

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 12, 2021

8:01 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Representative Mike Prax  
Representative Mike Cronk  
Representative Ronald Gillham

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S) : ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP~ PROGRAM  
REVIEW~ AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 48

"An Act relating to eligibility for the Alaska performance scholarship program."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 19

"An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and establishing limited language immersion teacher certificates."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 25

"An Act relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; relating to statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 48

SHORT TITLE: AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STORY

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21  
02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/18/21 (H) EDC, FIN  
04/12/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 19

SHORT TITLE: LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) KREISS-TOMKINS

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21  
02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/18/21 (H) EDC, L&C  
04/09/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
04/09/21 (H) Heard & Held  
04/09/21 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
04/12/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 25

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) HOPKINS

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21  
02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/18/21 (H) EDC, STA  
03/29/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
03/29/21 (H) Heard & Held  
03/29/21 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
04/12/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REBECCA BRAUN, Consultant  
McKinley Research Group, LLC  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations."

HEATHER HAUGLAND, Consultant  
McKinley Research Group, LLC  
Bellingham, Washington

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations."

MARY HAKALA, Staff  
Representative Andi Story  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 48 on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor.

SANA EFIRD, Executive Director  
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education  
Department of Education and Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony in support of HB 48.

ABBY O'NEILL, Educator  
National Education Association Alaska  
Eagle River, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony in support of HB 25.

MALLORY VANREENAN  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony in support of HB 25.

KATIE BOTZ  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 25.

CHRISTINE HUTCHINSON  
Kenai Peninsula, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 25.

MIKE COONS  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 25.

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy  
Association of Alaska School Boards  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 25.

KELLY NASH

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 25.

ALYSYN THIBAULT, Teacher

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in favor of HB 25.

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD, Executive Director

Alaska Council of School Administrators

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 25.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:01:46 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR ANDI STORY** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Hopkins, Prax, Cronk, Gilham, Drummond, and Story were present at the call to order. Representative Zulkosky arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **PRESENTATION(S): Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations**

[8:03:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the first order of business would be a presentation entitled, "Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations."

[8:03:39 AM](#)

REBECCA BRAUN, Consultant, McKinley Research Group, LLC, co-presented a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in committee packet], entitled "Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations," which was completed for the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. She presented slide 2, "Presentation Outline," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Overview and Study Purpose
- APS Eligibility and Use Trends
- Survey and Interview Findings
- Literature Review
- Key Findings
- Recommendations

- Q&A

MS. BRAUN presented slide 3 about the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS), entitled "APS Background," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Approved in 2010 "... to provide scholarships for high school graduates who are Alaska residents to attend a qualified postsecondary institution in the state" (AS 14.43.810)

Goals:

- Drive increased K-12 rigor
- Keep high-achieving students in state

Separately established \$400 million Higher Education Investment Fund

Administered by Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

[8:05:53 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN presented slide 4 entitled "APS Overview," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Two award types

- Degree (academic)
- Certificate (career and technical education)

Three award levels

- Level 1: \$4,755/year
- Level 2: \$3,566/year
- Level 3: \$2,378/year

Three eligibility criteria

- Grades
- Standardized test score
- Coursework

Other considerations

- Students can receive award for 8 semesters
- Must be used within 6 years of graduation
- Continuing eligibility requirements apply

MS. BRAUN presented slide 5 entitled "Study Purpose," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Annual awards are about half what was anticipated in dollars awarded and students served.\*
- After peaking in 2016, overall use has declined.\*
- Low use of the APS means missed opportunities for Alaskans and Alaska.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Why are APS eligibility and use low and falling?
- What changes would improve the program?

\*2020 is an outlier.

MS. BRAUN commented that the group was lucky to have a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources when asking the questions that drove the study. She said it used annual outcomes reports that are required in statute, executive interviews focused on post-secondary institutions in Alaska, a survey of high school graduates, a 2020 school district survey, and a literature review.

MS. BRAUN presented slide 6, entitled "Methodology: Review and Synthesis of Multiple Sources," which read as follows: [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

APS Outcomes Report 2021

Executive interviews: Postsecondary institutions and others

High school graduate surveys (classes of 2015-2020)

Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility Survey 2020 (school districts)

Literature review

[8:08:17 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN presented slide 7, entitled "APS Eligibility (set in statute)," which she explained was an eligibility matrix. She commented that it was complex for students to navigate the different eligibility levels and types. She directed attention to slide 8, entitled "APS Eligibility: 2011-2019." She

explained that this slide showed the percent of Alaska public high school graduates each year who met all the eligibility criteria for APS from 2011-2019. She pointed out that eligibility has fallen in recent years.

MS. BRAUN directed attention to slide 9, entitled "APS Use: 2011-2019." She said this slide showed the percentage of students who are eligible for APS and use it the fall after their high school graduation. She said generally students not using it either decided to go out of state for training and education or did not pursue training and education the fall after graduation. She noted that in the first year, 36 percent of eligible students for a total of 844 students used it, the number peaked in 2016 with 39 percent at 902 students, and then dropped to 33 percent with 644 students using the scholarship in 2019.

MS. BRAUN directed attention to slide 10, entitled "APS Eligibility and Use by Region: 2019." She suggested that the takeaway from this slide was the big regional variation. She also pointed out that students in Southcentral, Southeast, and the Interior tended to qualify at higher rates than in Southwest and the far North. She said use patterns, however, are different, with Interior students using the scholarship at a higher rate compared to the lower rates of use in Southwest Alaska and Southeast Alaska.

[8:11:53 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN directed attention to slide 11, entitled "APS Eligibility by Race/Ethnicity: AVERAGE 2015-2019." She explained that the average eligibility rate was 27 percent, but Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, and African American students qualified at lower rates. She moved to slide 12, entitled, "Increase in APS Eligibility by Race/Ethnicity, 2019-2020," which showed an average increase in eligibility of 63 percent in 2020 over 2019's numbers. She explained that because of COVID-19, testing requirements were waived in 2020, so students only had to meet the grade point average (GPA) and curriculum requirements. She said the groups with the greatest gains in eligibility when the test was waived were Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, and African American students, which she suggested said something about the role of the test.

[8:13:41 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN presented slide 13, entitled "District Survey (Principals/Counselors)." She said districts reported that test scores were the top barrier to eligibility for students, followed by curriculum requirements. In terms of use, she shared that funding instability was a key concern, and pointed to both the scholarships being vetoed in a previous fiscal year and funding instability for the University of Alaska (UA).

[8:14:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY referred to slide 12 and asked if there was a noted increase in the utilization of the program in 2020.

MS. BRAUN replied that use in terms of raw numbers increased, but in terms of percentage decreased. She commented that 2020 data is an outlier because many students opted to defer their education.

[8:15:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how many years a student could defer and still be eligible for the award.

MS. BRAUN answered that students are eligible for six years following graduation.

[8:16:22 AM](#)

HEATHER HAUGLAND, Consultant, McKinley Research Group, LLC, co-presented a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Alaska Performance Scholarship, Program Review, and Recommendations." She presented slide 14, entitled "High School Graduate Survey: APS-Eligible." She shared that McKinly Research Group, LLC, did an online survey of about 6,000 high school graduates from 2015-2020. She said about half were eligible for the scholarship and half weren't, so each group received a different set of questions. The survey asked APS-eligible students who went out of state for further education why they did so. She said "quality of academics" was mentioned by 53 percent of respondents in 2015 but increased to 77 percent of respondents in 2020. She stated that this pointed to a decrease in the confidence of in-Alaska options. She pointed out an increase in respondents citing both "scholarship" and "financial aid package" as additional reasons for continuing education outside of Alaska, which she argued pointed to the competitiveness of out-of-state financial aid options.

MS. HAUGHLAND presented slide 15, entitled "High School Graduate Survey: APS-Ineligible." She said about half of respondents said they were aware of APS. Of those who were aware, one quarter said they were very interested in qualifying when in high school, and another 46 percent said they were somewhat interested. She said this points to unmet demand and suggests many graduates would be taking advantage of the scholarship if they qualified. When asked why graduates didn't qualify, the number one answer was test scores, she shared. She said these surveys corroborated with other data.

[8:18:56 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN directed attention to key points slide 16 entitled "Postsecondary Institution Findings," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

UA reports APS students are more successful than their peers in postsecondary education

➤ Higher readiness, persistence, and completion rates  
Factors contributing to decline in APS eligibility and use:

- Complexity and burden of eligibility and program design
- Timing of award notifications
- Declining real value of awards
- Continuing eligibility requirements
- Lack of flexibility between CTE and academic awards
- Unequal access
- External factors

MS. BRAUN explained that students aren't notified of whether they qualify for the award until after graduation, so many don't factor it into their choice of school, since other scholarships are awarded as soon as fall of a high school student's senior year.

[8:21:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if the "declining real value of awards" was the amount of the scholarship that was decreasing or if it was relative to the increase in tuition cost for the UA system.

MS. BRAUN answered that the actual number was not declining, but the relative value because of inflation is eroding.

8:21:40 AM

MS. BRAUN returned to the presentation on slide 17 entitled "Literature Review," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Grades are more predictive than ACT/SAT.

- U Chicago: GPA 5x better predictor of college success than ACT.
- U California system: GPA better predictor of college success than tests.

SAT/ACT tests have inequitable impacts and serve as barriers

to underrepresented groups.

- Brookings Institution: SAT scores highly correlated with family income.
- National College Access Network (NCAN): Removing test requirements boosts diversity in higher ed without reducing student quality or success.

The role of the SAT/ACT is declining in higher education admissions and financial aid decisions.

- NCAN: More than 300 schools went test-optional since 2005.
- COVID is accelerating this trend.

MS. BRAUN presented slide 18, entitled "Key Findings: APS Eligibility," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- There is a high level of interest in the APS among ineligible students - this indicates unmet need.
- Standardized test requirements are the top barrier to APS eligibility.
- Eligibility fell after 2016 when the state stopped requiring and paying for all students to take standardized testing.
- The program's complexity serves as a barrier to eligibility.

- The distinction between academic and CTE awards limits some students' aspirations.
- There are significant disparities in eligibility by race/ethnicity, and by region.
- Evidence increasingly shows that the SAT/ACT is less predictive of student success than other factors.

[8:24:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX referred to the last bullet on slide 18 and asked how "student success" is defined.

MS. BRAUN replied that there are more details provided in the report, but it depends on the study. She said the University of Chicago study looked at all Chicago public school graduates from a graduating class and found that high school GPA was five times as predictive as ACT score in terms of the students' first-year-of-college success. She offered that some other long-term studies looked at college graduation rates and found no overall difference in graduation rates from schools with test-optional admission.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked if success meant completing college.

MS. BRAUN clarified that in this case, it is determined as success in the student's post-secondary program.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented that then success according to colleges is completing a college curriculum.

MS. BRAUN added additional clarification that the state has incentive for its investment to pay off; therefore, if a student were to receive an award for post-secondary school or training, the state would hope the student completes it. She agreed that the word success was "kind of loaded."

CO-CHAIR STORY offered her understanding that one reason Governor Sean Parnell implemented this program was to fill the Alaska workforce with graduates, as well as to keep students in state.

[8:28:36 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN proceeded to slide 19, entitled "Key Findings: APS Use," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Evidence suggests the APS is declining in competitiveness compared to other financial aid packages.
- Reduced appeal of in-state institutions is a contributor to declining interest in the APS.
- The late timing of APS award notifications means it is not a factor in many students' postsecondary decisions.
- Continuing eligibility requirements are out of step with student needs and with other scholarship requirements.

MS. BRAUN presented slide 20, entitled "Recommendations: Broad Principles," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Education Commission of the States recommends states redesigning financial aid programs ensure programs are:

- student-centered
- goal-driven and data-informed
- timely and flexible
- broadly inclusive

[8:29:48 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN presented slide 21, entitled "Recommendations," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

1. Simplify program eligibility.
  - Eliminate distinction between academic and CTE awards.
  - Offer alternative pathways to demonstrate academic rigor.
  - Use 3 years of high school for eligibility determinations.
  - Consider round numbers for award levels.
2. Simplify and increase flexibility of awards.
  - Revise continuing eligibility requirements to better match student needs.

- Consider aligning with Satisfactory Academic Progress or University Scholars standards.
- Extend 6-year window for APS use.

MS. BRAUN presented slide 22, a continuation of "Recommendations," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

3. Increase access and commit to equity.
  - Eliminate testing requirement. This also eliminates distinction between CTE and academic tracks.
  - If testing continues to be required..
    - require and pay for all students to take test
    - consider replacing statutory cut scores with regulatory criteria (technical)
  - Ensure all students get early and ongoing counseling to meet requirements.
  - Include subgroup analysis in annual outcomes reports.
4. The dollar values of APS awards will need to be amended.
  - Consider introducing statutory flexibility or a trigger mechanism.

[8:32:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY offered her understanding that the curriculum limited the award between career and technical education (CTE) and academic tracks, rather than testing. She asked for clarification on Ms. Braun's suggestion regarding eliminating the testing requirement or having the schools require, pay for, and offer the testing. She commented that some districts did not offer an ACT or SAT and students had to travel to take the test. She cited cost barriers and said [college entrance testing] has gotten to be a big industry across the United States, which creates a barrier for some students.

MS. BRAUN confirmed Co-Chair Story's assertion and said that is what the McKinley Research Group, LLC, has heard from districts, students, and universities and what national studies are showing. She said that this feeds into unequal access and the recommendation to remove the test as part of the eligibility criteria. She reiterated that the tests aren't good predictors of whether a student is college ready.

CO-CHAIR STORY pointed out that students lose the scholarship if they don't maintain their GPA while attending university, but a student could regain the scholarship by righting his/her GPA.

[8:36:18 AM](#)

MS. BRAUN finished her presentation with slide 23. She opined legislators had a lot of vision when creating this scholarship, and now with ten years of experience there is opportunity to refine and improve it.

[8:37:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS referenced slide 10 and asked if the availability of the required course load effected eligibility in the Southwest and Northern regions of the state.

MS. BRAUN cited a 2020 survey which found that the curriculum requirements were a challenge for rural districts. She said rural districts had difficulties with access to testing and test preparation, as well as access to the necessary support that allowed students access to every course needed, which often required online classes.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if the McKinley Research Group, LLC, specifically looked at the SAT and ACT for standardized test scores, and whether the group had any recommendations regarding the credit criteria.

MS. BRAUN replied that the group was just passing on feedback it had received that the curriculum criteria should be reconsidered. She commented that it would take some work, because of the desire to keep the scholarship at a high standard. She agreed that there should be enough flexibility that students across the state had access.

[8:41:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND referred to slide 4 and asked if the award levels had stayed the same over the life of the scholarship.

MS. BRAUN confirmed that the awards were set in statute and had not changed.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Ms. Braun if the McKinley Research Group, LLC, had looked at the investment fund which produced the revenue for the scholarships. She said it would be helpful to

understand the amounts available for scholarships but noted that there is not as much money available to produce the scholarships as there was at the start of the program. She opined that the legislature had made a mistake in not allowing for inflation.

MS. BRAUN replied it was not part of the group's scope of work to look at how much money the higher education fund is earning, but the group is aware of it. She said about \$9 million has been paid out a year in scholarships, which is below what was anticipated and below what could be afforded. She referred to legislative spending practices and said, "If we don't use this asset, it may be ripe for poaching."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed that on slide 8 there are no actual numbers, only percentages, and on slide 9 there are some numbers, but she would like to know the totals. She asked, "What is 36 percent of the 29 percent on slide 8, which doesn't have an actual number?"

MS. BRAUN responded that the group had debated what sort of numbers and how many to share during the presentation but offered that the numbers are in the full report. She said on slide 8 the number of eligible high school graduates in 2011 was 2,338, which was 29 percent of the class. She explained that 36 percent of the eligible students decided to use the scholarship, which came out to 844 students.

[8:46:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked if he was correct in understanding that the full amount of funds available wasn't being utilized.

MS. BRAUN answered the high education fund is not a dedicated fund, so the amount that is available is the amount that the legislature appropriates. She commented that legislators first anticipated \$20 million annually in awards, but thus far the awards have not exceeded \$9.4 million per year.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asserted that the underlying capital in the fund is underutilized, to which Ms. Braun said that was a fair conclusion.

[8:48:32 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:48 a.m. to 8:49 a.m. [During the at-ease, Co-Chair Story passed the gavel to Co-Chair Drummond.]

**HB 48-AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY**

[8:49:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the next order of business would be HB 48, "An Act relating to eligibility for the Alaska performance scholarship program."

[8:49:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY, as prime sponsor, presented HB 48. She stated that career and technical education (CTE) is a valuable part of post-secondary education. She said that research shows that it motivates students, keeps them engaged in school, and gives them a meaningful path towards their future work and education goals. She shared that she introduced the proposed legislation during the previous session, and it had been received with enthusiasm from the CTE community but given the late start and the COVID-19 early shut down, the bill did not move far enough. She explained that she sees HB 48 as a first step towards recognizing the value of CTE in a well-rounded, rigorous course of study. She commented that she would be interested in integrating some of the recommendations from the previous presenters' report into the proposed legislation.

CO-CHAIR STORY explained that HB 48 offers students options to apply CTE coursework towards Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) eligibility. She said it broadens the range of courses a student can count towards APS eligibility and recognizes the value of CTE for all students and for meeting the needs of Alaska's future workforce. She opined that APS is an important financial resource that more students should have access to, and said she wanted to be sure that CTE options count in the scholarship.

[8:52:27 AM](#)

MARY HAKALA, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, presented the bill packet for HB 48 on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor. She directed attention to the fourth paragraph of the sponsor statement which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 48 offers three avenues for a student to incorporate CTE courses in their APS application:

- Replace one credit of social studies with one credit CTE under the math/science track;
- Replace one credit of social studies with one credit CTE under the social studies/language track; or
- Replace two years of world language with two years of CTE, with one year of CTE in a sequence of increasing rigor within a career cluster.

Note - A credit is equivalent to one year or two semesters of course work.

MS. HAKALA noted that this was similar to the summary of changes and continued with the bill packet. She directed attention towards the "APS Checklist," and offered this as an easy way to understand what HB 48 does. She referenced the previous presentation and noted that one of the institutional factors that discourage APS use is the complexity and burden of eligibility. She said [the chart in the bill packet] is based on the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education's (ACPE's) format and maps out for a student and guidance councilor how a credit option of CTE or two credit options of CTE could be integrated into the required curriculum. She noted that the categories were defined by ACPE to better guide students, although this isn't how the tracks are defined in statute. She said one year of CTE is required to be a sequence of courses in a career cluster.

[8:55:09 AM](#)

MS. HAKALA moved on to the fiscal notes. She said the fiscal note from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has a \$6,000 cost to promulgate regulations for these changes. The second fiscal note is from the ACPE, she shared, and is a zero fiscal note. She said the hope is that the proposed legislation's impact would be to increase the eligibility and use of APS by students, so there would be an increase in cost against the higher education fund, but at this point the cost is unknown.

MS. HAKALA directed attention to a graphic from the CTE community, entitled "Who Are Alaska's CTE Students?" She noted that 73 percent of CTE concentrators continue to post-secondary training and pointed out the 95 percent graduation rate [of high school students who have taken CTE courses]. She mentioned that the proposed legislation has two letters of support at this point. She shared that in Juneau, 97 percent of students who take two credits in a career pathway graduate from high school.

According to ACPE provided data, 65 percent of Alaska's best jobs in 2025 will require a post-secondary credential, she noted.

[8:55:09 AM](#)

SANA EFIRD, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education Department of Education and Early Development, provided invited testimony in support of HB 48. She stated that HB 48, which would expand the eligibility requirements for APS to include a high school CTE pathway, is important to the commission. She emphasized that the commission is aware of the need to expand CTE opportunities in Alaska and support CTE as an integral part of the future success of Alaska students. She stated that the change places equal value on CTE career tracks as an option for postsecondary education, and if passed would allow more Alaska students the opportunity to be eligible for the APS and would expand options for high school CTE students. She said this pathway would align with the existing APS CTE award, which is needed for Alaska's workforce.

[9:00:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that this seemed to be meeting the recommendations of the McKinley Research Group, LLC, regarding an increased availability of CTE awards.

[9:01:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that as shown by the grid that charts what is involved in APS, there is great academic rigor, even if the testing requirement were removed.

[9:02:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY directed attention to [Section 1, subsection (a), paragraph (3), subparagraph (C), on page 2, lines 6-9] of HB 48, regarding the different scopes of curriculum of the proposed legislation, and she asked if making the scholarship more equitable across Alaska was the intention of this section.

CO-CHAIR STORY replied that the intent is to open the scholarship to the CTE opportunities that Alaska is trying to offer more of in high schools. She commented that one of the equity pieces was the curriculum availability across different school districts, because some districts did not have

opportunities to offer certain courses. She said she thinks this will make more courses available to students.

[9:04:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND recalled the presentations from the previous week had highlighted the popularity and availability of CTE classes and the success of students who took CTE in various districts.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 48 was held over.

[9:05:35 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:05 a.m. to 9:06 a.m. [During the at-ease, Co-Chair Drummond passed the gavel back to Co-Chair Story.]

**HB 19-LIMITED TEACHER CERTIFICATES; LANGUAGES**

[9:06:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the next order of business would be HB 19, "An Act relating to instruction in a language other than English; and establishing limited language immersion teacher certificates."

[9:06:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on HB 19. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[HB 19 was held over.]

**HB 25-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

[9:08:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the next order of business would be HB 25 "An Act relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; relating to statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning; and providing for an effective date."

[9:09:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS, as prime sponsor of HB 25, overviewed the proposed legislation's fiscal notes. He said there would be a one-time increment for creating social/emotional learning (SEL) standards that would include \$30,000 for 20 educators to come together for one year to create the standards, \$35,000 for a contract for an expert to help facilitate the standards process, and \$6,000 in legal fees to implement the necessary regulatory changes. He noted that stakeholder meetings would be held virtually in order to save cost.

[9:11:13 AM](#)

ABBY O'NEILL, Educator, National Education Association (NEA) Alaska, provided invited testimony in support of HB 25. She said that children successful when they have strong connections with people who care about them. She explained that this allows them to take risks safely, work with others, regulate emotions, and recognize their strengths. She said this is the epitome of SEL. She argued that when taught in the classroom and relationships are strengthened, SEL provides for academic success and personal growth both socially and emotionally.

MS. O'NEILL argued the pandemic highlighted that teachers do much more than teach academics. She said teachers are educating children on how to interact, how to calm down and reset, how to work past a challenge, and how to be their best selves. She stated that SEL has allowed her to instill self-regulation for those with high needs behaviors and has also encouraged teamwork and an appreciation of differences. She stated that SEL builds a bridge between life's obstacles and a student's learning. She opined that adding SEL standards at the state level would allow for students to be supported on a level other than academics. She offered that SEL can help bring in more trauma-informed teaching practices and can provide students the skills that will help them be more successful in the classroom and more prepared for the future.

[9:13:47 AM](#)

MALLORY VANREENAN provided invited testimony in support HB 25. She shared that her daughter has received support for SEL during her time in a special education program, which has helped her overcome shyness and given her the skills to advocate in the classroom. She shared her belief that this sort of curriculum would benefit all students. She said simple skills like naming and recognizing emotions can help to process feelings and help kids function in the classroom and the world as they grow. She

stated that these skills also help them interact with both their teachers and their peers. She opined that statewide standards for this curriculum would benefit every Alaska child and help hold the school system to a high standard.

[9:15:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on HB 25.

[9:15:37 AM](#)

KATIE BOTZ testified in support HB 25. She shared that she was sexually abused when in the sixth grade, and she wasn't allowed to talk about her experience or the investigation that followed. She said her teacher noticed she was falling behind academically in the eighth grade, and a teacher asked that she be held back. Ms. Botz asserted that she fell behind because she couldn't process the social and emotional aspects of her trauma, which has since affected her work as an adult.

[9:19:09 AM](#)

CHRISTINE HUTCHINSON testified in opposition to HB 25. She called the proposed legislation "mission creep of the Education Department." She said [public education] was to be [limited to] reading, writing, and arithmetic. She suggested that HB 25 be modified to include interaction and permission from the student's family. She said [emotional and behavioral] problems and solutions start in the home, which is where she opined these things should be addressed. She saw HB 25 as an added governmental expense.

[9:21:39 AM](#)

MIKE COONS testified in opposition to HB 25. He said this bill addressed learning that children should receive from their parents, and that he disagreed with spending \$71,000 on the proposed legislation. He said families were more concerned with reading, writing, and arithmetic, and other social issues.

[9:24:27 AM](#)

NORM WOOTEN, Director of Advocacy, Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), said the association strongly supports HB 25. He shared that AASB has a full-time position that works with school districts and families to support SEL. He explained that AASB doesn't intend to supplant parent teaching within the home, but

to supplement it. He argued that children's problems don't stop when they attend school, and it is necessary that teaching staff address student's problems and also help families overcome problems that children may be having.

[9:26:04 AM](#)

KELLY NASH testified in opposition to HB 25. She stated that HB 25 was "funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ... Chan Zuckerberg, and it also has affiliations with Chinese corporations," and she opined that it is, "absolutely disgusting." She argued this legislation would be a violation of privacy and was unconstitutional. She reiterated previous testifiers' sentiments that schools should [stick to] teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. She expressed that she was displeased with the legislature's response to COVID-19 in schools, and that it was bad for children's stress. She said she was considering removing her daughter from the public school system.

[9:28:24 AM](#)

ALYSYN THIBAULT, Teacher, testified in favor of HB 25. She said there is much more to schools than just the academics that teachers cover. She shared that as a teacher she has witnessed the challenges young people have in coping with and surviving struggles. She argued that Alaska can and must do better to support students and families. She said HB 25 would be a small step forward by providing a framework of SEL standards. She argued that SEL is no longer [comprised of] soft-skills and called SEL "twenty-first century skills" that business owners look for in their workforce.

[9:31:05 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), testified in support HB 25. She related that ACSA is an umbrella group supporting superintendents, elementary and secondary principals, school business officials, and administrators. She said as an umbrella organization working with multiple members, ACSA develops joint position statements annually, which reflect collective priorities in public education. In addition to the issues of student achievement and adequate funding, ACSA's members support SEL. She shared that Alaska students endure extremely high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, which is reflected in the fact that Alaska has the highest rate of teen

suicide attempts in the nation. She said ACSA urges the state to implement comprehensive SEL programs and supports targeted funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase students' access to school counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development for all staff to meet student's social and emotional needs.

DR. SKILES PARADY said ACSA also supports the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN). She shared that for almost 40 years, ACSA has been providing professional development to educators across Alaska, including in SEL instruction and support. She opined that with the pandemic, this has become an even more critical need for the state.

[9:34:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 25.

[9:34:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed concern with the state setting standards for skills "normally taught ... by parents and through Sunday school, churches, and organizations like that." He argued that the proposed legislation dove into religious freedoms. He opined that children may not be ready to deal with these things, and the legislature may be creating more problems than it is solving.

[HB 25 was held over.]

[9:38:20 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.