

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 3, 2020
9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes, Vice Chair
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator John Coghill
Senator Mia Costello

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING:

Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development
Lorri Van Diest - Palmer
Keith Hamilton - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 109(EDC) AM

"An Act relating to residency requirements for public school enrollment for certain children of active duty military and National Guard members."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 109

SHORT TITLE: MILITARY CHILDREN SCHOOL RESIDENCY WAIVER
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LEDOUX

03/25/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/25/19	(H)	MLV, EDC
04/09/19	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/09/19	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
04/11/19	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/11/19	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
04/16/19	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

04/16/19 (H) Heard & Held
 04/16/19 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
 04/18/19 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
 04/18/19 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 04/23/19 (H) MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
 04/23/19 (H) Moved CSHB 109(MLV) Out of Committee
 04/23/19 (H) MINUTE(MLV)
 04/24/19 (H) MLV RPT CS(MLV) NT 6DP
 04/24/19 (H) DP: KOPP, THOMPSON, JACKSON, TARR,
 TUCK, LEDOUX

 05/08/19 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
 05/08/19 (H) Heard & Held
 05/08/19 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
 05/10/19 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
 05/10/19 (H) Moved CSHB 109(EDC) Out of Committee
 05/10/19 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
 05/11/19 (H) EDC RPT CS(EDC) NT 3DP 1NR 1AM
 05/11/19 (H) DP: TUCK, DRUMMOND, STORY
 05/11/19 (H) NR: HOPKINS
 05/11/19 (H) AM: REVAK
 02/03/20 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
 02/03/20 (H) VERSION: CSHB 109(EDC) AM
 02/05/20 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 02/05/20 (S) STA, EDC
 02/18/20 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 02/18/20 (S) Heard & Held
 02/18/20 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 02/25/20 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 02/25/20 (S) Moved CSHB 109(EDC) AM Out of Committee
 02/25/20 (S) MINUTE(STA)
 02/26/20 (S) STA RPT 3DP
 02/26/20 (S) DP: COGHILL, WILSON, KAWASAKI
 03/03/20 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

LORRI VAN DIEST, Governor's Appointee
 Alaska Board of Education and Early Development
 Palmer, Alaska

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

KEITH HAMILTON, D.Min., Governor's Appointee
 Alaska Board of Education and Early Development
 Soldotna, Alaska

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

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as sponsor of HB 109.

DENEEN TUCK, Staff
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered question about HB 109.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:00:08 AM](#)

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Hughes, and Chair Stevens.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development

[9:00:53 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the confirmation hearing for two of the governor's appointees to the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development.

[9:01:29 AM](#)

At ease

[9:01:33 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reconvened the meeting and asked appointee Lorri Van Diest to introduce herself.

[9:02:52 AM](#)

LORRI VAN DIEST, Governor's Appointee, Alaska Board of Education and Early Development, Palmer, Alaska, said she was reappointed by the governor. She had served the remaining two years of Mr. Harmon's term after being appointed by Governor Walker. She said she is a life-long Alaskan who grew up in Seward and followed her father's footsteps by joining the teaching profession. She began her career at Seward High School. It was rewarding to teach students that she had babysat in her earlier years. After getting married, she moved to the Mat-Su Valley. She was part of the original staff of Colony High School where she taught math and became a secondary guidance counselor. She transferred to Teeland Middle School and has spent her last six years in the

Mat-Su School District office working as the curriculum coordinator.

MS. VAN DIEST said she retired from the Mat-Su Borough School District in 2010 to become a full-time teacher to her three children. Four years ago she became a substitute guidance counselor and is currently an elementary counselor at a Title I, high-needs school. Having boots on the ground at a local school gives her direct insight into the daily workings of a school. She brings this perspective to the board. She has spent the majority of her career in public education as a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, coach, and curriculum coordinator. Her focus has been and continues to be the safety, health, well-being of students. The state's children must feel safe in their school environment and have a connection to their school. Establishing relationships and building connections between students and staff is a critical component to the safety and well-being of students. When students do not feel safe and connected, the learning of reading, writing, and mathematics does not go very well.

MS. VAN DIEST said that after she was seated on the board, she learned about the Alaska Education Challenge. She was pleasantly surprised to find that one of the five trajectories of the challenge is to "improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes." The board has adopted the Alaska Education Challenge and this framework has guided its work. The board has directed the commissioner of Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to focus on the components of the Alaska Education Challenge. Current legislation corresponds to the goals of Alaska Education Challenge, including SB 6, the Alaska Reads Act, sponsored by Senator Begich, which has given all Alaskans hope that children can achieve the goal of reading by the end of third grade. SB 13, related to tribal compacting, sponsored by Senator Stevens, is a clear conversation starter on the priorities that many Alaskans want to see in the education system. These bills show direct ties to the strategic priorities of the Alaska Education Challenge.

[9:07:38 AM](#)

MS. VAN DIEST shared that as she thinks about the opportunity to serve on the Board of Education another term, she wants to continue the strategic work the board has adopted. She serves as the Regulations Committee chair. The committee has been reviewing each of the education regulations. The committee works with DEED's staff to determine where a regulation needs to

remain as is, be revised, or be removed. When stakeholders express a need for regulation change, the committee reviews it and makes recommendations to the board. The revised regulation then goes through the review process by all stakeholders prior to being considered for adoption.

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

MS. VAN DIEST said in addition to student goals, she wants to see the university system graduate more Alaskan teachers. The state needs more teachers and once the state gets them, it must work to keep them.

MS. VAN DIEST said that in addition to supporting the goals and indicators of the Alaska Education Challenge, she wants to see stable and affordable funding of education with fiscal discipline for those funds. For example, the Board of Education regulation committee is working to reduce regulatory restraints on districts to allow more flexibility within state and federal laws in spending practices. The board will continue to use the Alaska Education Challenge strategic plan to focus efforts and navigate this challenging time in the state.

She said the board is committed to DEED's vision of ensuring all students succeed in their education and work, shape satisfying and worthwhile lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

CHAIR STEVENS said the committee appreciates her years of dedicated service to the children and schools of Alaska. She answered his questions about what she intended to do to improve education in Alaska.

[9:11:27 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that SB 6, the Alaska Reads Act, is in partnership with the governor and the work of Senator Hughes, Senator Stevens, and Senator Costello. He asked for more detail about the regulatory changes the committee is reviewing.

MS. VAN DIEST replied the regulation committee has been working with the DEED director of teaching certification on Chapter 12, the certification of teachers to find alternative pathways for certification that also meet the needs of students and teachers. One regulatory change is coming before the board for the first reading, so the board can hear from stakeholders, at the end of March. The board is trying to decrease regulations that seem to be prohibitive to school districts as well as to make changes to give school districts more flexibility in hiring teachers.

SENATOR BEGICH responded that finding alternative pathways to certification raises a red flag because he does not want the state to lower the standards for certification. He asked her to elaborate on that effort.

MS. VAN DIEST replied the board and regulation committee is cognizant of maintaining standards for certification, but understands that the state has a teacher shortage and retention difficulties. She offered to provide her notes from the last regulatory committee meeting to speak about the emergency certification.

SENATOR BEGICH said that isn't necessary; the committee will see that information later. He referenced disturbing presentations about the university's ability to produce teachers and the spirited conversations the committee has had about what it takes to produce more teachers in the state of Alaska. He asked what the board is looking at to address the teacher shortage more directly with the university.

MS. VAN DIEST replied it would help for the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development to be more connected with the University of Alaska Board of Regents. In the past, the State Board had meetings with the Board of Regents to talk about university issues.

MS. VAN DIEST shared that she recently completed a week in Juneau with her daughter for Close Up. Many students were from rural villages. These students talked about how many of their teachers did not even finish teaching the whole school year. It is important that students decide to become teachers and go back

and teach in their villages. She said she thinks that SB 136 can help.

SENATOR BEGICH said he agrees with the suggestion that the Alaska Board of Education and the Board of Regents meet.

[9:19:29 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES offered her understanding that the Alaska Board of Education has reached out to the Board of Regents to have a joint meeting but it has been difficult to achieve. She suggested that if there is any hesitation or pushback about joint meetings, the legislature could consider making that a requirement.

CHAIR STEVENS added that the legislature and educators know the future is not bright when there is a teacher shortage throughout the United States. He noted that many teachers come to Alaska for two or three years and then go elsewhere because of the retirement system and asked for her thoughts about the retirement system.

MS. VAN DIEST replied that she was fortunate when she began teaching in 1988 because she was part of the Tier I system and many of her colleagues are in Tier II. From what she has heard from the young teachers in the building she is in, the retirement system is not good. There have been conversations with NEA about Social Security. She does not know all the ins and outs of that and is not particularly knowledgeable about the Tier III retirement system but younger teachers are concerned about it. Alaska salaries used to be the highest, but no longer. Alaska is a tough area, especially if people are away from family and need to travel down south at Christmas and summer holidays, especially for teachers in rural Alaska and not on the road system. She does not have a direct answer, but those are some thoughts off the top of her head.

CHAIR STEVENS said he appreciated her thoughts.

[9:23:33 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH agreed that the joint meetings should be pursued. Noting that the Alaska Reads Act will require a lot in regulations, he asked if the board is doing any preliminary work on what regulations the act would require, should the bill pass.

MS. VAN DIEST responded that DEED has formed teams to consider how to quickly implement the bill should it pass. A tremendous amount of work will have to happen and drafts are being started.

Superintendents, principals, teachers, and reading specialists are fully committed to implementing the bill but must be on board to help draft the regulations and give feedback about what each school district can implement.

SENATOR BEGICH said he appreciated her candor and answers.

9:27:25 AM

KEITH HAMILTON, D.Min, Governor's Appointee, Alaska Board of Education and Early Development, Soldotna, Alaska, said he is the current vice chair of the State Board of Education. He has been the president of Alaska Christian College for almost 20 years. The college serves Alaska Natives and is a postsecondary, accredited college that reaches out to the farther edges of Alaska to allow students to have a shot at higher education. The college just passed more than 100 students the past year, 90 percent of them Alaska Native, 5 percent American Indian from the Lower 48, and the rest Caucasian. The college has a lot of experience with students from rural Alaska and the challenges and barriers rural students have experienced in their educational pursuits. Many of the issues related to the Alaska Education Challenge and the state's educational pursuits are close to the hearts of those at the college. He reported that 90 percent of their students walk through the door unprepared academically for college. The college has a strong team and student success center that helps them get there. The college is graduating its largest class of 15 students this year with the college's four different associate arts degrees. His wife Debbie is the executive director of New Hope Counseling Center. It supports Alaska Native students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) scores. The college takes a whole life approach to students from rural Alaska.

DR. HAMILTON said he has been a commissioner for five years for the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) and was just renewed. His role as a college president is to connect K-12 with what is happening at ACPE. He was asked to join the State Board of Education to be a liaison between those two large, important educational groups in the state. As part of the subcommittee of the State Board to the University of Alaska for a couple of years, he has participated in joint meetings. When the subcommittee held in-person meetings, he was able to be a point of contact between the Board of Education and Board of Regents. He has been on the state personnel committee for eight years. He is committed to a healthy, educated state that reaches out to all Alaskans. He is involved in various faith-based

community organizations and social service organization on the Kenai Peninsula.

DR. HAMILTON said his hope is to be consistently helping the Alaska Education Challenge to be all that it can be. DEED staff and the Board of Education use it every day for the specific things it brings to the overall picture of education in Alaska. It is critical and he continues to work toward that.

DR. HAMILTON informed the committee that the department has turned around a horrible situation with its testing company from three years ago. He was part of the safety and well-being subcommittee for Alaska Education Challenge and was involved in the process of the state getting approved for Every Student Succeeds Act. He hopes that SB 6 will become law and that the state graduation rate will continue to climb.

9:33:57 AM

DR. HAMILTON shared that his students take an ACEs test because trauma-informed practices are critical in the state. He expressed hope that the state continues to make that a priority through SB 6. He said the current team on the state board is solid and he believes it is critical that it continue. He hopes that the critical nature of having momentum with the board is part of the discussion today. It is difficult to do business as a board when the board members meet once or twice a year and have so much on their plates. Two meetings are not enough. There is not enough time for dreaming and scheming. He hopes that is part of their near future so the board can work more collaboratively.

DR. HAMILTON said educators and legislators all know that the challenges in Alaska are enormous. He is a local control guy and hopes the state can continue to give as much as possible back to local school districts and perhaps to tribal compacting.

CHAIR STEVENS said it is always great to have a chance to talk to Dr. Hamilton and learn what he has been doing. The committee appreciates his service to Alaska and the board.

9:37:17 AM

SENATOR BEGICH noted that Dr. Hamilton's documents do not show that he is serving on the ACPE board or the personnel board. He asked Dr. Hamilton to please make sure those things are listed in the future.

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony and after ascertaining there was none, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearings.

[9:38:20 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development

Lorri Van Diest - Palmer

Keith Hamilton - Soldotna

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[9:38:57 AM](#)

At ease

HB 109-MILITARY CHILDREN SCHOOL RESIDENCY WAIVER

[9:39:48 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 109(EDC) AM, "An Act relating to residency requirements for public school enrollment for certain children of active duty military and National Guard members."

He stated his intention to hear the introduction of the bill and hold it for further review.

[9:40:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, speaking as sponsor, said that HB 109 is a residency waiver for military children. If people in the military are given orders to transfer to Alaska, but are not transferred before registration for school, then these students could be registered on the basis of the transfer papers. The Department of the Defense (DOD) is trying to get all the state legislatures to pass this bill or something similar. It is important to the military. If students have to wait until the families are in the state to register, some high school classes needed for graduation and electives are closed. Charter school lotteries can also be closed. It makes sense to allow people who

are coming to Alaska to register their kids before the family arrives.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if this is a problem in Alaska and whether she had any anecdotal information that students have been denied entrance to classes.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX replied she cannot say it has happened, but it will be nice to make sure that it does not. She noted the letter of support from Superintendent Deena Bishop.

[9:42:46 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES cited the 10-day proof of residency requirement and noted that some students might arrive before their parents and be staying with a relative or another military family. She asked if that could be a problem and whether place of residency should be the principal dwelling place of the student rather than the parents. She acknowledged that she did not know if this has come up.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX replied she had not heard that concern before. Under the bill the students will be able to register where parents are going to live, but she does not view it as a problem. If a student came early and stays with a family in Eagle River, but once the parents arrive the family will live in Muldoon, the student should be able to enroll in the Muldoon area at Bartlett High School because that is the principal resident of the parents.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Ms. Tuck if she had a response to that.

[9:45:08 AM](#)

DENEEN TUCK, Staff, Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that after discussion in Military and Veterans Affairs, the term "guardian" was inserted into the bill in case students came up early and were staying with someone else.

SENATOR HUGHES said that would probably take care of it.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX added that proof of residence must be provided once the family is in Alaska.

SENATOR BEGICH, after receiving confirmation from the sponsor that there is no data on the number of students who might be affected, said it is good policy and should be supported. He

asked if the definition of residency would qualify a student who came early to receive a dividend check.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX answered no.

9:47:05 AM

CHAIR STEVENS commented that the committee expected testimony from Tammie Perreault but she was not with the committee yet.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX advised that Ms. Perreault called to say that she would not be able to call in to this meeting.

CHAIR STEVENS added that Ms. Perreault is the Northwest region liaison for the Department of Defense. He expressed hope that the committee would have an opportunity to hear from her. He opened public testimony and ascertained there was none.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX shared that the committee had a letter from Ms. Perreault.

9:47:44 AM

CHAIR STEVENS held public testimony open and noted that written testimony could be sent to senate.education@akleg.gov. He held HB 109 in committee.

9:48:03 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 9:48 a.m.