

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 9, 2019
2:27 p.m.

[2:27:59 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Wilson called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 2:27 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Tammie Wilson, Co-Chair
Representative Jennifer Johnston, Vice-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Gary Knopp
Representative Bart LeBon
Representative Kelly Merrick
Representative Colleen Sullivan-Leonard
Representative Cathy Tilton

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Geran Tarr, Sponsor

SUMMARY

HB 22 EXTEND SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNCIL

HB 22 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Wilson reviewed the meeting agenda.

#hb22

HOUSE BILL NO. 22

"An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date."

2:28:33 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR, SPONSOR, introduced the bill that would extend the Suicide Prevention Council through 2027. The council had been created through statute in 2001; it had been through multiple audits and had been recommended for continuation because it was meeting the statutory requirements. The current audit recommendation was for a lengthier extension to the full eight years. She noted that over the years the recommended extension had been increased by the auditors.

Representative Tarr highlighted some of the council's statutory requirements including advising legislators and the governor on ways to improve Alaskans' health and wellness by reducing suicide, improving public awareness, enhancing suicide prevention efforts, working with partners and faith-based organizations to develop healthier communities, creating a statewide suicide prevention plan, and building and strengthening partnerships to prevent suicide.

Representative Tarr shared that she had the privilege of serving on the council for the past four years. The past fall, the council had released its new plan for 2018 to 2022, which was the third version of the State Suicide Prevention Plan. The council coordinated the Department of Education and Early Development on getting prevention grants into schools for primary prevention. She stated there was substantial promising work happening in schools with young people. She relayed the Alaska chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention had been in Juneau a couple of weeks earlier and had spoken about its program "I Talk" that worked with high school students on speaking up when they saw something. She stated there was significant positive work occurring. The council also worked with the legislature.

Representative Tarr spoke to the council's diverse membership. For example, it included a member recommended by the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). The council had partnered with AFN to do prevention education and healing workshops at the annual AFM meeting, which had been a

powerful experience during her time on the council. Additionally, membership included individuals from the faith-based community, who were great partners, especially in smaller communities when stability was important. She reported that schools and churches were foundational to communities and made good partners. She added that there had been council members in those areas in recent years. Additionally, there were members who were active and knowledgeable in health. She highlighted that the council's strong partnerships helped incorporate the most relevant and recent understanding of suicide prevention and programs. She highlighted trauma-informed programs as an example, which had been implemented into the approach for suicide prevention.

Representative Tarr hoped the committee would hear from the auditor at the following meeting. She noted the audit contained a couple of minor recommendations for improvements related to public notice and note taking. She believed the council staff was dedicated and well prepared to make the improvements and keep the work going.

[2:32:07 PM](#)

Co-Chair Wilson appreciated the bill introduction. She relayed her intent to hear from the auditor Kris Curtis (legislative auditor, Alaska Division of Legislative Audit) at the bill's next hearing. She referenced the audit review titled "A Sunset Review of the Department of Health and Social Services, Statewide Suicide Prevention Council (council)," dated August 3, 2018 (copy on file), in members' packets. She asked members to review the audit report prior to the bill's next hearing on Friday [April 12, 2019]. She noted public testimony would be taken that day as well.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard requested to hear from DHSS at the following meeting as well.

Co-Chair Wilson agreed. She intended to ask members about their questions prior to the next bill hearing in order to be prepared. She noted the subject impacted not only the schools and young people, but numerous agencies.

HB 22 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

2:33:42 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m.