

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
February 20, 2020  
5:03 p.m.

[5:03:18 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Foster called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative Jennifer Johnston, Co-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 Adam Wool  
Representative Cathy Tilton (via teleconference)

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Austin Brown, Interim CEO, Fairbanks Rescue Mission; Brenda McFarlan, Employee, Fairbanks Rescue Mission; Mathew Carrick, Fairbanks Citizen, Juneau; Cheryl Kilgore, Interior Community Health, Juneau; Rachel Lord, Self, Juneau; Paul Larentz, Self, Juneau; Representative Steve Thompson; Representative Grier Hopkins.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Garrett Armstrong, Self, Fairbanks; Susan Henrichs, Self, Fairbanks; Lesa Meath, Self, Fairbanks; Tammy Smith, Self, Fairbanks; Rick Spencer, Self, North Pole; Abel Bult-Ito, Faculty Union of United Academics, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Gerald Keyse, Self, Fairbanks; Misty Cole, Self, Kenai; Michael Jeffery, Self, Barrow; Nici Simms, Self,

Juneau; Lara Law, Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL), Haines; David Hurlbut, Self, Juneau; Jeannie Creamer-Dalton, Self, Fairbanks; Sharon Baring, Self, Fairbanks; David Frey, Self, Fairbanks; Julie Saunders, Self, Fairbanks; Jaclyn Cheek, Self, Fairbanks; Bert Houghtaling, Self, Big Lake; Grant Echohawk, KRBD, Ketchikan LIO; Leila Kheiry, KRBD, Ketchikan LIO; Donald Westlund, Self, Ketchikan LIO; Phil Doherty, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association (SARDFA), Ketchikan LIO; Holly Kenoyer, KRBD, Ketchikan LIO; Mary Forbes, Self, KODIAK; Robyn Cassidy, Self, KODIAK; Cheri Smith, Executive Director, Leeshore Center, Kenai; David Brighton, President, Kenai Peninsula Education Association, Kenai; Wayne Aderhold, KBBI/Kachemak Bay Broadcasting, Homer; Rachel Breithaupt, Self, Ketchikan.

#### SUMMARY

HB 205            APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

HB 205 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 206            APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 206 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Foster reviewed the meeting agenda. He explained the public testimony process and provided the call in number and House Finance Committee email address.

#hb205

#hb206

#### HOUSE BILL NO. 205

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

#### HOUSE BILL NO. 206

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

[5:03:46 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster detailed the agenda of the evening's meeting. He announced the different ways that the public could participate in public testimony.

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: FAIRBANKS

[5:07:40 PM](#)

GARRETT ARMSTRONG, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), expressed broad budget concerns. He spoke against the \$30 million cuts to education. He stated that he was a teacher, so felt that he job could be at risk. He noted that it could cause stress on students. He felt that there should be more funding for the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

[5:09:22 PM](#)

SUSAN HENRICHS, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of a reasonable level of funding for public service. She testified in support of funding for UAF. She also stated that she would be willing to pay taxes and accept a smaller Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD). She felt that the UAF compact did not sufficiently fund the university. She remarked that it would be difficult to serve the students statewide. She stressed that UAF had the ability to improve its enrollment, due to its unique location and education system. She felt that UAF could have a better and robust level of funding.

Co-Chair Foster noted Representative Thompson and Representative Hopkins in the audience.

[5:12:04 PM](#)

AUSTIN BROWN, INTERIM CEO, FAIRBANKS RESCUE MISSION, shared that he had experienced periodic times of homelessness in his life. He advocated for retaining the full amount for the basic homeless assistance funding. He felt that programs would be eliminated to survive the cuts. He

stressed that homelessness would increase, and thereby overwhelming local services. He encouraged collaboration with various stakeholders.

Co-Chair Johnston wondered where there should be an emphasis in homelessness or an increased PFD.

Mr. Brown felt that he would advocate for direct homeless assistance programs. He remarked that there could be a continued burden on the community.

Representative Carpenter wondered whether the Fairbanks Rescue Mission had fundraisers, and whether it received a percentage of its total from local donations.

[5:16:02 PM](#)

Mr. Brown replied that there was a support base of approximately 1200 individuals and organizations in the community. He shared that there were three veteran programs; a recycling program; a Mental Health Trust Authority resource for rapid rehousing; Habitat for Humanity; and a development of tiny homes for sustainable housing.

Representative Carpenter wondered how the Fairbanks Rescue Mission would request help from the community, should there be a reduction in resources from the state.

Mr. Brown replied that the Fairbanks Rescue Mission was already connecting with the community. He shared that they used the radio stations and on different platforms in the community. He stated that the community made up the difference of the \$58,000 reduction from the year prior. He stated that there was still a hope that the community would continue to respond.

[5:18:03 PM](#)

BRENDA MCFARLAN, EMPLOYEE, FAIRBANKS RESCUE MISSION, shared her story. She stressed that her family was able to prosper in Fairbanks due to the "safety net" that an extended family member was able to assist in their time of need. She stressed that no one wanted to go to a rescue mission, because it was a last resort.

Representative Wool wondered whether the Mental Health Budget would have restored funds.

Co-Chair Foster replied that the original funding was \$7.8 million, but was reduced by \$500,000 in the governor's proposed budget had \$7.3 million. The Mental Health Board recommended \$8.15 million to leverage their own funds. He stated that the most recent Mental Health Budget included \$8.15 million, therefore it was restored.

Representative Wool wondered whether the recommendation was larger to make up the gap in the UGF.

Co-Chair Foster stated that it was larger than the governor's recommendation.

[5:23:53 PM](#)

MATHEW CARRICK, FAIRBANKS CITIZEN, JUNEAU, advocated for reduced PFD and exploration of broad based taxes. He also spoke in support of keeping the CBR at full capacity. He testified in support of funding for UAF. He did not feel that "treading water" would advance the state. He specifically felt that there should be a reduction in the deferred maintenance backlog at UAF. He spoke to the issue of food security. He felt that there should be some conversations with those in the agriculture industry.

[5:26:05 PM](#)

CHERYL KILGORE, INTERIOR COMMUNITY HEALTH, JUNEAU, spoke in support of examining the Medicaid budget, and consider the people that rely on Medicaid. She felt that the \$3000 in the PFD did not come close to offsetting a complication that might occur at a hospital. She spoke in support of a reduced or eliminated PFD. She stated that she had worked in the health care industry for a long time. She shared that many of her family members had attended the University Alaska system. She stressed that many people in Alaska lived in poverty. She remarked that the Interior Community Health Center had a positive impact on those that come to the center. She noted the strong health outcomes of the patients. She remarked that the center focused on prevention and intervention. She noted that many patients had various problems in their lives. She stressed that her center relied on the entire health care system to assist the patients. She restated that the center was the safety

net, and the entire community helped in the care of the patients. She stressed that the center does a good job of keeping people out of the hospital.

[5:31:31 PM](#)

Representative LeBon recognized the accomplishments of Ms. Kilgore. She wondered whether the Interior Community Health Center received an award.

Ms. Kilgore stated that the center had received an award in 2018 for the top ten percent of health outcomes in the country. She stressed that there were many factors that come into receiving that award.

Representative Wool stated that he had been a patient at the health center, and emphasized that the health center provided a sliding scale of payment for services.

[5:33:46 PM](#)

LESA MEATH, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), echoed the comments of previous testifiers, focusing on compassion for all Alaskans. She spoke in support of funding the Alaska Marine Highway System. She spoke in support of the Interior Community Health Center and the Fairbanks Rescue Mission. She spoke in support of suicide prevention and educational opportunities for at risk youth. She testified in support of funding for education funding. She noted that there was always an attempt to recruit and retain educators in the state. She felt that Alaska needed to work to be attractive for potential teachers. She noted the issue of the schools that were not in the road system, and the infrastructure issues in those communities. She felt that there were many students and families that should be given the best opportunities. She supports the education tax and a cap to the PFD. She opposed any retroactive payments to the PFD.

[5:38:01 PM](#)

TAMMY SMITH, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), echoed the comments of Ms. Meath. She stated that she was a teacher, and spoke in support of funding for education. She strongly supported funding for UAF. She also spoke in support of funding for health care programs. She felt that strong public schools were important. She shared that there

was a reduction in resources, and stressed the issue of recruitment and retention. She remarked that there should be an effort to make the educational positions more attractive for potential applicants. She felt that there should be an examination of funding public education for all students in the state, both urban and rural schools. She felt that the elimination of the one-time finding would result in further erosion of the school system.

[5:42:54 PM](#)

RICK SPENCER, SELF, NORTH POLE (via teleconference), spoke in support of a state income tax. He echoed the statements of the previous testifiers. He felt that additional revenue would help with the state's budget issues.

Representative Carpenter wondered whether Mr. Spencer was employed in the private sector.

Mr. Spencer was currently retired, but paid income tax. He was previously employed as a power lineman in the private sector.

[5:45:08 PM](#)

ABEL BULT-ITO, FACULTY UNION OF UNITED ACADEMICS, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), advocated for K-12 education funding. He spoke in support of funding for the University of Alaska. He appreciated the additional \$10 million, so the cuts may not be as detrimental. He remarked that the university may need to cut dozens of programs. He shared that, despite the adversarial issues, he was very proud of the faculty in the university system. He was also grateful for the students who were ready to learn and achieve at the university.

[5:47:54 PM](#)

GERALD KEYSE, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for care coordination for the disabled. He testified in support of funding for transportation for senior disabled citizens. He remarked that cutting for the senior disabled would result in difficult lives for many people. He wondered why there were so many cuts to programs that impacted him. He felt that care for seniors should be a higher priority. He supported the governor, but hoped that he could get some direction in

helping the senior population. He remarked that there should also be funding for UAF.

Representative Josephson noted that there was a public transportation grant funded through the capital budget for many years that did not survive FY 2020. He shared that his office was examining that funding.

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: HOMER, KENAI, KETCHIKAN, KODIAK, MAT-SU, SEWARD

[5:51:24 PM](#)

MISTY COLE, SELF, KENAI (via teleconference), spoke against funding for Medicaid expansion. She spoke in support of fully funding the PFD, and felt that a change to the PFD should be put to the vote of the people. She asked that there be responsible cuts to the budget. She spoke against taxes and exploration of additional revenue. She also spoke against a binding caucus in the legislature.

[5:54:18 PM](#)

MICHAEL JEFFERY, SELF, BARROW (via teleconference), spoke against the suicide prevention program. stated that he had worked with various organizations that address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). He stressed that the therapeutic court was important for people that want to turn their lives around. He remarked that a holistic approach was important in the criminal justice system. He also spoke in support of public education and the university. He stated that he was in support of an income tax in order to fund the necessary services. He also spoke in support of public media.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard thanked Mr. Jeffery for his years of service. She stressed that he always gave wise counsel.

Mr. Jeffery thanked Representative Sullivan-Leonard.

Representative Knopp wondered whether there was an impact to public radio in Barrow from the previous year's budget cuts.

Mr. Jeffery replied that his community had made steps forward to keep the radio on. He stated that there may not

be a staff, but did not know the details of public radio in his community.

Co-Chair Johnston noted the high cost of living in Mr. Jeffery's community. She wondered whether the community would support a smaller PFD.

Mr. Jeffery replied that he was speaking for himself, so he did not want to speak to what the community would prefer for the PFD.

[6:00:47 PM](#)

NICI SIMMS, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke against the Juneau Area Mental Health Initiative (JAMHI). She stated that it was too easy to receive the checks from JAMHI. She remarked that people were able to receive money too easily. She felt that many people were taking advantage of the money. She remarked that the PFD was a mistake. She felt that doctors would stop participating in Medicaid. She encouraged the committee to examine other options. She remarked that Alaska was attracting the wrong kind of people.

[6:05:50 PM](#)

LARA LAW, SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING (SAIL), HAINES (via teleconference), spoke in support of fully funding the Mental Health Budget. She testified in support of senior transportation services. She shared anecdotes about those that use the transportation system. She remarked that the taxi voucher program allows for the participants to run errands without relying on other people. She also spoke in support of funding for the Public Guardians.

[6:08:43 PM](#)

DAVID HURLBUT, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke against use of the PFD to pay for state services. He spoke against putting the burden of paying for state government on families. He stressed that the PFD gave back to the people of the state. He felt that the elimination of an income tax was the biggest mistake.

[6:14:01 PM](#)

Ms. Law continued with her testimony. She urged support of funding for the Public Guarding budget. She stated that SAIL coordinated regularly with guardians, and shared that many participants lived in horrible circumstances. She also spoke in support of funding for telehealth systems.

[6:16:45 PM](#)

RACHEL LORD, SELF, JUNEAU, shared that she was a resident of Homer. She spoke in support of funding for rural and road system public safety; court system; marine highway service; K-12 education; the university system; a health care service that provides safety nets; public media; and regulatory programs. She encouraged bold leadership. She felt that the state was out of time. She remarked that there should be a broad approach, including use of the permanent fund. She also spoke in support of a broad based tax, specifically an income tax. She cautioned against a statewide sales tax. She spoke in support of an oil tax assessment.

[6:20:10 PM](#)

PAUL LARENTZ, SELF, JUNEAU, shared that he lived in Ketchikan. He spoke in support of funding the Alaska Marine Highway System. He stated that he had worked for the ferry, and remarked that there were many people who were waiting to work on the ferry. He remarked that there was a need for skilled workers if and when the ferry begins to function again. He remarked that there was a major impact to Southeast Alaska while the ferries were not operating. He shared that he had many different job offers, but was scared to take any of the offers.

Representative Josephson wondered whether there was 100 of the 450 workers actively working.

Mr. Larentz replied that out of 450 people employed by the unit, only 100 were working.

Representative Josephson wondered what the other 350 people doing.

Mr. Larentz replied that some were pursuing other jobs. He stated that he was also examining other jobs working in the sea. He was not sure the direction of the current ferry system.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard surmised that it was currently the "slow time" for ferry traffic.

Mr. Larentz replied in the affirmative, but he normally had at least three vessels running.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard wondered whether the full 450 employees would be working.

Mr. Larentz replied that there would be approximately 250 to 300 working.

[6:24:36 PM](#)

JEANNIE CREAMER-DALTON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Historic Sternwheeler. She remarked that the boat had been a museum, so there was a process to restore that boat. She did not know whether the budget had anything to fund historic objects. She shared that the National Park Service agreed to help the funding for the sternwheeler.

[6:27:48 PM](#)

SHARON BARING, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for education from Pre-K through the university system. She also spoke in support of funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System. She spoke in support of keeping the PFD at \$1600. She also spoke in support of an income tax. She testified in support of public media. She commented that Nevada chose to invest heavily in their education during their economic downturn.

Representative Carpenter wondered whether Ms. Baring was employed in the private or public sector.

Ms. Baring replied that she was employed in the public sector.

Representative Wool noted that Ms. Baring was the school nurse at his children's school.

[6:30:50 PM](#)

DAVID FREY, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke against large PFDs. He felt that the permanent fund was

meant for future generations, and it should not be taken for the current year. He spoke in support of a "reasonable" PFD. He wanted a thoughtful and balanced approach to the budget. He felt that the budget should include sources of new revenue. He spoke in support of an income tax, which would be a percentage of everyone's federal income tax liability. He stated that the income tax would also gain revenue from the out of state workers who currently benefitted from Alaska's infrastructure, but who paid little or nothing in tax. He testified in support of increasing the gasoline tax. He felt that there should be an increase to the oil industry tax. He spoke against cuts to current state services, especially K-12 education and the university. He shared that he was self-employed in the private sector in the tourism industry. He stressed that his business depended on infrastructure in the state.

[6:33:21 PM](#)

JULIE SAUNDERS, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for correctional officer recruitment. She shared that she had been employed as a correctional officer and had left her service when she was married due to the dangerous nature of the job. She stated that recruitment was not focused towards the long-term. She believed it needed to more closely mirror law enforcement recruitment.

[6:35:37 PM](#)

JACLYN CHEEK, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified about her concern that the current year would take a similar turn to resemble the past session. She stressed that the ferry system had crumbled, the accreditation University had been threatened, elders could not afford to live in the Pioneer Homes, public safety was poorly supported, and people on Medicare had lost dental coverage for months. She did not have a miracle solution for the budget, but she was scared for the state's schools, teachers, and others. She did not support the governor's budget that would drain savings. She thought the endless cuts and special sessions needed to end. She supported legislation to bring in more revenue via income tax or a change in [oil] tax credits. She supported a budget that funded the public system and protected vulnerable citizens.

[6:38:29 PM](#)

BERT HOUGHTALING, SELF, BIG LAKE (via teleconference), found it disturbing that six people in the House would decide what would happen in every district. He thought the binding caucus was extortion and blackmail. He thought there were special interests guiding the budget. He did not support the use of the PFD to fund government. He stated that government had been growing for decades. He thought the Department of Health and Social Services budget had grown \$3.5 billion in the last year. He discussed the broken ferries due to decades of underfunding. He wondered why funding had not been provided in the past. He did not think the governor had personally broken the ferries. He thought it was disturbing the legislature was trying to bypass the PFD statutory formula. He stated that until the past year the budget had never paid for the PFD - he thought the statutory formula should be followed where the money was transferred from the Earnings Reserve Account. He believed there was adequate funding to backpay the past PFD and pay the current full PFD.

[6:41:09 PM](#)

GRANT ECHOHAWK, KRBD, KETCHIKAN LIO (via teleconference), testified in support of public radio and shared the vital nature of the service to outlying communities. He shared that many outlying communities had limited access to internet and resources. He stated that the AMHS terminal had limited access to resources. He supported the ability to communicate vital information to outlying communities, including emergency services, news, streaming local basketball games, and other. He believed it was necessary to provide a platform to allow the community to be informed, to receive safety updates, and to participate with one another. He noted there had been a cut the past year. He appreciated the money in the current budget. Ultimately, he wanted to ensure public radio was at the top of the list. He supported the AMHS and stressed the need to develop a solution to get the system running and to put people back to work. He underscored that putting people out of work was a very short-term solution that created long-term problems. He stated that the individuals invested in communities when they were back to work. He continued to address the benefits of the ferry system. He spoke to truly diversifying the state's industry to reduce reliance on oil and mining. He pointed out that there were many other

industries with alternative fuel options. He thanked the committee for its time.

6:45:20 PM

LEILA KHEIRY, KRBD, KETCHIKAN LIO (via teleconference), testified in support of public radio as a vital resource for maintaining connections in Alaska. She stressed that many small communities relied on their community radio stations for emergency and safety information, along with local, statewide, and national news. She listed the merits of the service. Many communities would be cut off without the service, which made public radio a key state service. She discussed cuts from the prior year meant that the station was already at bare bones services. The station had increased its fundraising by adding another pledge drive, raffle, and auction. The station had a staff of four and the current level of fundraising was unsustainable. She supported a proposal to add some money to the state budget for public radio, which would go a long way towards providing necessary services.

Vice-Chair Ortiz thanked Ms. Kheiry for her testimony. He asked if funding cuts in the previous year had impacted other stations throughout the state.

Ms. Kheiry replied that the smaller stations throughout the state were really struggling to hang on. Many stations were trying to make it through the year with the hopes of being able to increase their funding for the coming year. She stated a second year of cuts would identify which stations were able to survive and which stations would have to close their doors or severely cut services.

6:48:06 PM

DONALD WESTLUND, SELF, KETCHIKAN LIO (via teleconference), thought that \$18.7 million was positive, but it was not enough to bring AMHS services up to the needed amount. He thanked the committee for its time. He stated that DOT was allocating \$365 million to widen the Seward Highway. He noted there had been an avalanche that had required overtime workers to clear the road. He stressed that the state could not even keep its ferries on the road. He considered what would happen if the avalanche had not been cleared and the roads had been closed until the snow melted. He supported increasing the motor fuel tax. He

disagreed with the governor's stance on the PFD; he preferred no dividend in order to have services like healthcare, ferries, and other. He stated that DOT was spending \$12 million to put a roundabout in Anchorage, while it was allocating \$18.7 million to fix the ferry system. He believed another \$50 million was needed to get the ferry system back to reasonable service.

[6:50:46 PM](#)

PHIL DOHERTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DIVE FISHERIES ASSOCIATION (SARDFA), KETCHIKAN LIO (via teleconference), shared information about the association. The value of the combined fisheries for geoducks, sea cucumbers, and red sea urchins was between \$10 to \$12 million per year. He shared that divers paid a mandated assessment tax of 7 percent in the geoduck fishery to pay for federal and Department of Environmental Conservation shellfish requirements and the Department of Fish and Game's assessment and management of the fishery. The 7 percent was in addition to the 3 percent state fish tax. He provided additional information about the fishery. Upwards of 95 percent of the geoducks were sold to the live Chinese market. Divers spent \$150,000 per year from the assessment tax to collect paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) samples. The association hired divers to collect samples weekly, which were sent to Anchorage for testing. Since the inception of the geoduck clam fishery, the state had not charged for the PSP analysis at the lab. He noted that SARDFA had always paid for the shipping of the samples. Under the governor's budget, the state would charge lab fees. He stressed that if the fees were charged the geoduck assessment tax would not be enough to cover the cost and the fisheries could close.

Mr. Doherty stressed that the governor's proposed budget would decrease the DFG dive fisheries budget by \$19,900. The association assumed it would have to make up the amount or lose fishing opportunities. He underscored that SARDFA already paid over \$100,000 for DFG to manage the resource. He emphasized they were the only fisheries in the state to directly subsidize DFG. He highlighted that an increase of 20 percent to its budget, while no other fishery was paying its way did not make sense. He urged the committee to deny the cut in the DFG budget.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked Mr. Doherty to repeat the fees SARDFFA paid.

Mr. Doherty complied. He detailed that SARDFFA paid slightly over \$100,000 to DFG annually. He provided additional detail on the process. The amount did not cover 100 percent of the department's management fees, but it was close. He shared that DEC money pertained only to the geoduck fishery. He explained that geoducks were required to pass PSP levels. The association spent \$150,000 per year to collect the PSP samples, \$19,500 for water quality samples, \$3,500 per year for DEC to reclassify the areas, \$18,000 to certify areas for inorganic arsenic testing, \$25,000 per year on geoduck money for management, and administrative costs of about \$50,000 for a total of \$266,000 per year, which was more than the fishery brought in over the past several years in assessment tax. The fishery would close if it was taxed for the PSP lab testing.

Representative Merrick asked what year the state started paying for the PSP testing.

Mr. Doherty replied that the geoduck fishery started in the late 1980s and the fishery started testing at that time. The association had always paid to collect the samples, while the state had always paid for the PSP testing at the lab.

[6:56:56 PM](#)

HOLLY KENOYER, KRBD, KETCHIKAN LIO (via teleconference), spoke in support of public radio broadcasting. She thanked the legislature for its efforts to fund public broadcasting in the past year. She asked the committee to consider funding for public broadcasting in the current year. She shared that she had stopped in to say hello to her mom on the way to testify. Her mom had asked her to be quiet while she was listening to state and local news. She shared that she used the public radio for election updates, basketball games, music, poetry, news, weather, water quality and more. She stressed that public broadcasting connected all communities in Alaska. She shared that it was community broadcasting.

Vice-Chair Ortiz thanked Ms. Kenoyer for taking time to share her story about public radio.

6:59:39 PM

MARY FORBES, SELF, KODIAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of public broadcasting. She shared that the loss of \$77,000 in the past year had put station's future in jeopardy. The station relied on the funding for day to day operations. Additionally, loss of the funding put the station's federal funding in jeopardy as well. The governor's cuts had impacted the borough and city council, which had also cut funding for the station. She stressed that the snowballing effects were increasingly difficult to make up. The station was doing its best to try to make up the difference, but any state funding would help. She shared that communities and villages relied on public radio for vital communications, news, weather, the fisheries report, and more.

7:01:14 PM

ROBYN CASSIDY, SELF, KODIAK (via teleconference), stated there were many items she wanted to see increased in the current budget including a fully functioning ferry system, Pre-K, K-12 education, the University, a robust public broadcasting system, school bond debt reimbursement, healthcare, funding for wildfires and melting permafrost. She shared that the headline in the local paper that day had been looking at increasing property taxes due to the governor's cuts. She supported ending the credits to oil corporations. She thought the time for funding roads and bridges to nowhere had passed. She appreciated a reduced PFD in the previous year. She suggested asking the D.C. representatives for funding for the ferry system, but she understood that federal agencies looked at the PFD program as an excuse to withhold funds from Alaska. She believed the state was overdue in finding new revenue resources. She did not believe a lotto would be sufficient. She was more than willing to pay for continuing and sustainable services.

7:04:22 PM

CHERI SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEESHORE CENTER, KENAI (via teleconference), the center provided emergency shelter and advocacy services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The center was also a member program of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. She was grateful to the governor and legislature for

understanding the mission of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault within the Department of Public Safety. The counsel was the funding agency for all victims' service programs throughout the state. She listed all of the services the center had provided in the past year. She thanked the legislature for its help ensure there was adequate funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services.

[7:06:19 PM](#)

DAVID BRIGHTON, PRESIDENT, KENAI PENINSULA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, KENAI (via teleconference), testified on the importance of education. He thanked the governor and legislature for fully funding K-12 education in the current budget. He stated that fully funding the Base Student Allocation (BSA) without including the onetime \$30 million from the previous year was a burden on the school district. The administration was working to ensure there were no cuts; they would be spending some fund balance to protect students' education in the current year; however, they were worried about the following year. He spoke to forward funding education and its importance in keeping teachers in Alaska. He asked the legislature to continue forward funding education in the future in order to retain teachers. He noted that under the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) teachers were fully vested after five years and could leave Alaska to teach elsewhere. He spoke to the importance of retaining teachers in order to benefit students in Alaska.

[7:08:23 PM](#)

WAYNE ADERHOLD, KBBI/KACHEMAK BAY BROADCASTING, HOMER (via teleconference), shared that financial support for public broadcasting was needed and appreciated as stations continued to progress towards self-sufficiency through membership and underwriting from local businesses. Listeners depended on public radio for national, statewide, and local programming that was not available from other sources. He highlighted that the station provided live broadcast and online streaming of borough assembly and city council meetings in an effort to enable an informed electorate. The station had formalized its association with the city and borough emergency departments to be directly involved in information gathering during any type of public emergency or natural disaster. He provided additional

detail. He appreciated the funding in the budget to support public radio.

Co-Chair Johnston reviewed the email address for public testimony.

[7:11:34 PM](#)

AT EASE

[7:32:29 PM](#)

RECONVENED

RACHEL BREITHAUPT, SELF, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), shared that she was a former school board member and social worker for the state. She spoke in support of full funding for schools and students who needed special attention including "pullouts" and in-classroom para-professionals. She believed teachers needed to be paid appropriately in order increase teacher retention. She supported full funding for Pioneer Homes and senior benefits. She shared that she spent much time helping individuals get affordable housing and healthcare. She stressed it was very challenging for many Alaskans. She implored the legislature to save the AMHS. She stressed the desperate need in Southeast communities for the state subsidized ferry system. She pointed to small communities who were currently experiencing food shortages because ferry service had stopped. She discussed the importance of doing things together. She asked the committee to continue to consider vulnerable populations during the budget process.

HB 205 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 206 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Foster shared the email address for public testimony. He reviewed the schedule for the following day.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[7:32:29 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.