

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 22, 2020

1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Mike Prax (via teleconference)

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Mia Costello
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Dan Ortiz (via teleconference)
Representative Bryce Edgmon (via teleconference)
Senator Cathy Giessel

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: VIRTUAL LEARNING CONTRACT

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: THE CURRENT STATUS OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: EDUCATION BUDGET, INSTRUCTION & STAFFING

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: UA COVID-19 UPDATE: IMPACT & RESPONSE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MICHAEL JOHNSON, Commissioner
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on the Virtual Learning Contract.

LACEY SANDERS, Director
Division of Administrative Services
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on the Virtual Learning Contract.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered a PowerPoint presentation on the Current Status of Local School Boards and Their Communities.

LISA S. PARADY, PhD, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing.

KAREN GABORIK, PhD, Superintendent
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing.

DANIEL WALKER, Superintendent
Lower Kuskokwim School District
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing.

DEENA BISHOP, PhD, Superintendent
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing.

JIM JOHNSEN, PhD, President
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered a PowerPoint presentation on UA COVID-19 Update: Impact and Response.

ACTION NARRATIVE

1:00:20 PM

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 1:00 p.m. Representatives Drummond, Story, Hopkins, Johnson, and Tuck and Senators Stevens, Begich, Coghill, Costello, and Hughes were present at the call to order. Representative Prax (via teleconference) arrived as the meeting was in progress. Representatives Ortiz and Edgmon and Senator Giessel were also present.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Co-Chairs Drummond and Story of the House Education Standing Committee for agreeing to a joint meeting, as both the House and Senate Education Standing Committees were pursuing the same thing, and he said that he thinks it is appropriate that they all get together to ask any questions and learn what is going on. He said that he has talked with a lot of people within the University of Alaska (UA) system and Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade (K-12) levels, and he expressed pride in what they are doing in coming to grips with COVID-19 and figuring out how to continue educating Alaska's children and adults.

PRESENTATION: Virtual Learning Contract

1:03:02 PM

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the first order of business would be a PowerPoint presentation on [the Virtual Learning Contract].

CHAIR STEVENS related that the presentation was an update from the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) regarding the issue of COVID-19.

1:04:25 PM

MICHAEL JOHNSON, Commissioner, Department of Education & Early Development, co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on the Virtual Learning Contract [hardcopy included in the committee packet]. He stated that it had been just over a month since he last updated the House Education Standing Committee on March 20, on the statewide effort to ensure student learning continues during the COVID-19 crisis. He said that in the month since then a lot has happened, and he is grateful to provide both committees in the joint hearing with an update.

1:05:44 PM

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation, stated that he would be focusing his comments on two main areas: the efforts to support distant delivery education through the Alaska Statewide Virtual School (AKSVS) and the federal education funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. He added that the Administrative Services Director, Lacey Sanders, would help talk about the federal education funding aspect of the presentation.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing slide 3, stated that it had been 38 calendar days since Governor Mike Dunleavy announced on March 16, the start of non-student contact days, for districts to dedicate in-service days to fully organizing education plans for remote delivered schooling, should the need arise. He said that schools across Alaska have done an outstanding job of shifting almost overnight from traditional school-based instruction to home-based and delivered learning environments. He remarked that for many Alaska teachers, this shift has involved countless hours of preparation for a very different kind of teaching and learning landscape, and he commended them for taking this leap quickly and ensuring ample opportunities for learning to continue during these unprecedented times. He

said that he is sure the committee has heard, and would hear more, about the amazing creativity that has been taking place in the system.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that on April 9, [2020], Governor Dunleavy extended the statewide school closure period from May 1 to the end of "the 2019 school year." He said that despite the need to extend school building closures, student learning was continuing for each school district's individual plan, to provide distance-delivered educational services to students. He said that he wanted to recognize that this was a difficult decision, and it ends the school year with students physically separated from their teachers. He stated that incident command is continually considering how this would look going forward and the possibility of having small groups, or individual students reconvene and meet with their teachers before they head into the summer months. He said that the department has asked districts to submit a summary report once this is all over, no later than 45 days after the declaration of public health disaster emergency is lifted. He added that the summary reports would provide everyone with valuable documentation of the educational services that are still being delivered during the school closure, which he expressed would give an opportunity for celebration because of the creativity and hard work that is happening.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing slide 4, stated that DEED's goal from the beginning has been to support Alaska's families, teachers, and schools by providing as many quality distance-delivered resources as quickly as possible, to ensure student learning continues through the crisis. He said that these low-cost resources are available at AKlearns.org, a website created in response to COVID-19, which includes "no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech support." He stated that in addition to the online clearinghouse, DEED has also partnered with Apple Inc. to purchase 500 preloaded iPads to send to as many students as possible, in the primary grades especially, who may not have Internet or access to a teacher in their communities. He pointed out that some communities no longer have teachers in them for various reasons related to transportation and other issues associated with the current situation. He thanked the Anchorage School District, which has been supporting the iPad project, as it will be processing the iPads and putting a note in the box for students. He said that DEED is working with superintendents on how the iPads will be distributed. He stated

that the Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) has supported the project by collecting data from superintendents on students in Kindergarten, First, and Second Grades who do not have connectivity in their communities and could use these resources.

[1:10:51 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Commissioner Johnson whether he had estimated how many districts and students do not have, or have very poor, access to the Internet.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that [the answer to] the question was slightly complicated. He said he saw a map recently showing districts that would benefit from the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) or "BAG 25," [the 25 referring to megabits per second (Mbps)]. He indicated that the map also showed which communities with fewer than 25 Mbps would benefit. He said the answer to the question of who has no connectivity is not a straight yes or no, because some communities have connectivity but not necessarily in the homes. He said that some districts have sent data showing which students have connectivity in their homes, but DEED has not required districts to send in that data. The work is ongoing, and hopefully this summer the data can be collected and reported. He stated that DEED is advocating for any future packages that come from the federal government to include money to expand connectivity for students in every community in Alaska.

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CHAIR STEVENS remarked that his understanding was that though many villages might not have connectivity in the homes, students could still connect at schools or outside of schools in cars.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that this was his understanding as well. He said that he had a call from one provider about some innovations that may be taking place, in which a tower could potentially be placed on a school or facility to broadcast Wi-Fi around a community. He added that he was not sure whether this has happened in any communities yet, but he knows some solutions like that are being considered.

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CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, referencing the BAG 25 legislation that was passed, stated that she was not certain whether the governor had signed the legislation yet, but said that she thinks it was

passed in time to meet the deadlines for grant applications. She asked Commissioner Johnson whether he was aware of districts having made their grant applications for that service.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that the governor did sign the bill, and DEED had sent the application to every superintendent just that morning. He said that ASA has been gracious to host calls with superintendents to remind them that applications are out there. He added that DEED has been working on updating the regulations to correlate with the new statute that increases [the broadband requirement for schools from 10 Mbps to 25 Mbps of download speed, with help in funding from BAG].

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, referencing students using Wi-Fi from the schools outside of the building or in cars, remarked that this could not possibly be an effective way to work, especially in inclement weather. She commented that she has seen photos and videos of students on decks outside of schools, soaking up the bandwidth outside of the building, and she expressed that she hopes districts are looking at better ways to get connectivity to students.

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REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS remarked that his understanding was that the Florida Virtual Schools' contract is available to parents on an individual level where they can sign in, and this is not being run through school districts. He asked Commissioner Johnson whether this was correct.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that in some cases families can access it individually, and in other cases districts or schools are using it. He said that he would be talking much more about the Florida Virtual School in just a moment.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether there was a time frame for when BAG 25 might be implemented.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that the bill was signed, the applications were distributed, and the window closes on May 1, for the BAG grant applications to be submitted.

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CHAIR STEVENS noted that Representative Ortiz and Speaker Edgmon had joined the committee meeting online.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON referenced slide 5 of the PowerPoint presentation, which shows that many, if not all, in the education community are pulling together in putting online resources together, especially for education leaders. He stated that DEED has drawn collective wisdom and resources from schools, districts, and states from around the country. He related that there are staff who have been reviewing dozens of websites and resources in search of solutions that may be helpful in Alaska; this is happening in other associations as well. He said DEED is working with partners to provide content and resources; the Alaska Staff Development Network has been hosting meetings; and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), the National Education Association - Alaska (NEA-Alaska), and the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) have websites addressing COVID-19.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that the leadership website is full of content and attempts to provide up-to-date information. He expressed that while it does not know what restarting and reentering school in the fall will look like, DEED is committed to gathering and providing as many resources for leaders as they focus on ending the school year and the decisions that will be need to be made next school year.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing slide 6, stated that the distant delivery through AKSVS is part of an effort to provide quality options online. He expressed that he shares the convictions of the committee members, as Co-Chair Story had stated, that all levels of governance in Alaska that affect children should be worked on closely together, and he apologized that his effort to provide instructional content to students, teachers, and families through the partnership with the Florida Department of Education communicated anything other than that. He said that providing as many high-quality content options as quickly as possible should not have prevented him from demonstrating the appropriate preparation and communication, and he apologized for putting the committee in the position that they were receiving questions about this. He stated that since the announcement of the virtual school, he has been having a lot of online meetings and phone calls with groups, associations, and individuals to apologize for unintentionally surprising them and to answer questions and ensure that people know there was no deliberate intent not to collaborate or communicate with superintendents and school boards. He said that he considers the announcement of the virtual courses as another option for

families, teachers, and schools to use as needed at the local level.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing slide 7, stated that there were several elements that the committee had asked him to address. He said that DEED entered into a standard contract for goods and professional services with the Florida Virtual School on March 25, 2020; this was a one-time contract not to exceed \$525,000. It was executed following standard procurement policies and procedures, but it is a government-to-government contract and not a single source. He explained that the contract was entered under the authority of a government-to-government agreement, because it addresses public schools.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that the contract has three phases, first of which is to meet the immediate need of content for students, teachers, and families who are unable to attend school because of the pandemic. He said that the next phase is to provide training for 54 teachers, theoretically one for each district, online, and the goal is to transition this summer from instruction being provided by or in cooperation with the Florida Virtual School to instruction given by Alaska teachers. He stated that the transition includes being able to use over 190 courses and content from the platform with the Florida Virtual School that teachers in Alaska can use, which is happening already in the state in at least one district. He remarked that Alaska teachers can customize and modify this content in any manner, as needed. He stated that the goal of the contract is to ensure student learning continues through this crisis. He emphasized DEED's commitment to supporting teachers and families with as many quality-content options as possible.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that the Florida Virtual School was chosen because it is a public agency, public school, and government entity. The Florida Virtual School is a statewide model funded by the Florida State Legislature, and it has been around for almost 20 years, providing course training and expertise in online blended programs for districts and states. He explained that when the coronavirus hit, DEED wanted to act quickly to provide additional learning opportunities, and the department felt comfortable working with the Florida Virtual School, as it had already been looked at and used in Alaska, and it is a not-for-profit entity, is governed by a board, and is a public school. He stated that Florida Virtual School has helped to design and implement programs in other states, including

Alabama, Hawaii, Illinois, Montana, New Hampshire, and several others. Prior to the launch, a couple of districts in Alaska were using the Florida Virtual School for content this year, and the content can support public school teachers.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that the program is funded through existing funds, which were originally allocated to support state-level efforts for education. He explained that DEED receives several federal awards each year, and each award has an allowable amount that can be used for state-level administrative costs. He said that the department has seven federal awards that contribute to the consolidated administration, and each award crosses multiple fiscal years. He stated that one portion of funding that was expended for the virtual school was consolidated administration, and the other remaining federal funds used to support it were discretionary funds that could have been used for state-level activities that may have been diverted because of the contract, such as in-person meetings and other types of travel. He commented that enrolling in a subject through the virtual school is free; it does not include any cost to a family or school district. Furthermore, enrolling will not change a student's enrollment status in his/her local school or state funding received by that district, which he said is a significant point he should have been careful to communicate more clearly from the very beginning.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that he has received questions regarding families wanting to enroll in home-school programs that already exist, but funding for those programs was decided last fall. He said that the virtual school content can be used for free, even by home-school programs for existing or new students, without any cost to the district allotment.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON reiterated that the timeline for the virtual program was an initial response to the pandemic to provide immediate resources for families and teachers. As an example, he said that there could be a family with multiple students that might want an extra science or history activity and could use these resources that would also work with a public school teacher. He provided another example, in that a teacher teaching multiple grades and working with district leadership could use this content to provide multiple subjects to multiple grade levels of students. He stated that looking ahead to the next year, it is unknown what it will look like; everyone is hoping that things will return to normal, but the contract looks

forward by building the capacity in state for Alaska teachers to deliver virtual online content.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that the next topic on slide 7 was communications, and he reiterated that there was no deliberate intent to not collaborate with superintendents, school boards, or educators. He said that he has been meeting with various educational leadership associations each week and has continually expressed the commitment to provide as many high quality, distance-delivered resources as possible. He stated that DEED considered the announcement as just another option that may be needed by families and schools, and nothing about the virtual courses are mandatory. He commented that he has had some positive calls with other leaders around the state.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON stated that as of yesterday, over 420 courses were being used or accessed by students across several districts at varying degrees and levels. He reiterated that there is no cost, the program is optional, no one needs to change enrollment, and there is no expectation that a district will use the program, but it is there for those that need it. He said that courses offered are aligned with Alaska's content standards. Florida Virtual School follows the same data security and privacy protocols required of all other schools under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), because it is a public school, and, as mentioned in phase two, there will be a shift to all of the content being taught by Alaska teachers.

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CHAIR STEVENS noted that Representative Prax had joined the Committee online.

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SENATOR BEGICH asked when the contract would expire.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that it expires in February 2021. In response to a follow up question, he stated that it is fully funded until that time.

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that he has seen the positive comments made by former Commissioner Hanley in the Anchorage Daily News, about the usefulness of the program, and he asked whether it was Commissioner Johnson's intent to not have a second contract.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that it would not be a contract like the one that currently exists. He said that he does not know what next year is going to look like, and he said that the courses and the platform might be something that people want to continue to access, as some districts continue to do currently. He emphasized that if the crisis continues and there are a lot of people who would like to have the platform continue to be provided, so that it would not be an expense to districts, then it could be continued in a way similar to textbook purchases, in which content is provided to districts. He reiterated that DEED would not be entering into a contract like the one from this year.

SENATOR BEGICH asked how many people currently were using the virtual school.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that there are 420 courses being taken by over 140 students, as of a day or two ago.

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REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked what would happen to districts or students utilizing these programs during the second semester when [the programs] stop in February 2021.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that the contract ends in February 2021, but the content and the platform can be used through May 2021, which essentially will be the end of the school year.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether this platform would be taught all next school year, first and second semester, by Alaska teachers who are trained this summer.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered yes, that is the intent.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked who would be paying these teachers during the summer for them to take the professional development courses through the state and through these programs.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that DEED has had conversations with the Alaska Education Association, which will have conversations with districts. He said it may be at a district's discretion and, depending on some of the COVID-19 money that DEED gets, it may be able to pay a stipend for teachers to participate in the training. He stated that some of the training could start as soon as May of this year if teachers are ready.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how the courses were being acclimated and included into options for students now, in terms of Alaska's standards and grades for districts. He asked whether this was simply an enrichment program that was costing \$500,000 for 140 students "in places where they only have accessible Internet access and devices."

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that that is not how he would characterize it. He said that for some students it may be enrichment, which is part of a well-rounded program; for some students it may be something that is needed for graduation; and for other students it may be something that is used to round out their program as they are provided other instruction. He remarked that districts are adopting a variety of grading and credit strategies around the state and will be making those determinations.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked what this would mean for a district that is not including this in its grading policy for this year, or for graduation, and he asked how this would help a student, outside of critical enrichment, in his/her educational progression and ability to graduate this year or use those credits on his/her transcripts. He asked whether this would be "district-by-district."

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that no one is required to take a course, and if a family elects to take a course, then an attempt at building communication with that district is made to let it know that a family has expressed interest. He said that these districts will work with a family to determine whether and how to grant credit. He expressed that the challenge currently is that students were suddenly turned out, and each district is making decisions to try and provide options and opportunities for them, and some districts are choosing different methods. He said that he thinks Representative Hopkins' ending statement that it is up to the districts is accurate.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated that he understands very well that Commissioner Johnson was apologizing for the miscommunication with the districts and said that he understands how it can be difficult with how fast things are moving in the world currently. He commented that this was something that could have been helped by getting out ahead and working with the districts.

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CO-CHAIR STORY remarked that she appreciates Commissioner Johnson recognizing the error of not reaching out to the stakeholders in making a contract. She stated that there was information in the committee packet from a stakeholder about the concerns regarding the Florida Virtual School, noting that some of its success rates do not include certain demographics in comparison. She said that she thinks one of the things stakeholders can do when they know something is being pursued is to find and share information. She said that she thinks that everyone wants to work together well and noted that there are several correspondent schools doing distance learning, and the amount of the contract, \$500,000, she said she thinks districts could use to improve their offerings in distance learning. She remarked that she did not know when planning started for the contract, but she expressed concern. She asked what the limitations were that were seen in Alaska schools being able to offer the content, and she asked how things would move forward, based on that information.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that he appreciates the council that included the information, and he said, "Point taken." He said that this was not to address any deficiency in Alaska. He said his team was having daily meetings with educators around the state and hearing about how overwhelming it is to immediately switch to all the students not being in school. He noted that these are extraordinary times, and he said he was "trying to spread a table with as many options for school districts, for teachers, for families to be able to choose from to meet the needs of students, and their teachers, in a really extraordinary time."

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON reiterated that it was not at all designed to address a deficiency. He said he thinks the teachers in the state are working hard, and some have been able to make the transition very easily based on training, content, or resources their districts had, while other teachers have had more of a challenge based on experience, how many years they have been teaching, or what else has happened in their districts. He commented that this was just one of many options being put on the table, including the iPads and other content online. He said that some families are choosing other options online that are either for profit, nonprofit, or private. He apologized if it was communicated in any way that this was a deficiency being addressed, and he said that moving forward he was having many conversations with people, and many teachers had expressed

interest in receiving training. He said that DEED was being careful to reach out and work with education partners to ensure that it is truly fulfilling the intent to build a capacity in the state to respond to statewide or regional closures that may happen in the future.

CO-CHAIR STORY remarked that Commissioner Johnson had said that phase two of this project was ideally to have one teacher trained from each of the 54 school districts. She asked for further explanation on the topic.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that theoretically, with 54 districts, it would be great to have at least one teacher in each district trained, but it is known that some districts may not have the capacity or may have a lot of turnover; therefore, it may not work out to have one teacher for every district. He indicated that those teachers using [AKSVS] are busy dealing with the transition that has happened. He expressed that next school year everyone is hoping that they get to go back to school, but if there is still a statewide closure, then the added capacity, platform, and over 190 courses could be used and adapted as a way to respond. He said there is also the possibility that there could be individual community or regional closures. He said conversations have been held with education leaders regarding the possibility of time being spent this summer to form a response team that could go in to support individual communities or regions that may have closures due to COVID-19. He indicated this team could be comprised of teachers from around the state, who could help teachers who have gone through the training make the necessary transition. He reiterated that he hopes this does not happen and he is not predicting it, but he wants to be responsible and prepared for what might happen.

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CO-CHAIR STORY asked whether any other of the 54 districts have stepped forward to have the training from the virtual school, whether there were any other department funds available to help develop AKSVS programs, and how DEED was getting feedback currently from educators, administrators, and parents on how this is working.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that in terms of feedback, as he had said before, he has been soliciting in-person feedback through meetings, conversations, and e-mails on the website. He said that there has been some positive feedback, as well as some

concern about the contract and this option for students. He stated that the department has received federal money, including administrative money, and that will be an ongoing reality. He stated that DEED has not allocated or planned any specific expenditures out of that money coming forward, but he has had conversations on whether some should be set aside as an emergency response fund, in case of regional or community issues. He said that DEED had not yet sent out an official solicitation for training. He remarked that conversations have taken place on how to possibly do this well, and some individual teachers have e-mailed and inquired about it as well.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Commissioner Johnson how he has seen this impacting the resources for the other 31 correspondence programs and how the impacts to them would be tracked.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that he was not sure he completely understood the question. Nevertheless, he related that there is a superintendent, who has received numerous inquiries from families wanting to enroll students in a homeschool program, to get support during this transition, but "those districts don't have the money to provide that allotment." He said, "They can use this content and provide that if they need to, with no cost. So, this does not take anybody's enrollment; it doesn't take any student away from a correspondence program; it provides free content that a correspondence program can use with their students if they so choose."

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SENATOR HUGHES remarked that she noticed the contract was signed a week or so after the schools announced closures, and she commended all the districts, because she said she knows they were scrambling trying to figure out how to meet needs. She said that in the first couple of weeks, she heard from several families in different districts, friends, and people communicating how things were going. She remarked that she understands that most of the districts probably want to make sure that their high schoolers stay on track for graduation. She stated that she heard from families around the states that things were running smoothly for the high schoolers, but for the other grades it was a little bit "hit or miss" initially.

SENATOR HUGHES stated that when she heard about the contract, she initially thought it was a good thing, but was surprised to hear the education community pushing back. She said that she understands some of this was from the lack of communication, to

which the commissioner had humbly admitted, and which she said she appreciates. She said that she recommended families check out the Khan Academy Kids application, which has reading and math programs that her granddaughter was using as a supplement to what the Anchorage School District was providing.

SENATOR HUGHES mentioned SB 79, which she sponsored. She said she and Representative Drummond had held approximately half a dozen joint meetings exploring the possibility of setting up a virtual education statewide platform that would connect districts. She indicated that although there had been bipartisan and bicameral support for that proposed legislation, it was blocked. She said that educators were not "jumping up and down" to help. She suggested that she would put out a call to the education community, and she indicated that Commissioner [Johnson] had worked with her on SB 79. She mentioned an occasion when children were unable to be in their classrooms as a result of an earthquake, and she offered her understanding that the Anchorage School District was discussing the possibility of having days every school year in which classes would go virtual so that students and teachers would be accustomed to it, so that if there were a need they could switch to that mode. She asked Commissioner Johnson whether he thought the state should consider such a plan for the purpose of readiness.

SENATOR HUGHES also asked Commissioner Johnson how well this program was being communicated to families, as there are only 140 students currently using it. She remarked that it has been left to the districts to offer it to families, and she asked whether there was any way to get out the word, other than putting it on the website for families to see. She said that even though the families might be using resources through the classroom teachers for their students, a lot of the parents are working from home, and if there were additional options for more hours of work for students, then the parents might use it.

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COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, regarding whether this is something that Alaska should move forward in the future, said he is still reflecting and learning on the first rollout before he has conversations about what may come next. He expressed that he is certainly apologetic for not doing a better job of showing this as an option for families. He stated that virtual courses are an option and opportunity used, probably, in most districts in the state. He said that he is going to spend more time figuring

out how he could have rolled this out better and would then be happy to have conversations with the legislature on the next step. He remarked that in terms of communication, it is on DEED's website and remains there still, but after the reaction to it, DEED has decided to let other sources do some of the communication. He said that unfortunately, the lack of communication at the beginning and the negative things that came out probably scared some people away, but he said that he thinks districts and others are starting to see it as an option. He said that there are other parts of the contract, and there are 140 students and "400 and something" courses being utilized currently, but those numbers are expected to grow.

[1:55:58 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO said that she has children in high school and middle school. She asked how, as a parent, when her children's teachers design lesson plans for core courses, is she supposed to know whether they are from the Florida Virtual School. She asked whether she was hearing correctly that this was something for individual families that want to leave the public school and go through the virtual school. She expressed that she did not quite understand the mechanics of the virtual school.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that this would in no way take students away from their local schools; they would not unenroll and then enroll in a virtual school. He loosely compared the virtual school to Khan Academy and said that there are students in classrooms where teachers use Khan Academy as part of the content. He expressed that he thinks a parent would know whether a teacher was using a virtual school as part of the curriculum, and he said that the Anchorage School District used content from the Florida Virtual School even before this happened. He said that DEED put this out for people to use, as it works in a local setting, so families could access it. He said that there is a brief survey on the website that asks a series of questions to determine what district the people are in, whether they intend to use it for enrichment, whether it is a teacher using it with students, and other things. He said that DEED will continue to improve efforts to explain the mechanics so that people understand how the virtual school works and know that it is not taking enrollment away from local schools.

[1:59:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS remarked that Bob Boyle's recommendation, which DEED had said it was using for contracting with the virtual schools, had estimated that \$500,000 would provide 450 semester hours to students. He asked whether the \$525,000 would be limited in the same way, where available semester hours for students would run out.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that this contract is not part of the work Bob Boyle did with DEED. He stated that because he was recently retired from a district that had a virtual school, he did some research for DEED on virtual schools, as it was a topic that had recently come up at the legislature. He said he had wanted some background and information, and Bob Boyle had provided it. He remarked that he did not have the report in front of him that Bob Boyle had provided with the exact number of hours. He stated that when the transition is made to Alaska teachers teaching the content next school year, there are over 190 courses available, in which up to 300 students can enroll at a full-time equivalent. He said that he is not certain how that correlates to the number Representative Hopkins gave, but this is what the contract look likes currently.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the 190 different courses available were incorporated into Alaska standards and would be applicable for statewide recognition towards a student's graduation.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that this is up to local districts to decide whether they will use the content, in the same way that they choose to use textbooks or other curriculums to count as part of their programs. He said that these courses taught by Alaska teachers are fully adaptable in whatever way classroom teachers want to adapt them to meet state, local, and cultural standards.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS posed a hypothetical situation in which a student enrolls in a course on his/her own, not through a district, then drops a class and is charged an exorbitant cancelation fee. He asked whether, based on the way that the Florida Virtual School program is currently structured, the cancelation fee would be covered by DEED or by [the student's] district, or whether the family would have to cover the fee.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that the immediate courses provided in response to COVID-19 are provided at no cost for the course, the proctoring of an exam, or dropping a course.

[2:02:53 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that earlier in response to a question from Representative Story, Commissioner Johnson mentioned that capacity was being added for dozens of courses that can be accessed or adapted. She asked how that works and when it would occur. She asked whether the 420 or more courses being accessed were representative of 420 students, 420 classrooms of a certain number of students each, or 120 students accessing 3 or 4 classes each.

[2:03:53 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON, referencing the adaptation element, stated that Alaska teachers take the Florida Virtual School content or other textbooks, then implement the curriculum and adapt it as needed for their classes or students. He said that the 420 courses are being accessed by over 140 students. He related that this is just the immediate response to end-of-year content as part of the sudden closure of schools; it is not necessarily what enrollment numbers will look like next fall when courses are delivered by Alaska teachers.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that she was looking at several pages of quotations in the contract and noticed a column for quantity and the sales price with a discount. She asked for an explanation regarding quantity.

[2:05:44 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that the quantity was the estimate given as to the number of courses DEED thought might be accessed by students.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether, if 20 students accessed "Algebra I Global School Sem 2" instead of 50, there would be a reduction in the sales price, and how it would work if more students access than estimated.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that adjustments are made as things move forward based on actual course requests and needs.

[2:06:42 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS stated that he would like to move on to the funding aspect of the department's presentation, particularly

the CARES Act and how those funds are affecting DEED and the districts.

2:07:03 PM

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON commented that he would like to make an initial comment and then turn it over to Lacy Sanders. He thanked his staff, who spent a lot of time "unpacking" the CARES Act as it was a bill that was passed very quickly on March 27. He said that the Act includes \$30.75 billion in emergency education funding for states.

2:07:55 PM

LACEY SANDERS, Director, Division of Administrative Services, Department of Education & Early Development, continued DEED's PowerPoint presentation on the Virtual Learning Contract as it relates to the issue of COVID-19. Referencing slide 9, she stated that she would walk through the emergency education funding that was allocated through the CARES Act and is often referred to as the Education Stabilization Fund. She said the fund is divided into three pots, the first of which could be referred to as the Governor's Emergency Relief Fund. She explained that the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds are administered by the governor, and Alaska's allocation was set at \$6.5 million. She said that these funds are available for obligations through September 30, 2020, and the governor must award the funds within one year of receipt or the funds are reverted to the U.S. Department of Education for reallocation to other states. She stated that these funds can be used for three things: emergency support to local education agencies that the state education agency deems most significantly impacted by the coronavirus; emergency support to institutes of higher education the governor determines are most significantly impacted by the coronavirus; and support to any institute of higher education, local education agency, or education-related entity within the state that the governor deems essential for carrying out educational services.

MS. SANDERS stated that the second pot of funds in the Education Stabilization Fund is the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. She explained that the CARES Act provided several different methods for distributing roughly \$14 billion in funds to institutions of higher education; the most significant portion of that funding allocation provides \$12.56 billion that will be distributed to institutions using a formula based on student enrollment. She said that she would defer to the

University of Alaska to share additional details in its presentation later in the meeting.

MS. SANDERS stated that DEED's presentation today on funding is focused on the third pot of funding, which is known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF). She said that this third pot of funds is what the commissioner referenced heading to DEED as the state education agency, also referred to as the SEA by the federal government. She explained that this funding will be distributed to school districts, which are commonly referred to as local education agencies, and will support elementary and secondary education.

[2:11:19 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked whether the \$14 billion or \$12.56 billion in funds could go towards both state institutions and private institutions.

MS. SANDERS replied that it is her understanding that the funds could go to both state and private, but she said she would defer to the university to correct her later in its presentation if she had misspoken.

[2:12:01 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS, referencing slide 10 of the PowerPoint presentation, stated that she wanted to make the committee members aware of additional education related funding in the CARES Act. She said that there are several pots of money, most notably the items listed on slide 10. She pointed out that there is \$3.5 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant, which is to provide childcare assistance to healthcare providers, first responders, sanitation workers, and other essential workers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that this money will be allocated through the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). She said that there is \$750 million in the bill for grants to local agencies providing Head Start services that support children's growth and development. She explained that this money will be allocated directly to the Head Start Alaska providers. She said that there is \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs, which includes the national school lunch program, the school breakfast program, the summer food service program, the child and adult care feeding program, the school milk program, and others. She explained that this funding will be allocated through DEED.

MS. SANDERS stated that there is \$15.5 billion of additional funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which will be allocated through DHSS. She said that there is \$100 million targeted for school funding for safe schools and the citizenship education initiative through the School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) Project, which provides education-related services, including counseling and referrals for mental health services, to local education agencies. That money will be distributed through the local education agencies. She noted that the CARES Act also provides federal student loan relief, which is an automatic suspension of principal and interest payments on federally held student loans through September 30, 2020; borrowers are not required to take any action in order to participate in this automatic suspension.

[2:14:28 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS, referencing slide 11, remarked that she would be "diving" into ESSERF. She stated that approximately \$13.5 billion was allocated for elementary and secondary education formula grants; the State of Alaska's allocation is estimated to be \$38.4 million. She noted that DEED had not yet received an official application from the U.S. Department of Education on this funding; therefore, the \$38.4 million is just an estimate. She said that the funding will be distributed from the federal U.S. Department of Education to DEED and then on to local education agencies. She stated that allocations to state education agencies are based on the proportion of Title 1, part A funds each state received in the most recent fiscal year. She said that state education agencies may reserve up to 10 percent for grants and statewide emergency needs, including up to 0.5 percent for administration; these funds may be spent on emergency needs, as determined by the state education agency, to address issues responding to the coronavirus. She said that the state education agencies may also spend the funds directly or through grants and contracts. State education agencies must allocate 90 percent for local education agencies, and the funds must be awarded within one year of receipt. She noted that DEED posted on its website, and shared with superintendents, an estimated allocation for the \$38.4 million [hard copy included in the committee packet].

[2:16:41 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked for clarification on the money that goes to DEED, 10 percent going for grants and 0.5 percent for

administration, and he asked what purpose "the other 9.5 percent" is used.

MS. SANDERS replied that that funding is an allowable amount that the federal guideline allows DEED, or the state education agency, to grant or contract out for other needs or emergency-related costs associated with the coronavirus.

[2:17:39 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she thought she had heard Ms. Sanders say that one half of one percent is allowed to be retained for administrative costs. She asked for clarification as to who was allowed to retain that amount, DEED, or the school districts.

MS. SANDERS answered that the half of a percent for administration could be retained by DEED for administrative costs. She added that school districts have maximum flexibility in their ability to spend the funds received through the Title I allocation, on the needs that they identify, and she said she would talk about allowable uses momentarily.

[2:18:32 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that she had the draft estimate for the CARES Act funding, as it is distributed among Alaska school districts, and the first column was for the EESRF funds, which total approximately \$34,567,000. She said that the second column is the GEER fund, totaling \$3.7 million, for a total CARES Act funds to education of \$38.3 million. She expressed that she understands this is a draft and the numbers are somewhat flexible, and she asked Ms. Sanders to explain the governor's emergency education relief fund column, as she could see it goes to some school districts, but not all of them.

MS. SANDERS answered that she absolutely could explain that and asked to have everyone turn to the document so she could walk through it and answer any questions in order to clearly articulate what the estimated document outlines.

[2:20:04 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that the document she is referring to is on BASIS, and it is from DEED, titled, Draft - Estimated CARES ACT Funding for Alaska School Districts [hard copy included in the committee packet.]

MS. SANDERS stated that the first column shows the estimated ESSERF allocation. She reiterated that the State of Alaska's total allocation is \$38.4 million; after removing the 10 percent that state education agencies may reserve, the remaining amount is \$34,567,200. She said that DEED used the Title I allocation, as required by the federal guidance, to allocate money to the school districts. She stated that this is what is seen in the first column.

MS. SANDERS stated that out of the GEER fund, the governor has allowed \$3.7 million to be distributed to 35 school districts, to ensure that all districts receive funding equal to or greater than the allocation of the \$30 million one-time funding that would have been allocated through the foundation formula. She explained that if a school district was not eligible for a Title I distribution, under a \$30 million allocation through the foundation formula, then it would have received \$23,096. She said, "The governor is allocating \$3.7 million to these 35 schools so that they receive an amount equal to or greater than the allocation under the \$30 million." Ms. Sanders stated that the third column totals the amount that school districts would receive between the two pots of money.

[2:22:31 PM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that Ms. Sanders had pointed out that the governor had communicated his intent to replace the "\$30 million one-time money." He added, "But during that testimony - you know, we had quite a bit of it this year - districts identified that they used a lot of the \$30 million one-time funding from the past year, which ... the vetoed \$30 million was supposed to hold harmless, to offset reduced class sizes, retain teachers, purchase and update their curricula - things like that." He asked whether what the governor is doing would effectively "do that," or whether the money was really supposed to be used for the additional burden that falls on districts to address the COVID-19 related expenditures, as opposed to offsetting the activities. He asked whether this was "just digging a deeper hole."

MS. SANDERS replied that the school districts have the ability to use the funding at their discretion, and while it is understood that the one-time foundation formula would have been in addition to the foundation formula that would normally be received, they are now receiving approximately \$38 million to address not only current needs, but increased needs due to coronavirus impacts as well.

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that essentially the answer that he had just heard was, "No," and that it is not providing very much at all for districts to deal with COVID-19, if they choose to hold themselves harmless on the cut imposed last week through the veto process. He commented that he thinks this is what Ms. Sanders said, and said he understands that it is basically a forced "Sophie's choice" on the districts as to how they will address COVID-19 or the veto. He expressed that he appreciated Ms. Sanders candor in letting the committee know that.

[2:25:27 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked Ms. Sanders how quickly these funds would get out to the districts.

[2:25:35 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS replied that it is DEED's understanding that the application for the funds related to ESSERF will be distributed either tomorrow [4/23/20,] or Friday [4/24/20]. She said DEED will apply for the funds and, once the application is submitted and the funds are received, it will wait for legislative approval to disburse that money to school districts. She stated that the GEER fund application and guidance had already been received from the U.S. Department of Education, and as soon as the governor provides a detailed plan on that funding, DEED can submit on the governor's behalf to receive the funding.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Ms. Sanders to clarify the legislative approval she had mentioned, and he asked whether that means through the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee.

[2:26:44 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS answered that Chair Stevens might be aware that yesterday the Office of Management and Budget and the governor submitted a Revised Program Legislative (RPL) packet to the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee. She said that the RPL packet included an RPL for DEED to receive additional federal authority to receive those federal funds and disperse them to school districts.

[2:27:21 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether these funds would be available to school districts starting that week and would be available

for obligation through September 2021, through the beginning of school the next fiscal year. She said that she assumes the districts could start spending the money now, but the suggestion is that they will spread the expenditures over the course of the next year, starting in July. She asked whether, if this is intended to replace the \$30 million that was vetoed by the governor, she can assume that the administration believes that the cost of the impact of COVID-19 issues on the school districts is only \$8 million above that \$30 million that was vetoed by the governor. She remarked that she is having trouble understanding the justification of the size of these grants and when they are supposed to be expended.

[2:28:45 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS emphasized that DEED had not received an official application or guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. She said there is rumor at the federal agency level, meaning other entities outside of the U.S. Department of Education, that the expenditures associated with the funding will be backdated as early as March 13, 2020; however, she reiterated that DEED has not received official guidance, and until it does it would not want to advise anyone to make expenditures based on receiving this money. She stated that the allocation of the funding for ESSERF is based on federal guidance, and she said that she does not want to speak on behalf of the governor or the administration other than to say that DEED's guidance has been to determine what the allocation methodology for the school districts was. She said DEED looked at the allocation methodology for the \$30 million outside of the foundation formula and wanted to ensure that school districts were receiving funding at least equal to the amount under that allocation. She reiterated that she would not feel comfortable speaking on behalf of the governor or the administration regarding whether this is backfilling \$30 million.

[2:30:49 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that he thinks [the committee] understands.

[2:30:55 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that the first column that is allocated by Title I, Part A formula, only shows three districts that appear to not have any Title I eligibility: the Aleutian

Region, Pelican, and Skagway. She asked whether this was correct.

[2:31:22 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS confirmed that was correct.

[2:31:28 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that the meeting was going on longer than he had hoped, but that these were all important questions. He said that he would like to get through the rest of the slides.

[2:31:47 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY expressed concerned about the cuts to districts and noted that it looked like the school districts that received more money up towards the \$38 million have more Title I students and are getting more money from that. She asked whether this money would also allow the local municipalities to contribute to districts, as typically money is run through the formula and local municipalities can increase their contributions.

[2:32:41 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS answered that the federal funding Title I allocation is not a match-able fund; therefore, communities cannot contribute a match towards federal funding.

[2:33:15 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS, returning attention to the PowerPoint, referenced slide 12 and stated that some of the items on the slide had been discussed previously. She reiterated that the allocation for Alaska was \$38.4 million; the allocations are based on the proportion of Title I, Part A funds that each state received in the most recent fiscal year; it is anticipated that funding and allocation will be available on April 24, 2020, or April 25, 2020; and the state education agencies must award funds within one year of receipt.

[2:34:00 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS noted that Senator Giessel had joined the meeting.

[2:34:07 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS, referencing slide 13, stated that it had been briefly discussed in an earlier slide that the state education agencies may reserve 10 percent for grants and statewide emergency needs, which also includes half of a percent for administrative costs; these funds may be spent on emergency needs as determined by the state education agency to address issues in responding to the coronavirus. She said that the state can use these funds directly through grants or contracts.

[2:34:57 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS referencing slide 14, titled "Local Level Spending Options." She stated that this slide was intended to answer the question of how districts can use these funds. She said that any activity authorized under the federal Acts were noted on the slide, many of which will help in response to COVID-19, including preparedness and response efforts, sanitation, professional development, distance learning, and others. She said that she wants to remind people that this funding is very flexible to respond to emerging needs.

[2:35:52 PM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked Ms. Sanders for clarification on a topic from slide 10, relating to a childcare development block grant. He said that a lot of testimony had been heard on a "directly unrelated" issue of the potential impact on childcare from the current crisis, and he asked for more clarity on the governor's approach to childcare and on whether it was the intent of the governor, the administration, or DEED to maintain the current pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) programs with any of these resources. He remarked that there were also \$4.3 million in pre-K grants that were vetoed.

MS. SANDERS answered that the \$3.5 billion for childcare development block grants are funds administered by DHSS, and DEED is not involved in those conversations. She recommended follow-up with that department to see how it is administering those funds. She stated that there is \$11.5 million remaining in the existing budget for pre-K and early learning programs, which consist of \$6.5 million for Head Start, \$3.2 million for pre-K grants, \$500,000 for parents and teachers, and \$300,000 for Best Beginnings. She reminded the committee that GEER funds currently have had only \$3.7 identified through the allocation methodology, which leaves some funds available for the governor to determine how to utilize at his discretion. Additionally,

DEED can retain 10 percent of the funding that is allocated for ESSERF, and the determination on how that will be used has not yet been made. She remarked that there may be other opportunities, but she does not have a firm answer as to what they will be.

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that this was an encouraging response from Ms. Sanders, and he said he would be in touch with the department and the Office of the Governor regarding the extra resources and how they might best be allocated.

[2:39:25 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY remarked that she had two questions relating to items that were vetoed in the DEED budget: the elimination of the additional authority for the consortium library and support for the online libraries. She asked Ms. Sanders whether she knew of any possible funding for those two items.

[2:39:51 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS replied that she could speak to the vetoed amounts regarding the partial veto for online libraries, and she said \$33,000 is retained in the budget to work with libraries, archives, and museums to utilize subscriptions for online video conferencing and to provide equipment, as necessary. She asked Co-Chair Story to repeat the second question for her.

CO-CHAIR STORY responded that the question pertained to the \$635,000 for the consortium of library support.

MS. SANDERS stated that the state's current fiscal picture is not looking very great right now, as she said the committee is aware. She said that the governor chose to veto that funding and not expand the library operations for that program. She said she realizes that the term "operating funds" or "increase in operating program" has confused some people. She remarked that when looking at the State of Alaska's budget for the libraries, archives, and museums, an addition of \$600,000 would expand current operations. She expressed that given Alaska's current fiscal challenge, the governor chose to veto that funding.

CO-CHAIR STORY expressed that she would appreciate more information on that topic be provided to the committee. She emphasized the importance of the interlibrary loan, a state-of-

the-art program allowing for borrowing from any library or university in Alaska.

[2:42:19 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS offered his understanding that Ms. Sanders was saying that the reduction was for something that was to be expanded beyond the current system, not for the interlibrary loan system that has been in place for quite some time.

[2:42:37 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS said DEED could provide additional information to the committee, as Co-Chair Story had requested. She clarified her understanding was that the library being discussed was previously located and funded within the University of Alaska's budget, and due to reductions there was a proposal that would move the program into the libraries, archives, and museums, which is what she meant by expanding the libraries, archives, and museums operations. She stated that the decision the governor made was to veto the expansion of that program within the libraries, archives, and museums. She offered her understanding that there is some funding allocated currently in the university's budget for maintaining that, but she said she would have to defer to the university to speak to what is included in its budget.

CHAIR STEVENS said he would ask the university about the status of that program.

[2:44:13 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that the interlibrary loan program is being utilized more than ever now that the libraries have been shut down to entry by the public, and she remarked that it makes absolutely no sense to her to cut that funding, because she is sure [libraries] are having to dig deep to mail books to patrons instead of allowing patrons to come in and pick them up. She remarked that there needs to be more discussion on the topic.

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that if Ms. Sanders could get back to the committee with any additional information it would be appreciated.

[2:45:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked for confirmation of his understanding that DEED had said that the \$30 million-plus coming in from the COVID-19 and CARES Act funds could not replace the \$30 million that was vetoed out of the budget, and because that is money no longer coming from the state, it limits the amount that a municipality can give as a local match to a school district. Referencing slide 14 of the PowerPoint presentation, he asked for further confirmation that the CARES Act limits a lot of the funds to specific purposes and could not replace "the \$30 million lost that would impact electives, courses, support staff numbers, class size impacts - things like that." Those impacts will still be realized by school districts while the CARES Act funds go to specific things as listed on the slide.

[2:46:08 PM](#)

MS. SANDERS answered that she wants to be clear to the best of her ability that these are not replacement funds of the \$30 million; this is an allocation of federal funds through the CARES Act to school districts. She reiterated that school districts have a significant amount of flexibility in the use of these funds, including addressing some of the multiple items just listed by Representative Hopkins. She said that Representative Hopkins is correct in that federal funds cannot be matched and so local contribution amounts will not be increased given the federal allocation, but she said that given the state's current fiscal situation, the governor chose to veto the \$30 million and now money is being allocated through the CARES Act, which was the point of the presentation before the committee that day.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS remarked that he would be interested in finding out "what exactly these funds are able to be replaced for, " and added that "that might be specific to the school districts." He mentioned the layoffs of teachers and support staff and [the loss of] class types, and electives, and he said that unless "the et cetera down at the bottom of slide 4" allows for the replacement of jobs, activities, sports, and things like that which were cut from next year in the budgets, the impacts would be realized due to the governor's veto.

MS. SANDERS reiterated that DEED was still awaiting specific federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on all the exact uses and allowability for this funding. She said that once it has that, then DEED can provide school districts with

the resources and ability to help answer any questions that they have on allowable use of the funds.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS remarked that it makes sense and the state is still waiting on a lot of direction from the federal government.

PRESENTATION: The Current Status of Local School Boards and Their Communities.

[2:49:17 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the next order of business would be a presentation on the Current Status of Local School Boards and Their Communities.

[2:49:43 PM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, offered a PowerPoint presentation on the current status of local school boards and their communities. Referencing slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation, he stated that when schools first shut down the first question the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) received from school boards across the state was how they would be able to have school board meetings. He said AASB put together a webinar for school boards to be able to digitally have remote school board meetings, thus allowing the public access to comply with the Alaska Open Meetings Act, while complying with social distancing. He said that the model policy under Board Bylaw 9320 makes allowances to be able to do so and then archive on the AASB website. He commented anecdotally on a webinar with the National School Boards Association in which remote meetings were discussed and he had spoken about Alaska's model, which was then shared with states across the entire country. He expressed that AASB was pleased to be able to teach school districts in many other states how to accomplish remote meetings.

[2:51:37 PM](#)

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 3, stated that AASB has had multiple calls from school districts across the state asking for help as they wade through a new era of online meetings to provide resources to students and ensure student learning continues. He credited his team at AASB for doing amazing work under an increasing workload.

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 4, stated that he had made some screenshots of online resources from the AASB's digital newsletter, which previously went out once a month but is being put out every week now because of the quickly changing landscape. He said these were some of the webinars related to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing and closing schools. He said that school districts can access this resource on their own time, and he said that the webinars have had more participants than ever before, because school board members are taking advantage of the resources AASB is providing them.

[2:53:11 PM](#)

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 5 of the PowerPoint presentation, stated that AASB advertised that it is open for business to school districts and is picking up workshops and learning more about how to deliver them and maintain interest, which he said can be more difficult when you cannot read body language and look people in the eye. He said that the districts are responding to AASB, and he pointed out several different examples of workshops that AASB has put out for school districts.

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 6, stated that as Commissioner Johnson had mentioned, a lot of resources are available on the AASB website and the weekly commentary it puts out. He pointed out that the slide shows an example of Brigham Young University (BYU) contacting AASB to say it was providing a free online high school curriculum, which is another resource for school districts at no cost to them. Referencing slide 7, he stated that another resource AASB put out is for wellness, safety, and social and emotional learning. He said that there has been an amazing outreach from partners across the state and the nation, and AASB has been putting them on its site so that school boards are not overwhelmed and can access the resources. Referencing slide 8, he stated that AASB has been putting coronavirus information and resources on its website and has been monitoring the daily press releases from the governor, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and others, to provide a single place that school districts can go to get information.

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 9, stated that an interesting section in the commentary AASB put out is labeled "District Dispatches," which is a brief report of things that school districts are doing across Alaska. He said AASB asks a question of school districts each week; this week it asked how the school

districts are supporting students at home and what have been some successes and challenges. There has been great response from school districts, school board members, and school staff, which AASB has been posting. He pointed out an example of some things the Anchorage School District is doing, and the encouragement given to other districts.

[2:56:43 PM](#)

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 10, pointed out some things that keep school board members up at night. He said there is concern about limited and affordable bandwidth in rural and urban districts. He explained that many students across the state only have a smartphone as a digital device, and it is difficult to access courses and do the work needed on those devices. He said that he is happy DEED is looking into this and AASB is looking into other solutions as well. He said distance learning is a concern, as mentioned earlier by Commissioner Johnson, and he said he has heard from school board members that they are concerned about distance learning and would prefer distance learning to be from Alaskans, for Alaskans. He said there are concerns about planning for the 2021 school year, as no one knows what is going to happen but would like to make plans as far in advance as possible.

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 11, stated that school board members are worried about transportation. There has been trouble getting staff back into villages with the suspension of service by RavnAir Alaska, which really took school districts by surprise. He said school districts and other air carriers are scrambling to get staff, move students around, and get freight. The decreased service of the Alaska Marine Highway System has really affected school districts in Southeast Alaska, Southcentral Alaska, and the Aleutian Chain. Mr. Wooten remarked that there are concerns from school boards about financial support for the extra COVID-19 expenses, food service, instructional materials, Internet fees, and quarantining staff. He relayed that across the state budgets have "gone out the window." The budget that was put in place at the beginning of the school year is of no effect anymore, and districts are making changes on the fly.

MR. WOOTEN said the school board members also want to create an emergency plan that would include the possibility of a statewide pandemic. He stated that even though districts had a lot of plans in place, this caught everybody by surprise. Nevertheless, the districts have been able to do amazing things.

He said DEED has been a great help to the districts, but the state just needs a plan that has some protocols in place. He stated that school boards are worried about assistance for counseling, mental health, and social and emotional learning for students, staff, and community members. He expressed that this pandemic has really affected people and will be something that will never go away from their memories, and school boards will need to provide services to these people.

[3:01:03 PM](#)

MR. WOOTEN, referencing slide 12, stated that school board members are worried about summer programs; they want to ensure increased student achievement, do not want the students to go off track, and do not want to lose ground with them. He said they would certainly appreciate assistance in being able to offer a universal summer school for students across the state. He relayed that nearly all districts are subsidizing the food service provided now with district funds, and this will only get worse as the summer goes along. He stated that Alaska's significant Title I student population is the main user of food services, and districts are concerned about being able to ensure students don't go hungry, whether or not they are in school.

[3:02:23 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that he appreciated Mr. Wooten's presentation. He said the committee is certainly well aware of the crucial role that the school boards play in education in Alaska and understands to some extent, though not as much as Mr. Wooten, some of the problems being faced. He expressed hope that the CARES Act funds would get to the districts as quickly as possible.

[3:02:52 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that AASB has always been there for school boards and she appreciates its services. She stated that there has been little time to look at the draft document the department gave on the distribution of the CARES Act funding, and she emphasized her concern that school districts have already set their budgets for the fiscal year that begins in July and those budgets will be \$30 million leaner due to the governor's veto. She said that it sounds to her that the approximately \$38 million dollars is supposed to be replacing the \$30 million, and the \$8 million above and beyond that is supposed to take care of all the COVID-19 expenses. She stated

that without consulting with a single chief financial officer, she has a distinct feeling that the \$8 million is not enough to cover the expenses that were outlined in the last three slides by Mr. Wooten, including bandwidth, digital devices, transportation issues, the extra food services, instructional materials, and so forth. She asked Mr. Wooten what his thoughts were on that fiscal issue, then noted that it is a somewhat unfair question, and suggested that if he did not have that document, he should obtain it.

[3:04:40 PM](#)

MR. WOOTEN answered that the districts are very reluctant to spend money until they have it in their bank accounts. He said that what they are accessing now are their general funds and reserves. He said he seriously doubts that the \$8 million will be nearly enough money, but he did not want to speak for the chief financial officers and superintendents across the state. He stated that he was quite surprised that the CARES Act funds are being used to supplant rather than supplement. He said this might be a step away from the direction of Co-Chair Drummond, but he hoped it expressed the nervousness that AASB has.

[3:05:48 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked whether her understanding was correct that the \$38 million from the CARES ACT fund is already appropriated to all the districts through the Title I formula, and, as an example, that Anchorage will now have \$4 million more because it has more Title I students. She expressed her understanding is that DEED was trying to use the GEER funds to fill in for the other school districts that would not receive more Title I money to fill in the \$3.7 million, which would total \$38 million.

MR. WOOTEN replied that his understanding was that that is the case, and the \$38 million has been appropriated to the districts already. He said that it sounds like a lot of money, but the way the districts are currently spending money, it is going to dry up quickly.

PRESENTATION: Education Budget, Instruction & Staffing

[3:07:00 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the next order of business would be a presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing.

3:07:15 PM

LISA S. PARADY, PhD, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing. She stated that she wanted to join Chair Stevens in his opening comments in commending the incredible job of Alaska's K-12 public educators in responding to COVID-19. Referencing slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet], she stated that the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) provides leadership and advocacy for Alaska's public education, and as a private nonprofit established nearly 50 years ago, ACSA was created to serve as an umbrella for the Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA), the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP), the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP), the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), and the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN). She said that these organizations have been working collaboratively and tirelessly through COVID-19 to serve Alaska students.

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 3, stated that ACSA appreciates that DEED has accounted for the non-Title I districts to provide comparable funds through the discretionary CARES Act funding, and while there are still no specifics, she complimented the department in its estimates for the work that has been done to support all the school districts to receive the CARES Act distributions. She commented that as previously mentioned, there will still be the resulting loss of local matching funds to affected districts, and there will be additional costs as a result of COVID-19. She said that school districts would appreciate a quick approval by the legislature to receive the funds once distributed.

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 4, stated that ASCA has been the communications hub through COVID-19, supporting Zoom meetings and calls, as shown on the chart on slide 4. She thanked Commissioner Johnson and his staff for their willingness to join most of these to best support education leaders across the state to be on the same page and to hear the same information from the department and each other. She noted that Shawn Arnold, President, ASA, has facilitated meetings almost every morning with superintendents and the commissioner, through COVID-19. She said that Robin Jones, President, AASSP, and Eric Pederson, President, AAESP, have been supporting a weekly call with Commissioner Johnson and all the K-12 principals. She said there is a weekly call for education leaders statewide to hear

the same information from DEED and share with each other how each organization has been working to support education during this time. She stated that there is a current COVID-19 website that acts as a clearinghouse for school district resources that has been sorted by like-sized districts, so that school districts have not had to "[reinvent] the wheel," but can work with each other to support documents, messaging, or anything needed during this time.

[3:11:01 PM](#)

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 5, stated that ASCA is committed to continuing to support collaboration across school district leaders and statewide educators moving forward. She said that Commissioner Johnson and she have had many conversations about how they can best support school districts with school restart dates, reentry for next year, soft openings, and staggered openings, whether that is physical, virtual, or a hybrid. She said ASDN will continue to provide development and will continue to help with communication and collaboration across Alaska.

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 6, stated that Commissioner Johnson had shared that ASDN has been providing extraordinary services during this uncertain time. She said that ASDN has created no-cost, one-hour support sessions for teachers to quickly transition them to remote education. She thanked the ASDN team Kathy Blanc, Sam Jordan, Kelly Tonsmeire, and Ceann Murphy for working for a month straight to support educators across Alaska. She said that the mission of ASDN is to improve student achievement by providing research-based, online learning and face-to-face professional development programs for Alaska's teachers and school administrators; it has been doing this for nearly 40 years.

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 7, showed an example of the services that have been provided to Alaska educators since the coronavirus. She said that it is worth noting that 42 of Alaska's 54 districts have participated. She expressed pride in the work, which focused on core content to continue to provide students what they need in this remote environment.

[3:13:02 PM](#)

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 8, showed an example of offerings from ASDN in the current week. She explained that the offerings are different every week, and she noted that ASDN is cognizant of the disparity in Alaska regarding connectivity, bandwidth,

and infrastructure, and it is focused on how to help teachers without Internet access support their students. She said that these classes have been incredibly popular, because so many of Alaska's school districts that are off the road system and without connectivity are using paper and packets. She said ASDN partnered with NEA-Alaska to conduct a statewide needs assessment to determine what teachers' needs are before courses are developed; those needs were targeted, and the results can be seen on the slide.

DR. PARADY, referencing slide 9, pointed out some samples of feedback that have been received, and she said that all the feedback received has been incredibly positive. She reiterated that she is proud so many people are working hard to make this all work for Alaska's students. She expressed that she thinks it is important to make sure that the superintendents have the opportunity to share with the committee a boots-on-the-ground perspective of their transition to remote learning, the costs being incurred, the challenges being faced, and the successes that they have had. She stated that she would like to turn the presentation over to Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District; Dan Walker, Superintendent, Lower Kuskokwim School District; and Dr. Deena Bishop, Superintendent, Anchorage School District.

[3:15:08 PM](#)

KAREN GABORIK, PhD, Superintendent, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, testified during the PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing. She stated that it was a pleasure to be there to share how Fairbanks has responded to school closure during COVID-19 and to highlight some of the efforts and challenges as it shifts to a remote learning model. She said that the first two weeks of school closures, which were non-student-contact days, were utilized to prepare. She explained that using an online tool that was created by the district's team, school leaders and staff conducted a needs assessment with each family in the district to determine their status at that time. She said that several questions were asked about: the effectiveness of the district's communication and families' ability to access it; awareness of and access to resources on the district website; personal belongings of students and medications at the schools; whether supplies were needed to participate in engagement activities; whether assistance was needed with snack or meals at home; Internet connectivity; and access to devices. She said that the needs

assessment has served as the foundation for the response efforts in the district throughout this whole event.

DR. GABORIK stated that teachers focused initially on providing engagement activities for students and preparing for the transition to remote instruction. She said that in her district remote instruction covers the full gamut from no-tech paper and pencil options, to high-tech online options. She commented that educators had to get up to speed very quickly with platforms like Zoom, Google Suites, and a multitude of other digital tools. She said that naturally, the teachers who had been effectively integrating technology already were able to make the transition with much more ease than others, so a full range of support had to be provided to teachers to help with that.

DR. GABORIK stated that when the closure was extended to May 1, the school district began student device deployment; its target was to put 3,000 Chromebooks in the hands of students. She said that the priority was seniors, as the district wants to ensure that they graduate this spring. She stated that after that students then rose to the top of the list based on the needs assessment. She pointed out that Fairbanks is not currently a one-to-one district, but one silver lining in all of this will be a renewed commitment on the district's part in terms of resources, to ensure that every student in the district has a device, and she said the district would actively look at developing lease options so kids can take the devices home and have them available at all times. She stated that additionally, the district has begun to provide meals to kids across the community and there are two tiers - morning and afternoon - with approximately 45 drop off sites across the borough, including schools, local businesses, and agencies. To date, almost 94,000 meals have been delivered to students.

DR. GABORIK stated that her district's team of educators have curated high quality social and emotional learning resources and provided them on the website, through regular newsletters and personal contacts with families. She said that telephone counseling ("telecounseling") was deployed so that school counselors could continue to do their general and academic support work with students. She said her district is very fortunate to be a recipient of the Alaska Rises Grant, and it is engaging in teletherapy services to students to address mental health needs as appropriate to that grant. She remarked that her district's social services managers have provided a critical link for high-risk families, and they are working hard to keep those families connected with community resources. She stated

that one of the "heavy lifts" included the development of telework agreements for all employees, which was new to the district; in partnership with unions, the district was able to create agreements that have been seamlessly deployed across the organization. She said that in addition to working from home, which most of the district's employees are currently doing, there are some staff onsite, and to protect the health of these onsite employees, some crews, such as those in nutrition services and facilities maintenance, have split their shifts so that if an employee becomes ill with COVID-19, an attempt can be made to mitigate the impact.

DR. GABORIK stated that another heavy lift was developing a grading policy that was grounded in equity and a commitment to do no harm to students. She said that the district looked at best practices that were emerging around the country and put into place guidelines that focus on providing learning activities and feedback to students. She remarked that priority was once again given to seniors who needed to improve third quarter grades in order to graduate. She stated that the district tried to be very family friendly and cognizant of the limitations of family to support children at home. She remarked that the announcement that schools would remain closed for the rest of the school year put a damper on everyone's spirits and a noticeable dip in energy could be seen the week after that. She expressed that she thinks in general people were experiencing emotional and physical fatigue, and she said it has been important to shift from "sprint mode, to marathon mode" to encourage staff to take care of themselves and make sure they are getting a break.

DR. GABORIK stated that there are hundreds of amazing stories of students and staff creating meaningful connections and utilizing all the resources available. There are also heartbreaking pieces to this as well, and she said she thinks those parts of the story should not be glossed over. She stated that this year's seniors and their families are genuinely mourning the loss of traditional graduation ceremonies. She said that in Fairbanks it has been found that while principals truly want to create alternative events that are fun and celebratory, it is a challenge to do so with limited people who would normally be available to assist. She stated that her commitment has been to adhere to the advisories and mandates from the state and with only two and a half weeks left, decisions had to be made, so she gave directions to schools the previous week that there would be no gatherings of any type for graduations. She pointed out that the governor's message the day before confirmed this for the

district. She stated that principals are working on ways to create remote graduation events to celebrate the students.

DR. GABORIK stated that the kids she worries about most are the at-risk students, who have unfortunately dropped off the radar. She said that there have been multiple outreach efforts, home visits, and attempts to connect with families. She said that it is known that for some students the safest, warmest, and healthiest part of their day is at school, and they have not had that. She expressed that she is very concerned for these students, and if the schools reopen in August, they will have been off the school grid for five months. She said that she anticipates the district will need to significantly ramp up its social and emotional and trauma informed supports for these kids when they come back to schools. She stated that with every student it is anticipated that there will be some level of a learning gap, but for the at-risk students this will involve so much more than just academics.

DR. GABORIK stated that another thing to remember in all of this is that the staff have been stressed as well. She explained that educators do not function in a bubble, and all the social and economic stressors in the community are impacting them also; they have their own children to support, spouses who are out of work, and family members who are immune compromised. She added that some of the staff themselves are immune compromised. She stated that the district has been working hard to extend self-care and resilience resources to the staff during this time and to reach out to them as frequently as it is reaching out to students and families.

DR. GABORIK stated that looking ahead she is worried about education funding for fiscal year 2022 (FY 22). She said that not only is the price of oil a concern, but the impact of loss of jobs on community population and, ultimately, student enrollment in the long term, has her worried. She said that she personally wonders whether, once the travel bans are lifted, people will choose to stay in Fairbanks or Alaska, especially if there has been irreparable damage to their employment opportunities or they feel the need to get closer to family support networks out of state. She summarized that COVID-19 has changed the perspective on school, work, and life in general. She said there are moments of brilliance and inspiration, as well as moments of heartbreak and fatigue. She stated that everyone is finding their way to figuring it out, and she expressed that she truly appreciates the House and Senate

Education Standing Committees' interest in hearing from superintendents across the state.

[3:23:11 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that he appreciates Dr. Gaborik's comments and thoughts about not glossing over the issues. He expressed that he thinks she did a good job of informing the committee on how bad things are looking, and he understands her concern about funding in the future. He said that his main concern is young people graduating this year without meeting academic standards, thus going off to college without really being ready for it. He said he is concerned also about the students Dr. Gaborik had mentioned, who are dropping out. He asked Dr. Gaborik whether she could give the committee an idea on how many students in her district have been lost through this process, be it through parental involvement or other causes.

DR. GABORIK answered that she would speak to the seniors specifically. She said there is always an intersession in June to help the seniors who "just didn't make it," and she said the number of students who are at risk have doubled. She said that for some students, the online environment does not work, and she expressed that she thinks everyone is beginning to appreciate that there need to be several options for students. For some, in-person [instruction] is what they need and what works, and to expect them to be effective learners remotely is a challenge. She commented that she does not have numbers on how many kids have dropped off the radar, but she is hearing from the social service managers that there have been students "hanging on by a thread," and now "they're just not sure that thread even exists." She said that these would be important numbers to track after this is all over.

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that it is a shocking statement that at-risk students have pretty much doubled, and he said it would be interesting to know what that number is in other districts as well.

[3:25:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY remarked that Dr. Gaborik had prepared a document to send to [the House Education & Early Development Subcommittee] about what the loss of \$30 million in one-time funding would mean for her district, and she said that Dr. Gaborik talked about class size being conducive to learning, instructional aids, and a reduction in school activities. She

expressed that she assumes this is going to become a reality for the district now.

[3:26:00 PM](#)

DR. GABORIK replied that it has been interesting to track that conversation. She said that she has more questions for DEED, and she appreciates the questions from the legislators, because it helps bring some clarity to how the money can be used. She commented that the need is high, Fairbanks has a \$3 million hole from the vetoes, although she said she is still not clear as to what degree the district can fill that hole. She stated that she thinks summer programs and supplemental academics in the coming fall are going to be key for Fairbanks, which would be new services on top of cuts. She explained that sanitation training and supplies, planning for long-term closures, and educational technology will be huge for Fairbanks, as well. She said that someone had commented that rural areas are impacted, but even in a "community down the road system," there is a wide variety of connectivity for families. She said that these needs will have to be addressed. She stated that the equity gap in all of this has become glaringly clear, much of which has to do with connectivity and access.

[3:27:20 PM](#)

DANIEL WALKER, Superintendent, Lower Kuskokwim School District, testified during the PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing. He stated that the last five weeks had been an unprecedented time for everyone, and he said that the breadth of new challenges seems to be unending. He expressed that the level of stress that teachers are experiencing is unlike anything he has seen in his 28 years in the Lower Kuskokwim School District. He stated that most of the anxiety is around the uncertainty of the future and ranges from how to support students in this new learning paradigm, whether schools still will be in this mode of operating in the fall, and how to ensure quality learning for students. He said that this is further complicated by teachers' anxiety over their own personal safety and wellbeing. He commented that one frequently asked question is whether teachers will be able to leave villages for summer break to visit family and take care of their own personal healthcare needs, whether they will be able to return in August, and what this will look like in terms of quarantine needs.

MR. WALKER stated that in terms of education delivery, as can be imagined, the quality of education in rural Alaska is partially determined by access to the Internet, and most of the families in the communities do not have the luxury of basic Internet service outside of their personal cell phones. He said that without access to the Internet, teachers must think of creative ways to deliver instruction that is engaging and allows for creativity for the students. He stated that because of the lack of Internet, the use of the Florida Virtual School is simply not an option for his district outside of the school walls. He said that as his district has worked through logistics and has challenged teachers to move from packets of work delivered to home to more project based approaches that allow for hands on and meaningful experiences supported by the teacher through phone calls, text messages, pictures, and so forth. He stated that where available, teachers are holding Zoom calls with students and their parents. He expressed that he is continuously amazed by the staff and their desire to provide quality experiences for the district's students.

MR. WALKER reiterated that the Lower Kuskokwim School District does not have the capability to use the Internet to a high degree for instruction outside the school walls; while some infrastructure exists, it is financially out of the reach of most families. He said that the district is looking toward the future in determining what technologies might be utilized to provide access to rich multimedia content that does not require direct access to the Internet. He stated that current e-rate rules prohibit the district from extending its school Internet connections to students in their homes; however, the district is looking at technologies that would allow for the school networks to be extended across communities to provide access to media content and caching service, but without direct access to the Internet. This would allow for student issued devices to access a special network from students' homes to access the content. He expressed that in these uncertain times it is more important than ever to communicate on a regular basis, and the district is meeting with its 28 principals 3 times per week via Zoom calls and doing district-wide Zoom calls with all staff periodically to update them with the latest information. He pointed out that there are routinely more than 400 staff members on these district-wide calls. He stated that it is important that students continue to be fed through food service during this time of uncertainty, and the district is providing meals to students seven days a week and to the elders five days a week and has served approximately 64,000 breakfasts and 67,000 lunches to date.

3:31:36 PM

MR. WALKER stated that there are several other logistical challenges being addressed, including travel restrictions that have limited the ability of itinerants to provide services in a variety of areas. As an example, he said that one community had several tragedies involving students, and schools not being open and social workers not being able to provide in-person counseling has made it difficult to meet the social and emotional needs of students. He said that the district continues to provide teletherapy to students in these situations, but as can be imagined, it is not ideal. He stated that many staff are taking advantage of the district's employee assistance program, seeking counseling to deal with the emotional stress of the pandemic. He said the facilities staff are struggling to provide the same level of service to remote communities, due to the travel restrictions in some villages. He pointed out that a generator went down in a village the past week, and the needed part had to be transported to the edge of the village by snow machine and sled and wait for local staff to pick it up, as the people delivering it were not allowed to enter the village. He said that additionally, there are several construction projects ongoing, and village communities are not allowing contractors to come to the villages to work, which will cause delays and cost overruns. He stated that the district is working with the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation to make some of its facilities available, should there be a surge in COVID-19 positive patients in Bethel. He summarized that overall the district is working through these challenges and moving forward, and like Dr. Gaborik had said, many of the same challenges being experienced across the state in addition to the ones he mentioned, including graduation and meeting the mental health needs of students, is a challenge that he thinks they are all worried about in the long term.

3:33:56 PM

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that he appreciated Mr. Walker's comments and thoughts on the stress levels that everyone is facing.

3:34:25 PM

DEENA BISHOP, PhD, Superintendent, Anchorage School District, co-offered a PowerPoint presentation on Education Budget, Instruction, and Staffing. She stated that she would be presenting distance learning data, and she said she and the

Anchorage School Board appreciate being asked to share the information. She stated that she would be sharing surveys from teachers on their thoughts and perceptions on the three weeks they have been fully engaged in distance learning, as well as the actual student data from electronic systems that captured it. She shared that the information she would be presenting has some limitations, as it does not reflect the paper packets that have gone home to nearly 6,000 people this week. Some of those packets were for families that do not have connectivity or devices; however, she said that the district has had additional requests for paper packets: "something that a child could do at a table without a parent looking at a computer." She added that this data also does not account for long-term projects, such as online learning projects that are tracked based on students logging in during the week. She said that the Anchorage School District has distributed over 9,000 Chromebooks and 940 hotspots, with 1,300 more to be dispersed, and it has worked with partners in MTA Solutions, Alaska Communications (ACS), GCI Communication Corp, AT&T, and Verizon for the Internet.

[3:36:30 PM](#)

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 14 of the PowerPoint presentation, stated that the student remote learning engagement survey was asked teachers, the people on the front lines, their perceptions of student engagement in their classes. She noted that this data was "hot off the press." She noted that of the 3,227 in the district, 73 percent of elementary school teachers responded, [61 percent of middle school teachers responded], and 55 percent of high school teachers responded. Referencing slide 16, she said that the overall level of student engagement - shown on the chart from not engaged to very engaged - is a classic bell curve, with the little engaged and moderately engaged being what teachers are finding to be the most common. When surveyed, 46 percent of teachers felt that their students were moderately engaged.

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 17, stated that there is an interest in equity regarding educating all students. The Anchorage School District has a motto regarding the students it educates, which is that "all means all." She stated that there is a direct inverse relationship between Title and Non-Title schools with the center of the bell curve in the engagement.

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 18, stated that this chart looks a little busier, and at the top it asks, "To what degree do the following barriers affect your ability to support the remote

learning needs of your students?" She said that this was a question to individual teachers in the community, who responded that they had no difficulty in using the online communication platform or caring for or teaching their own children at home while teaching their students. The teachers also had no problem with bandwidth or Internet access in their homes. She said that there were some other challenges. She explained that this data is taken to plan for the kinds of support needed for teachers for the next week and the future. She stated that in order to create this program on the fly, the district wanted to understand what the needs are of the people doing the work.

[3:39:17 PM](#)

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 19, stated that the data she mentioned previously can be juxtaposed with the data pulled from the online programs being used for students in middle and high schools to engage in the content. She explained that platforms such as Canvas and Zoom are used to connect with students and have the student learning system, but the actual content is through Apex Learning, which is another high-evidence online learning program. She stated that in the research for the Florida Virtual School online learning, Apex Learning is the second from the top, and it is used in her district. She pointed out that the chart on slide 19 shows the number of students enrolled in Ninth through Twelfth Grades, the percentage logged in, and the percentage of submitted assignments. She said that this data is compared to other urban school districts. She remarked that Anchorage is in the Council of Great City Schools, and Co-Chair Drummond was a member of that as well when she was on the Anchorage School Board. Dr. Bishop said that this is the organization that represents the top enrolled school districts in the nation, so the data in Anchorage is more favorable than other urban areas. She stated that the third week of education showed a significant drop in the number of students logging in and the number of assignments submitted. She said that the limitations are that some of the courses do not need the students to log in every day or every week; they are longer term with just a choice to log in during office hours. She stated that all the teachers in the Anchorage School District have office hours for students.

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 20, stated that equity has challenged the board and administration to "keep an eye on the all," and to the district's surprise, of the kids logging in there was not a big "delta" among any of the groups and there was about the same amount of engagement from all the student

groups, including the economically disadvantaged. She expressed that she was happy with the data so far, even though she wished there were more students online.

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 21, stated that the middle school data was broken up between students that are "on straight Apex and then using a Canvas platform." She pointed out the middle school data in the same format as the other slide. She said that it is still early; there are only two data points, which do not create a trend, but the district is keeping a close eye on it. She said the district continues to query what it should expect. She said the city is hunkered down, the state is hunkered down, there is limited access, families are in their homes, and there is stress in communities and homes; therefore, the district is trying to engage with the data in its learning of the system and discover the appropriate expectations for what is doable and possible.

[3:42:56 PM](#)

DR. BISHOP, referencing slide 22 of the PowerPoint presentation, pointed out the middle school engagement in Canvas, which is more social studies and science, and in Apex, which is English and math. Referencing slide 23, she said that the slide demonstrates the same thing about middle school student groups, and again the Anchorage School District has found that the engagement of the different races and ethnicities, as well as students represented in different categories such as Title, have all been very comparable to each other. She stated that this leads to more questions.

DR. BISHOP referenced slide 24, which spotlights English language, Indian, migrant, and special education learners. She said that some of the special education students are engaged in the general curriculum with support, while others are on alternate assignments, and it was difficult to gauge due to the differences there. She reiterated that she wants to be transparent and open and share data with the committee that is hot off the press. She said there is a struggle with expectation, but the world is in a pandemic, so that has to be taken into account to determine what needs to be done to bring hope to the communities, to bring routine to children and families, and to assure them that the district is there for them. She said that the district does its best, although it is difficult to determine what the needs will be in the future. She stated that the district knows through the data that a

significant input will need to be made into summer learning to reengage students who have not been engaged.

DR. BISHOP, regarding finances, said, "We don't know what we don't know." She explained that the largest expense is going to be making up the learning that was lost. She related that the district budgeted for food and computers for students, as well as items budgeted in the normal, everyday running of the school district. She added that there are areas where school districts are reserving money by not using substitutes, energy, and other things like that, and that money can be redistributed for present needs. She said that an unknown is the summer school issue and how there will be an "additive program" so that the children of Anchorage and all Alaska "can get back up on their feet and continue in the learning trajectory to meet the student outcome," which she emphasized is the main reason why public education exists.

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CHAIR STEVENS remarked that he appreciates Dr. Bishop providing the committee with such up-to-date information. Referencing slide 19 of the PowerPoint presentation, he remarked that the submission of assignments seems to be almost half from Ninth through Twelfth Grades, and he asked Dr. Bishop what conclusions she draws from that.

DR. BISHOP answered that the data was just received the day before, and the district is looking at it. She said the district understands that "the excitement and newness of something got folks out there and now we're falling into routine." She said that a lot of these courses are not designed for students to log in everyday with their teachers to complete them, and some of what has been shared by students and teachers is that they log in, download the assignment, do the assignment, and then upload and submit them. She remarked that the district had looked at the make-up of the students and the courses and found that there is not a disparity among the different ethnicities and races. She said that the next step that the board charged the district with after seeing this data the night before, was to look at where these students are in their schools and what the differences and similarities are of those who are logging in and completing [assignments] versus those who are not. She added that the next goal the district has for itself is to use a multi-tiered system of support, which she said addresses instruction in different levels; students in tier one are logging in and doing fine at this pace, but added support

needs to be there for students who are not logging in, and the district is trying to figure out what it can do and how to do it with distance education. She reiterated that the district is meeting people where they are, and the needs are vast. She said that she has communications from some families that they want more rigor and accountability and from other families that they cannot take on even one more thing, and the vast differences are difficult.

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CHAIR STEVENS thanked Dr. Bishop and remarked that he looked forward to hearing from her in the future on how things have developed. He expressed concern that this could be a lost year for so many of Alaska's young people, and he said that he knows Dr. Bishop is doing her best to make sure that doesn't happen.

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CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that this must be enormously stressful, and she said that she appreciates all the work that Dr. Bishop and her "thousands" of staff are doing to approach normalcy in Anchorage. She expressed that she has concerns about the loss of the \$30 million one-time funding and the resulting loss of local matching funds to affected districts. She remarked that this is all so new she has no idea how the CARES Act funding will intersect with that funding space, and she asked Dr. Bishop whether she has any thoughts on that. She remarked that the \$30 million that was outside the formula has been vetoed, and the funding from the CARES Act will be considerably more for the Anchorage School District, but overall for the whole state, it will only be approximately \$8 million more than the \$30 million would have provided. She said it sounds like, as Mr. Wooten had said, school budgets are basically out the window and districts are scrambling as fast they can to provide services and keep up with the needs of students and are not worrying about the budget impact at this point.

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DR. BISHOP replied that this was a great question. She said the Anchorage School District and Anchorage School Board voted on a budget early on that did not include the \$30 million. She said the Anchorage School District made some significant adjustments to its program, specifically to health education, by increasing the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) at high schools, eliminating some

positions, and redesigning its gifted program to make up an approximately \$20 million reduction; the district was able to make up \$14 million dollars outside the classrooms but had to reduce \$6 million inside of them. She stated that the legislature supporting the \$30 million brought \$8 million to Anchorage, which might seem large compared to other school districts, but is relative because Anchorage has approximately 40 percent of the students in the state. She said there would have been \$2 million in a local match on top of that, and because there is a high percentage of poverty in Anchorage and many students, it is receiving an additional \$2 million that was not expected.

DR. BISHOP stated that the school board did make some adjustments to help teachers in bringing them back, as well as the gifted, essentially "kicking the can down the road," and it will have to double up on reductions in the future, because this is one-time money. She said that this is the biggest issue, and there is a long road ahead. She said that right now in the process, there are some savings being made because of things she had mentioned. She said that the district didn't lose a year, only nine weeks, but [this time lost] took a toll more on the social and emotional side of normalcy and stress. She said that for the most at-risk learners, or most unrepresented learners, additional inputs will be needed, and summer school, early learning, and pre-K is where it matters the most. She expressed that she fears that the district will have to expend money to summer school or other aspects added to the school year, to compensate for lost time and learning.

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CHAIR STEVENS thanked the Superintendents Gaborik, Walker, Bishop and Dr. Parady and said the presentation was quite enlightening for everyone. He said he looked forward to hearing from them as they move down the path in the coming months.

PRESENTATION: UA COVID-19 Update: Impact & Response

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CHAIR STEVENS announced that the final order of business would be the presentation on UA COVID-19 Update: Impact & Response.

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JIM JOHNSEN, PhD, President, University of Alaska, offered a PowerPoint presentation, titled "UA COVID-19 Update: Impact & Response" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He stated that he appreciated the last hour, hearing from other education leaders in Alaska and their challenges, and he said he was inspired by the hard work and commitment that they are delivering every day. He said that it is an example of the resilience of Alaskans, which is what he would be talking about.

DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation, stated that he would give an overview of the levels of commitment that the University of Alaska (UA) is making to its mission of higher education in Alaska, through support for mitigation efforts, communities, and education in general. He said that UA is experiencing very negative effects of the COVID-19 virus, and he would talk about those in terms of expenses and projected revenue declines. He stated that he would also talk on what is headed the university's way regarding its fiscal picture, which involves state funding cuts since 2014. He said that he would then speak to how UA is moving forward, and he noted that it was great to hear from his colleagues as to how leadership is happening in the schools across Alaska. He stated that the UA Board of Regents is meeting weekly to deal with this specific issue. The university system has a management team, and each of the three universities have this system as well, which is linked with the state for close communication and cooperation in this response.

DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 3, stated that in terms of mitigation response, UA's top priority is the health and safety of the students and employees. He said that the university was in spring break and decided to extend it another week, closed the campuses, and asked students not to come back or find an alternative if they were living in a student residence. He said that there were a small number of students from rural Alaska - international students and some others - who were permitted to stay on campus as an exception. He stated that UA transitioned to remote program delivery on March 23, most of which is online; however, some of it is over the telephone. He said that thousands of courses were transitioned in a week's period.

DR. JOHNSEN stated that most UA faculty and staff are working from home; the faculty is providing distance delivery and the staff is performing their regular jobs. He said that on-campus events were cancelled, even commencements, which he said was a sad but necessary thing to do. He stated that access to facilities is highly restricted and only essential use is

allowed, including preparation of online materials, and research that needs to continue. He said that additionally, UA operates critical facilities such as police, heat, and power plants that need to continue, and social distancing and other hygiene measures are being taken. He commented that critical research needs to continue, and UA was able to acquire some exemptions from several of the governor's health mandates, consideration for which he expressed appreciation to the governor and his team. He said that UA is constantly enforcing very strict monitoring rules, cleaning practices, and distance protocols. He noted that UA is using the Internet extensively and has a website for faculty, students, and staff that summarizes how to learn, work, and teach most effectively.

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DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 4, stated that in terms of UA's commitment to communities, it is deploying all available capacity, brainpower, and resources to communities and the state, including expertise in epidemiology and economics, as well as [distribution of] medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). He clarified that he had just received approval from Commissioner Crum the previous evening to transfer hand sanitizer and other PPE UA has manufactured in its labs and campuses to communities. He stated that UA can work with the state and the Board of Nursing to graduate senior nurses early, and they now have interim certification to "get out there and into the fight" to help take care of Alaskans who need care. He said that the dorms have been made available to first responders and there are facilities use agreements in place with numerous communities across the state. He stated that the Alaska Airlines Center, [on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus], is now an alternative-care site for the COVID-19 crisis. He remarked that UA is also focused on "coming out of this" and on economic development for the state, and the center for economic development, business enterprise institute, and small business development center are all working hard on this. He said there is a lot of hard work going on in support of the communities.

DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 5, stated that in terms of education more generally, UA has converted thousands of classes to alternative modes and is in communication with Commissioner Johnson on how to support K-12 teachers with professional development for online courses and programs going forward. He said that UA is continuing its virtual middle college, for college-ready high school students across the state and

conducting research on the transition from in-person to alternative modes of education. He stated that now more than ever there needs to be a focus on stepping up and growing UA's teachers, for several reasons already stated throughout the afternoon. He noted that the day before, UA had a very constructive meeting with the heads of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Regional Corporation Education Foundation and is working closely with the funders and supporters of rural and Alaska Native students to do the best for their access and retention in academic programs during these tough times.

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DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 6, mentioned financial impacts and stated that there is no question that UA is getting hit. He said UA has had to help its students get off campus and provided support for travel, housing, and other basic living expenses. He remarked that it has also set up private donation funds, and people across Alaska have been very generous in supporting students' needs. He said that some students are kept on campus, and those who are low income or have other specific needs are being taken supported. He stated that UA has expanded payroll benefits to take care of, which is a burden it bears as an employer. He pointed out that it is buying Chromebooks and Mifis and getting them to students, faculty, and staff across the state. He expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Internet service providers in Alaska and said they have really stepped up to help bring down the cost of distance delivery. He added that there have been increased costs for security, cleaning, and other steps that have been taken.

DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 7, stated that the bigger challenge is the impact on revenue. He remarked that UA does not know exactly what these are, which is why the slide shows a range, and he expressed that UA is very concerned about impacts on revenue. He stated that UA earns a lot of money from investments and subsidizes operations from investment income, which is obviously down. He said that if enrollment continues to decline as a result of the pandemic, tuition and fee revenues will decline. If students are not living in UA dorms, going to hockey games, buying books or food, or parking vehicles on campuses, auxiliary income will decline. He stated that if research is delayed, research revenues decline and indirect cost recovery declines, and he said that there are compelling needs for philanthropy in Alaska and across the country, and UA anticipates some softening in philanthropic giving. He said

that UA's estimate at this point for the coming year is between \$35 million and \$40 million in costs and foregone revenues.

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DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 8, stated that Congress has passed statutes that provide some assistance to higher education, and \$7.9 million is coming to UA directly, via a formula; \$3.9 million of which is for students and has already been received, and UA is in the process of designing how it gets distributed to students. He said that the other \$3.9 million will go directly to UA institutions; it has yet to see money but anticipates it will arrive in the next couple of weeks. Additionally, Congress appropriated \$6.5 million dollars into an Emergency Education Relief Fund that is discretionary with the governor, to fund any education needs, whether they be at UA, the schools, or other post-secondary institutions in the state. He stated that UA is working with the governor's office on that and has indicated a strong interest in receiving some portion of those funds.

DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 9, remarked that the slide depicts the decline in funding of the state's Unrestricted General Fund (UGF); the peak was in FY 14, and there was a downward slide beginning in FY 15 where there were substantial year-over-year reductions with a cumulative impact of \$490 million. He stated that the current three-year compact agreement has a \$70 million reduction, so there is a serious combination of continuing base budget reductions with increasingly less ability to absorb the reductions, and COVID-19 laid on top of that. He said that UA is back in Washington, D.C., advocating for additional federal stimulus funds, directly with its delegation and in conjunction with higher education associations. He pointed out that two big ideas have bubbled up as areas of possibility, one of which is to refinance debt at zero or low interest, which would bring down the annual service cost of debt to free up resources to offset other reductions or to take care of operating expenses. A second option would be to do two things to the e-rate program: to expand its scope to include post-secondary institutions, which as of now it includes only primary and secondary; and to "plus out" the appropriation for it, so that it is not in a zero-sum competition with the schools across the state who benefit from this important program.

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DR. JOHNSEN, referencing slide 11, remarked that looking ahead, UA continues to believe that education is critical for Alaska's economic recovery, and it is an essential partner with the state, communities, and businesses in the effort. He expressed that it is going to be a difficult time ahead, and said that UA is open this week for enrollment for classes in the fall, keeping a close eye on enrollments and spending small discretionary pots focused on recruitment, marketing, and retention of students, and the university is at this point delaying the decision as to whether it will be delivering classes primarily in-person in the fall or via distance online. He stated that it is the goal to offer as much as it can in-person in the fall, but it will be prepared to offer mostly online if that is what conditions require. He said that UA students and faculty want this decision made as soon as possible, and it will make the decision as quickly as it can, given the conditions on the ground, and he expressed that UA is very hopeful that as plans come forward on opening up, it will be able to open up, as well. Nevertheless, UA will be prepared to offer its full curriculum in the fall. He noted that continued uncertainty is likely to contribute to enrollment challenges, and although the direction and focus UA has on meeting its mission will help, he expects some challenges on the enrollment front this coming year.

DR. JOHNSEN stated that UA will need to cut costs because of the state budget cuts, but he said that he thinks there will need to be other further reductions. He said that it is in the planning process for furloughs of employees in FY 21 and, after several years of no compensation increases, modest compensation adjustments that were put into the budget will need to be reconsidered. He stated that there are administrative and academic program reviews focused on trying to get \$45 million of cuts out of the UGF in FY 21 and FY 22, which is a major process; UA has already identified close to 50 different academic degree programs for discontinuation and reduction, and the academic and student affairs committee has met, and those selections are moving forward for a board decision in June. Additionally, he said there are extensive administrative reductions, consolidations, and other steps underway.

DR. JOHNSEN thanked the committee for the opportunity to present. He stated that not everything is negative and like its colleagues, UA is doing its best to position itself to come out of the pandemic strong. He remarked that UA will be smaller with the budget reductions, but he said that he thinks it will be more focused on its goals of economic development, research,

workforce development, educational attainment and equity, and cost effectiveness.

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CHAIR STEVENS expressed his appreciation for the comprehensive look at UA, and he expressed that there was concern from the committee for what happens to the university with the combination of reductions in budgets plus COVID-19. He asked Dr. Johnsen whether he has any reflection on what is happening to college and university education around the country.

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DR. JOHNSEN replied that "it is all over the map," because there is great variance. Small, low enrollment, private liberal arts colleges with small endowments are suffering dramatically because they do not have the cash capacity to deal with these kinds of reductions. He said that he was on a panel a couple of weeks ago with the head of the regional institutional accrediting body for the Northeast, who was describing the number of colleges closing and the number of colleges merging in that area. He remarked that Vermont is a prime example, and there is "a lot of that." He stated that the concern is even at the table of "the big ones." He explained that he was on a panel recently with the University of California, Berkeley; Michigan State University; Ohio State University; the University of Georgia; and many other big universities, and they are very concerned about enrollment impacts, [lost] revenue from athletics, research, graduate students and graduate training, and the future of the faculty for the long term with the interruption of training future faculty members. He remarked that there is a high level of concern across the country as this issue is addressed. He stated that there is a tremendous amount of communication and collaboration happening, and universities are learning from each other going forward and paying close attention to the experiences of other institutions.

CHAIR STEVENS remarked that he appreciated Dr. Johnsen's positive comments about seizing opportunities to take care of teachers and nurses. He said that it seems likely that kids will not want to leave their homes, and "we have that advantage"; therefore, he encouraged Dr. Johnsen in his marketing to students.

DR. JOHNSEN responded that UA would be focusing on marketing. He said typically when unemployment rates increase, enrollment

increases, and although he was not certain that this would take place during the COVID-19 recession, such a phenomenon could be a "silver lining to a dark cloud." He said that UA has developed over the years some very strong, nationally competitive, high quality online programs, and there is the possibility that these programs can be marketed nationally and internationally, based on areas of unique expertise developed over the years. He summarized that these were some upsides that UA will hopefully be able to invest, in spite of cutting everywhere else, to position itself to grow in the future.

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CO-CHAIR STORY remarked that she did not know how much of the discussion Dr. Johnsen heard earlier, but there were some questions about the funding of the consortium library program that had been vetoed from the DEED budget, and it was thought that the reason it was vetoed was because this was an expansion of the program, and she asked Dr. Johnsen whether this is an expansion of the program, from his understanding, or this would fund the interlibrary loan program in the State of Alaska.

DR. JOHNSEN offered his understanding that a portion of the funding that DEED received for this program is what was used to purchase services from UA in the amount of approximately \$200,000. He stated that this does create an issue, because those funds are used to provide those services. He said that UA is looking at the situation to evaluate the impact of the veto in DEED and its inability to purchase those services from UA as a result. He stated that he could not go into any more detail at this point because it is a developing situation, but it is a concern.

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CHAIR STEVENS stated that all the testimony heard in the meeting was extremely valuable, and there would probably need to be more meetings in the future to explore the details of all the issues that were presented. He reiterated that it is impressive and inspiring to hear what everyone is doing during this time.

[4:18:07 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.