

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

March 6, 2020

9:49 a.m.

9:49:33 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair von Imhof called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:49 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Natasha von Imhof, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Donny Olson
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Sponsor; Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens; Senator Cathy Giessel.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Paul Layer, Vice President, Academics, Students and Research, University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Scott Macmanus, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok; Karen Gaborik, Superintendent, Fairbanks School District, Fairbanks; Shawn Arnold, Alaska Superintendents Association, Valdez; Monica Goyette, Superintendent, Mat-Su Borough School District, Mat-Su; Darrel Bowers, Director, Idea Homeschool Program, Galena.

SUMMARY

SB 30 COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SB 30 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 234 (FIN)

APPROP:SUPP; REAPPROP; CAP; AMEND; CBR

CSHB 234 (FIN) was SCHEDULED but not HEARD.

[9:50:19 AM](#)

Senator Olson acknowledged the Co-Chair Stedman's birthday.

Co-Chair Stedman joked that he was still under 30-years-old.

Senator Olson made a joke about wine turning to vinegar with age.

#sb30

SENATE BILL NO. 30

"An Act establishing the middle college program for public school students; and relating to the powers of the University of Alaska."

[9:51:47 AM](#)

SENATOR GARY STEVENS, SPONSOR, explained the legislation. He stated that the effort was to establish a state-sanctioned collaboration between secondary and post-secondary schools, and encourage students to complete their formal education. He stated that there was data to support the effort. He remarked that the merits of the program were not in dispute, and most people could agree on the program's success in helping students complete high school and begin higher education. He pointed out that the program also helped to avoid remediation when students begin college. He stated that there were many models that could be used, and the challenge was to find a program appropriate for Alaska. He remarked that there would be a committee substitute that would put the onus on the University of Alaska, rather than the school districts. He wished his children had access to a similar program when they were attending college. He shared that his oldest daughter attended a college that was currently \$50,000 per year, although it was not that cost when she attended the school. He stated that the program allowed students to

graduate from high school with one or two years of college credits. He was grateful for the opportunity to enact the program.

Co-Chair von Imhof remarked that she had served on the school board and visited the middle college in Eagle River, and felt that it was a tremendous program. She shared that the students were able to become excited about going to college.

Senator Stevens agreed that it was a success in many larger districts in the state, and the bill would allow for the University to administer the program, giving access to smaller and rural schools.

[9:55:31 AM](#)

Senator Olson remarked that there was an issue about the awkwardness related to social development for the younger graduates.

Senator Stevens replied that high school students would often take college courses with adults. He felt that they prepared students did not have a problem working with adults.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered whether the middle college students were integrated or separate from other college students.

Senator Stevens replied that the program could be either, depending on various factors.

Senator Bishop wondered whether the bill could apply to those students who wanted to pursue a two-year certificate.

Senator Stevens replied in the affirmative.

[9:58:55 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, STAFF, SENATOR GARY STEVENS, explained the bill. He explained that the bill was responsive to the data that showed participants in middle college and dual-credit programs substantially improved student success in high school graduation rates and college entrance.

Co-Chair von Imhof queried the difference in the forthcoming committee substitute.

Mr. Lamkin replied that the main difference was that the onus would be put on the University, because there was a concern about who would take the lead in administering the program.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered whether it was a mandatory program.

Mr. Lamkin looked at page 2 of the bill, which read that "each school district shall enter into an agreement with the University." He stated that the committee substitute would say that the University shall enter into an agreement. He remarked that the extent of the school districts participation would vary widely.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered what would happen should a school district decline participation.

Mr. Lamkin replied that the agreement would show that there was no interest or no eligible students in that district.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered whether the University or school district would be required to carry further.

Mr. Lamkin replied that the intent of the bill was to provide the flexibility.

Senator Gary Stevens furthered that the University was supportive of the bill because the intent was to increase enrollment in the University.

[10:04:47 AM](#)

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered whether the Base Student Allocation (BSA) followed the student and stayed with the district, or would it go to the University to help pay for the classes.

Mr. Lamkin replied that it would vary. He deferred to the University to speak to the specifics.

Senator Wielechowski wondered whether the credits could be transferrable to colleges outside of the University of Alaska system.

Mr. Lamkin replied that currently it was intended for credits to apply only to the University of Alaska. He deferred to the University for more information.

Co-Chair von Imhof felt that it depended on the university.

Senator Stevens explained that there was no control over outside universities, but felt that the University of Alaska had solid academic standards based on their accreditation.

Senator Bishop recalled that, approximately 14 years prior, there were conversations about the poor graduation rates for high school. He felt that the bill would help to increase those graduation rates.

[10:08:18 AM](#)

PAUL LAYER, VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMICS, STUDENTS AND RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), replied to some of the questions from the committee.

Senator Wielechowski wondered whether the program was available to students outside the public school system.

Mr. Layer replied that some of the districts were homeschool districts. He furthered that the bill did not currently provide for some of the private schools.

Co-Chair von Imhof OPENED public testimony.

[10:14:42 AM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT, TOK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[10:17:35 AM](#)

KAREN GABORIK, SUPERINTENDENT, FAIRBANKS SCHOOL DISTRICT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), echoed the comments of Mr. Layer.

[10:22:04 AM](#)

SHAWN ARNOLD, ALASKA SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION, VALDEZ (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[10:24:49 AM](#)

MONICA GOYETTE, SUPERINTENDENT, MAT-SU BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, MAT-SU (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[10:28:04 AM](#)

DARREL BOWERS, DIRECTOR, IDEA HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM, GALENA (via teleconference), felt that the cost of homeschool to the state would not cover the cost of the program. He recommended that the juniors and seniors in homeschool be funded at 100 percent of the BSA to make up for some of the discrepancy in the allotment.

Co-Chair von Imhof CLOSED public testimony.

Co-Chair von Imhof discussed the following meeting's agenda.

SB 30 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

[10:30:01 AM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 10:29 a.m.