 a.m. to a call of the chair. [The meeting was called back to order at 8:07 a.m. on 3/26/20.]