

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
May 4, 2022  
1:31 p.m.

[1:31:56 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Merrick called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Bryce Edgmon  
Representative DeLena Johnson  
Representative Andy Josephson  
Representative Bart LeBon  
Representative Sara Rasmussen  
Representative Steve Thompson  
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Lizzie Kubitz, Staff, Representative Matt Claman; Brenda Stanfill, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Nancy Meade, General Counsel, Alaska Court System; Representative Matt Claman, Sponsor; Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens; Steve Williams, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Juneau. Suzi Pearson, Executive Director, Abused Women's Aid in Crisis.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Susanne DiPietro, Executive Director, Alaska Judicial Council; Travis Welch, Program Officer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; April Wilkerson, Administrative Services Director, Department of Corrections, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Governor; Alysa

Wooden, Division of Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Social Services; Sondra Meredith, Teacher Certification Administrator, Department of Education and Early Development; Peggy Rankin, Senior Director of Talent Management, Anchorage School District, Anchorage; Tammie Perreault, Northwest Regional Liaison, Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Bryan Hawkins, City of Homer and Alaska Association of Harbor Masters & Port Administrator, Homer; Bruce Friend, Self, Homer; Jon Erickson, City Manager, Yakutat; Bal Dreyfus, Matson, Anchorage; Bob Scanlon, CEO, Blood Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Mike Brown, Self, Palmer; Douglas Olerud, Mayor, Haines; Edna DeVries, Mayor, Mat-Su Borough, Palmer; Cara Durr, Food Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; John Handeland, Mayor, City of Nome, Nome; Sarah Kathryn Bryan, Self, Anchorage; Dianne Holmes, Self, Anchorage; Jason Lessard, NAMI Anchorage, Anchorage; Margaret Henson, Northwest Arctic Borough School District, Kotzebue; Paul Ostrander, City Manager, Kenai; Robin Minard, Mat-Su Health Foundation, Wasilla; Kelly Lessens, Anchorage School Board, Anchorage; Heidi Hill, Self, Anchorage; Brenda Moore, Self, Anchorage; David Karp, Saltchuk, Anchorage; Eric Wyatt, President, Alaska Mariculture Alliance; Gale Vandor, Self, Juneau; Kurt Buchholz, Self, Soldotna; Virgie Thompson, Mayor, City of Houston, Houston; Bryan Haugsead, AWAIC, Anchorage; Clay Bezenek, Self, Ketchikan; Patrick Mayer, Superintendent, Aleutian East Borough School District, Sand Point; Chuck Homan, Self, Eagle River; Joan O'Keefe, United Human Services of Southeast Alaska, Juneau; Brandon Calcaterra, Self, Eagle River; Joy Baker, City of Nome, Nome; Julie Decker, Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Executive Director, Wrangell; Susanne Marchuk, Executive Director, Alaska Careline, Fairbanks; Laura Lann, Self, Anchorage; Jan Carolyn Hardy, State President, AFSCME, Anchorage; Heather McCarty, Central Bearing Sea Fisherman Association, Juneau; Dave Bronson, Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage; Ross Risvold, Finance Officer, City of Anchorage; Tom Chard, Alaska Behavioral Health Association, Fairbanks; Mariya Lovishchuk, The Glory Hall, Juneau; Bruce Bustamante, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage; Jerry Jenkins, Self, Anchorage; Moria Smith, Self, Anchorage; Julia Luey, VOA Alaska, Anchorage; Jessica Leonard, Self, Houston; Haley Johnson, Alaska Trails, Anchorage; Dr. Gene Quinn, Alaska Heart Institute, Alaska Health Information Exchange, Anchorage; Donna Aderhold, Homer City Council, Homer; Ed Hendrickson,

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage; Pollybeth Odom, Self, Mat-Su Valley; Carl Weisner, Northwest Arctic Borough, Kotzebue; Chris Manculich, Self, Mat-Su; Carter Cole, City of Houston Council Member, Houston; Suzanne LaFrance, Anchorage Assembly, Anchorage; Katie Bethard, Seawolf Hockey Alliance, Anchorage; Georgiana Page, Health Information Exchange, Anchorage; Carlin Evanoff, Self, Anchorage; Steve Nerland, Miracle Legion Baseball, Anchorage; Noria Clark, Self, Anchorage; Tom Atkinson, City Manager, City of Kotzebue, Kotzebue; June Rogers, Fairbanks City Council, Fairbanks; Victoria Kildal, Kodiak Area Native Association, Kodiak; Joann Rieselbach, Juneau Youth Services, Juneau; Brent Fisher, Self, Juneau; Tim Potter, Anchorage Skates, Anchorage; Richard Tuluk, City of Chevak, Chevak.

SUMMARY

HB 183 CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA ANALYSIS COMMISSION

CSHB 183(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, four "do not pass" recommendations, and four "no recommendation" recommendations and with one new zero fiscal note from the Department of Corrections; one new zero fiscal note from the Department of Health and Social Services for the Department of Health; one previously published zero fiscal note: FN1 (AJS); and one previously published fiscal impact note: FN3 (AJS).

HB 283 APPROP: CAP; REAPPROP; SUPP

HB 283 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSSB 20(FIN)

OUT OF STATE TEACHER RECIPROCITY

CSSB 20(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the meeting agenda.

#hb183

HOUSE BILL NO. 183

"An Act renaming the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission; relating to the membership of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission; relating to the powers and duties of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission; extending the termination date of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission; relating to the duties of the Judicial Council; providing for an effective date by amending the effective date of secs. 41 and 73, ch. 1, 4SSLA 2017; and providing for an effective date by repealing the effective date of sec. 74, ch. 1, 4SSLA 2017."

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Co-Chair Merrick relayed the bill had previously been heard on April 27, 2022. The committee would consider two amendments. She asked the bill sponsor's staff if she had any opening statements.

LIZZIE KUBITZ, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, introduced herself and was happy to answer any questions and speak to the amendments.

Co-Chair Merrick moved to invited testimony.

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AT EASE

[1:33:51 PM](#)

RECONVENED

SUSANNE DIPIETRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA JUDICIAL COUNCIL (via teleconference), shared that the Judicial Council had served as staff to the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission. She intended to speak about staffing under the legislation. She explained that the Judicial Council would continue to staff the new entity, the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission. She shared that Article IV of the state's constitution one of the council's constitutional duties was to conduct studies for improvement of the administration of justice. She informed committee members that the council had been engaged in studies of the criminal and civil justice systems for the past 50 years, including studies on criminal recidivism, sex offences, felony sentences, domestic violence treatment programs, therapeutic courts, and other topics.

Ms. DiPietro noted at the previous hearing on the bill there had been discussion about the role the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJIC) would play in the work of the data commission as envisioned in HB 183. She detailed that AJIC also did discrete research projects for the commission. The Judicial Council had found in its research that the roles of the council and AJIC had very complimentary skill sets that were not overlapping. She reported that the current structure was working quite well from her perspective. She explained that the data commission would have a critical function of collecting and analyzing criminal justice data supplied by the Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the Court System.

Ms. DiPietro stated that while each of the agencies currently had their own data sources they analyzed for their own purposes, the role of the commission would be to collect data from all of the criminal justice entities to form a more complete picture of how the criminal justice system was functioning. She highlighted that it was a unique ability that had not been previously available to any entity. She explained it would be the primary purpose of the Criminal Justice Data Commission and would be the value added to have a view of the big picture. She expounded that under the bill, the data commission would be entitled to receive quarterly data from the criminal justice agencies. She noted it would not be statutorily possible without the authority in the legislation.

Ms. DiPietro discussed what the commission had been able to accomplish by weaving together data from all of the various sources. She highlighted the commission's report on impaired driving offences from 2016 as an example. She believed at the previous meeting the committee had been made aware of reports on sex offences and domestic violence compiled by the commission in collaboration with AJIC and the University of Alaska. She stated that most importantly, the reports used data from the Court System, DPS, and DOC.

Ms. DiPietro highlighted a final potential benefit of creating a data analysis commission: the ability to document changes over time in the criminal justice system. She explained it would include documenting changes in the laws in addition to variations in patterns of offending, incarceration, charging, and convictions. She pointed out it was something that no agency or entity had previously

been in the position to do. The creation of the data commission, the legislature could ensure that work done over the last five or six years was not lost and was built upon going forward.

Co-Chair Merrick thanked Ms. DiPietro for her testimony.

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BRENDA STANFILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA NETWORK ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT, spoke to the importance of creating the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission from a victim advocate perspective. She shared she had been honored to participate on the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission from the beginning of its formation through two terms for a total of six years. She detailed it had been a time of determining what needed to be done differently in the system. Her time with the commission had ended in July 2020. As a victim's rights advocate, the knowledge she had gained while serving on the commission was transformative in how she performed her work. She believed that often victim's rights advocates saw their piece of the work, but not the larger picture of the criminal justice system.

Ms. Stanfill shared that a unique feature of the commission and its proposed transformation into the criminal justice data workgroup was its inclusion of judges who could share insight and information regarding the court system. She highlighted the involvement of the head of the Public Defender Agency and the attorney general or their designee. She explained it was the only group she knew of that included the Court System perspective while discussing the criminal justice system. She pointed out the structure was also unique because most often those who support individuals who harm Alaska's communities work together in a group and those who support individuals who have been harmed work together in a group. The working group brought both groups together to try to find a balance in providing supports to those doing harm so they could make better choices in life going forward, while also recognizing the harm caused to the victim to ensure the system provided the supports victims needed to be made whole over an event that was not their choice.

Ms. Stanfill discussed that while AJIC (operated through the University of Alaska Anchorage) collected and analyzed

data, they did not have the story behind the data. She recalled from a statistics class that a direct connection had been made between an increase in sexual assault and consumption of ice cream based on the numbers only. She stressed the importance of the story behind the numbers. She explained that the group at the table was where the story got told to understand things like the reason for a "blip" one year or what was going on in the system that may have created something different.

Ms. Stanfill stated that while the group may no longer be making formal recommendations, it could compile meaningful reports that legislators could use to bring forward meaningful legislation. She spoke to the importance of having a strong victim's rights advocate in a seat on the working group. She detailed that in a survey of victims offered over the internet and in a series of hearings conducted by the current Criminal Justice Commission in four locations across Alaska, the commission had heard overwhelmingly that victims did not feel the criminal justice process was their process. She elaborated victims shared that their story had been taken and then it was no longer their story or about them, but about a system that often seemed to be about winning or losing by a defense or prosecution.

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Ms. Stanfill continued that victims had indicated they did not feel heard, were not included in decisions, and often times they were not believed. She explained that having a victim's rights representative appointed by the groups working with victims would allow victim's rights advocates to have a free voice to say what they need at the table, regardless of whether it may be in line with what others would like for them to say. The criminal justice system had a huge job in its attempt to accomplish the goals of holding offenders accountable, imposing the correct sentence reflecting the seriousness of the offence, and deterring future criminal conduct, while at the same time, supporting the victims and their needs. She relayed that the balancing act of needs required continual review and analyzation to determine if it was performing the way it should. She strongly supported the creation of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission where the state could keep a group coming together to talk about an issue that was way too prevalent in Alaska.

Co-Chair Merrick thanked Ms. Stanfill for her testimony.

Representative Johnson asked if there would be time to speak to the bill.

Co-Chair Merrick replied affirmatively.

Representative LeBon asked Ms. Stanfill if she had an opinion regarding adding a person who had been convicted of a felony offense to the commission.

Ms. Stanfill replied that the bill specified that in order to serve on the commission, a person convicted of a felony could no longer be "on paper," meaning they had to have fulfilled their sentence and be off probation. While serving on the commission, she had found listening to stories told by individuals who had been incarcerated to be impactful. She elaborated that people forget about the impact trauma had in growing up. She expounded on hearing about the challenge people had coming out of a long prison sentence for kids who got into trouble early on in life. She felt strongly the person serving on the commission needed to be past the event, where they could meaningfully participate in the conversation without looking for an outcome that could assist them in some way. She believed as long as there was a screening process by the public defender and Department of Law (DOL), the person would be a good addition to the group.

Representative LeBon wondered about asking Ms. Stanfill about a yet to be proposed amendment.

Co-Chair Merrick replied that the committee could hear from Ms. Stanfill once the amendment process was underway.

[1:46:47 PM](#)

TRAVIS WELCH, PROGRAM OFFICER, ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation with a prepared statement:

Trust beneficiaries account for approximately 40 percent of the annual incarcerations in DOC facilities. Beneficiaries include Alaskans who experience mental illness, intellectual developmental disabilities, substance use disorders, Alzheimer's,

dementia, and other cognitive impairments like traumatic brain injury. Available data indicates that unsentenced and sentenced trust beneficiaries remain incarcerated longer than non-trust beneficiaries.

Trust beneficiaries are also over-represented as both perpetrators and victims of crime. Alaska is currently facing high rates of violent crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault, high recidivism rates, and a prison population that is disproportionately represented by trust beneficiaries. The Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission established by HB 183 includes appropriate criminal justice representation as well as the opportunity for the public to engage.

HB 183 establishes a body that represented the key stakeholders of the criminal justice system including victims of crime, a member of the Alaska Native community, and a person with lived criminal justice involvement, among others. This body would maintain and prioritize data collection and analysis functions as recommended in the sunset review of the ACJC by the legislative auditor. The collection, research, and reporting of criminal justice data to such a representative body is critical to understanding criminal justice in Alaska and analyzing where the current system is functioning effectively or ineffectively, in order to find solutions for the serious problems I just described.

There are other important reasons for a body like this commission. For example, improved interdepartmental communication; executive, legislative, judicial branch communication; and direct meaningful dialogue with the public to produce results such as small problems get identified and solved, public awareness of how the criminal justice system functions, opportunities for the public to share their experiences with the system, positive or negative.

I recognize and appreciate that there may be some concerns in establishing this new commission; however, I believe the benefits of data-driven, informed public policy that can result from this commission outweigh any concerns. Our criminal justice system is far from perfect, and we must continue efforts to make

investments based on sound information. Requiring the body to continue to collect, analyze, and report on data is paramount to making Alaska's criminal justice system fair, efficient, and protective of the public. As a program officer with the Alaska Mental Health Trust whose mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable Alaskans and as a former chief of police in Alaska, I urge the committee to support HB 183. Thank you.

[1:49:41 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick thanked Mr. Welch for his testimony.

Representative LeBon asked what Mr. Welch thought about the fact that the proposed commission did not include a member from the private sector. He asked if it was an omission that should be considered.

Mr. Welch replied that it was an interesting question that should be discussed. He had not looked at that particular aspect. He believed a diverse group was important and that many of the desired stakeholders were represented in the legislation.

Representative LeBon highlighted the hope of finding employment opportunities for individuals coming out of the prison system. He asked if it would be valuable to have a private sector perspective in the process.

Mr. Welch answered that he could see value in the idea.

[1:51:17 PM](#)

Representative Johnson had a number of concerns and questions. She stated her concern that there was already an AJIC steering committee. She read from the audit conducted by the Division of Legislative Audit (copy on file):

Although we recommend sunseting the commission, we do not recommend terminating the data collection and the analysis functions. Objective evidence regarding the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and laws governing the system are critical to future policy decisions.

Representative Johnson stated that the bill did not create another objective group, but people who may influence or give opinions on what the data should or may be. She highlighted the makeup of the AJIC steering committee that included a member of the Alaska Native Justice Center, a member from the Alaska Court System, DOL, AMHTA, DOC, the Department of Health and Social Services, DPS, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). She compared the existing steering committee to the proposed commission makeup. The proposed commission included a member from the Native community nominated by the Alaska Native Justice Center, a member from the Alaska Court System, DOL, AMHTA, DOC, the Department of Health and Social Services, DPS, a legislator (non-voting), two peace officers selected by the Alaska Association of Chiefs of Police (also in the realm of public safety), a public defender, victim's rights advocate, and a person formerly convicted of a felony offence.

Representative Johnson stated the bill set up a board that was very similar to an existing group established in 1975. She considered perhaps people forgot about the existing group. She believed the bill went above and beyond the audit's recommendation to sunset the commission and keep the data collection and analysis in an objective way. She stated there was already something in place set up by the legislature. She asked if it was efficient to create another group with similar people.

Ms. Kubitz deferred the question to Ms. DiPietro to speak to the differences between the AJIC and the commission she had staffed for many years.

Ms. DiPietro responded it was a question that the commission, AJIC, and the Judicial Council spent quite a bit of time discussing and working on when the commission received the audit results and was contemplating what would be a good successor. At the time it had been acknowledged that the Judicial Council and AJIC had complementary but not overlapping research expertise. She elaborated that AJIC had its own research agenda, which was independent from the criminal justice agencies and Judicial Council. She shared that the discussion had been that AJIC was not really in a position to create a research agenda driven completely by the data commission and to make a commitment to supporting the research agenda and to commit to

reporting back regularly to the legislature on the research agenda.

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Ms. DiPietro continued to answer the question by Representative Johnson. She explained that AJIC had its own research projects and functions and had collaborated well and assisted with the work of the outgoing commission. She believed AJIC would be happy to assist with the proposed data commission and to share the data. She relayed that the last time the Judicial Council spoke with the director of AJIC and the commission, AJIC was not really in a position to take on the full staffing of the data commission.

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Representative Edgmon spoke about the battles through SB 64, SB 91, SB 54, HB 49 and a slew of other pieces of legislation that dealt with the criminal justice system sometimes in a singular way and other times in a comprehensive way. He stated that historically the agencies including AMHTA, Court System all came forward in earnest, but in a very separate manner. He stated there was no comprehensive approach. He observed the fiscal notes attached to the bill had zero fiscal impact. He wondered why the legislature would not implement the bill. He did not see any persuasive argument against it. He stated the committee had spent a significant amount of time with AJIC over the years and he recalled the agency's role was more from an academic standpoint. He stated AJIC's role was not to take retired judges, defenders, prosecutors, or law enforcement to give a well-rounded perspective.

Representative Edgmon underscored that the state's criminal justice system cost at least \$500 million on paper. He stressed there were a whole range of costs that were not on paper. He wondered why they should not implement the commission. He wanted to hear if there was a credible argument against it. He stated that if there was a credible argument, he wanted to hear what, in lieu of the commission, would bring forward policy recommendations and needed interpretations from a multidisciplinary standpoint that would serve legislators' functions as appropriators. He asked Ms. DiPietro to address the question.

Ms. DiPietro answered that she did not understand "why we would not move forward with this." She served on the AJIC steering committee and as staff to the Criminal Justice Commission. She relayed that the entities had two very different roles that were important and complimentary to each other. She relayed that the Judicial Council was not requesting any additional funding to staff the data commission. She pointed out that the council was proposing a decrement because the work of the data commission would be smaller in scope than the work of the Criminal Justice Commission.

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Representative Johnson spoke to her concerns about the data commission. She stated she did not believe anyone in the room did not want to see the criminal justice system improved. She believed policy makers wanted to see better things come forward and they all wanted to find the right answers to things. She pointed out that the committee was looking at a board extension. She highlighted that the audit's recommendation was to sunset the board. She did not believe her stance was "way out there" to want to follow the auditor's recommendation. She remarked that some components had been noted to be valuable; however, it included the data analysis component and not the policy component.

Representative Johnson believed that in a simple board extension the bill was getting carried away with many different policy changes. She remarked that the bill changed the name of the commission and established a board with nearly the same members serving on another board established by the legislature in 1975. The proposal did not seem efficient to her. She wanted to see "this kind of thing" come forward as a new board and new discussion. She stated there had been many recommendations that came from the existing board, which had contributed to SB 91. She suggested starting fresh with new discussion and setting up a board where the legislature was descriptive about the policy it wanted to see brought forward instead of trying to put it in a board extension the legislature had been recommended to sunset.

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Co-Chair Merrick OPENED public testimony.

Co-Chair Merrick CLOSED public testimony.

[2:05:17 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick asked the Department of Corrections to review the first fiscal note.

APRIL WILKERSON, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR (via teleconference), spoke to the department's zero fiscal note within the research and records allocation component. She explained that the department was currently providing portions of the data request that were identified in HB 183; however, if there was a change or expansion of the data in the future, the department would seek an additional position.

[2:06:22 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick asked the Judicial Council to review the Fiscal Note 3.

Ms. DiPietro reviewed the Judicial Council's fiscal note showing a decrement. She explained that the scope and function of the Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission would be less than that of the [outgoing] Criminal Justice Commission. The council believed it could support the work of the new commission with fewer resources than before.

[2:07:19 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick asked the Department of Health and Social Services to review the next fiscal note.

ALYSA WOODEN, DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (via teleconference), reviewed the department's zero fiscal note. The division believed it could accomplish all of the requests within the bill and did not anticipate a fiscal impact.

Co-Chair Merrick asked the Court System to review the last fiscal note.

NANCY MEADE, GENERAL COUNSEL, ALASKA COURT SYSTEM, discussed the Court System's zero fiscal note. She relayed that the Court System already submitted much of the data to

the Criminal Justice Commission. The Court System provide the data to the new commission as required, without any fiscal impact.

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Representative Edgmon asked where the Court System would send the data if the bill did not pass.

Ms. Mead answered replied that the current law required the Court System to send a whole slew of data to the Criminal Justice Commission. She explained that if the commission sunset and was removed from statute, the Court System would no longer gather or send the data unless someone else requested it.

Representative Edgmon considered that in theory the information could be sent to the legislature or executive branch. He clarified that he was advocating for the current bill. He remarked that although the data could be provided, there would no longer be an ability for someone on the other end to interpret the data in absence of a data commission. He was perplexed "about all of this."

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Ms. Mead responded that the Court System was neutral on the bill. She relayed that the Court System provided data to anyone who asked within reason. She noted there was readily available data that was sort of easy to provide. There was a different rule with respect to people requesting the Court System to compile information, which depended on resources. The Court System could provide the data called for in the legislation to the legislature, DOC, or others. The Court System entered into agreements to exchange data with other entities sometimes. She understood Representative Edgmon's point about who would do what with the data and perhaps it would not make its way to policy makers. She did not take a position on the issue. She relayed that if AJIC or others sought data, the Court System was typically cooperative to the extent it could be.

Representative Edgmon stated he believed she had answered the question that there was no definitive response to [inaudible].

Co-Chair Merrick noted that Representative Carpenter had joined the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Representative LeBon asked if Ms. Mead was familiar with the reports or data produced by the commission. He asked if the data was received by the Court System.

Ms. Mead replied affirmatively. She had personally attended all of the Criminal Justice Commission meetings.

Representative LeBon asked for verification that the commission collected and analyzed data and offered recommendations for action to be taken by the legislature.

Ms. Mead relayed that the description reflected the operations of the Criminal Justice Commission under current law. She explained that the bill would modify the duties and change the name of the commission and she expected it would analyze data and prepare reports. She clarified that the bill stopped short of requiring the proposed commission to provide recommendations to the legislature on bills and policy. She believed it was also limited to providing recommendations on how to spend funds to assist in issues regarding criminal justice.

[2:13:16 PM](#)

Representative LeBon asked if Ms. Mead had an opinion on the addition of a person who had a previous felony and had been cleared [by serving out their sentence and probation].

Ms. Mead replied that she would not offer an opinion on the policy call. She echoed a prior testifier who had stated that formerly incarcerated individuals occasionally attended the meetings to offer perspective, which she believed voting members of the commission had found valuable. She reiterated that she did not have a personal or Court System opinion on whether it was a good addition.

Co-Chair Merrick thanked Ms. Mead and moved to the amendment process.

[2:14:16 PM](#)

Representative Wool MOVED to ADOPT Amendment 1, 32-LS0645\G.1 (Radford, 4/28/22) (copy on file):

Page 3, line 11:  
Delete "16"  
Insert "17"

Page 4, line 15:  
Delete "and"

Page 4, line 21, following "AS 12.55.185":  
Insert "; and  
(16) one person who has an immediate family member incarcerated in the state, designated jointly by the deputy attorney general for the division of the Department of Law that has responsibility for criminal cases and the public defender for a three-year term"

Representative LeBon OBJECTED.

Representative Wool explained the amendment that would add another member on the proposed commission. He noted there were currently 15 members on the commission including three judges, a member from the Native community, deputy attorney general, public defender, commissioners from DPS, DHSS, and DOC, AMHTA, two police officers, a victim's rights advocate, a person who had been incarcerated and was no longer in state custody. He believed including a person who had been in jail was of the utmost importance. He stated that lawmakers did not know what it was like to serve time or be in state custody. He stated that an increasing number of places require individuals released from prison to comply with a list of things including drug and alcohol testing and numerous appointments. He remarked that some had said that the system was setting people up for failure and increased the recidivism rate.

Representative Wool explained that the amendment would add a family member of an incarcerated person to the commission. He reviewed the makeup of the commission members and noted there were numerous individuals on the law enforcement and corrections side. He pointed out that if a father was incarcerated it impacted his entire family. He elaborated that families had to deal with a loss of income and had to help the person once they were released on parole or probation. He believed the experience of having a family member in prison was valuable as well. He referenced adverse childhood experiences (ACES) scores; one of the experiences was an incarcerated family member. He remarked that prison populations were increasing in Alaska.

He thought eventually the state would have to build another prison or send prisoners outside of state. He believed having the perspective of a family member of someone incarcerated completed one of the pieces that was not included.

[2:19:38 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick referenced Representative Wool's mention that sometimes incarcerated individuals were sent out-of-state. She provided a scenario where a person serving a three-year term on the commission had a loved one sent to prison out-of-state. She asked if the commission member would be replaced under the circumstances.

Representative Wool replied in the negative. He thought it could be an indicative experience of what could happen more and more. He stated his understanding that the state was not using outside prisons with the exception of a handful of federal prisoners and other.

Representative Rasmussen requested to hear Ms. Stanfill's opinion on the proposed amendment. She asked about the potential impact on victims.

Ms. Stanfill referenced her prior experience on the commission and relayed there was a lot of conversation at the table and those at the table had a voice. She thought that having people involved in the system who could provide real life experiences was important. She stated that having the voice of someone who understood what it was like to have a family member serving time out-of-state could be impactful. She noted that when a person was going through something at the present moment, it was hard to be objective. She noted it happened in victims' circles also. She pointed out that often times when conversations arose, a person thought about how it may impact them and/or their family member. She encouraged the committee to consider a family member of a person who had previously been in the correctional system. She did not believe it was a bad idea to have a voice at the table who could really talk about the experience.

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Representative LeBon asked Ms. Stanfill if it was redundant to have a person who was once convicted of a felony on the

commission in addition to a family member of a person currently serving prison time in Alaska. He wondered if it tilted the balance of the commission. He wondered if it helped with the commission's intended purpose to reduce crime in addition to gathering and analyzing data.

Ms. Stanfill replied it was not really a tilt when thinking about the different people represented on the commission including law enforcement, public defender, and DOL. She reasoned that because it would be a data commission that would not put recommendations forward, it would be okay to add another person. She added that the person had to be agreed on by DOL and the public defender, which she believed was a way of ensuring the person would be looking out for the best interest of the State of Alaska. She highlighted the importance of a balanced approach on the commission. She explained that as a victim advocate, she was not necessarily thinking about the trauma the person going to jail would experience, what they had experienced, and what their family would experience. She was thinking about the victim and their pain. She stated the commission was a way of bringing a group together that could share in all of the experiences and come up with the right balance.

Representative LeBon asked if Ms. Stanfill was familiar with how a parole board was set up in Alaska.

Ms. Stanfill replied that she was not.

Co-Chair Merrick asked Ms. Wilkerson to reply.

Ms. Wilkerson asked to hear the question restated.

Representative LeBon was interested in the typical composition of a parole board. He wondered about the number of individuals on the board and the background of the members.

Ms. Wilkerson answered that she could respond in writing. She noted there were five board members.

Representative LeBon noted that she did not need to respond in writing. He believed the parole board sought diversity in its membership as well. He wondered if there was representation from the private business sector on the parole board. He thought the absence was as much of an absence as the suggestion of adding someone with a criminal

background or a family member of someone currently serving time in prison.

[2:26:55 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter asked if the commission was currently allowed to bring a family member on in pertinent situations as invited testimony to help with perspective.

Ms. Stanfill replied that public comment time was available at all of the commission meetings. She detailed that public comment time allowed time for individuals (i.e., victims, incarcerated individuals, and family members) to share the story. She relayed that the commission had heard from a substantial number of family members talking about the impact of the sex offender registry. The commission had also heard family members talk about the impact on their kids with a change in financial status. She clarified that the commission meetings were specific to the members of the commission in terms of having a voice at the table. She explained that if the person [under the proposed amendment] was not on the commission, they would not have an equal voice, but they would have a time to speak.

Representative Carpenter asked if the issues included in the data and analysis performed by the commission impacted families. He was trying to get more information on the commission's workload and what it did.

Ms. Stanfill replied that she had not been on the commission for the past two years. She deferred to a current member.

Ms. DiPietro replied that currently the commission's policy work was informed by the members of the public with experience of the criminal justice system who came in to tell their stories. She suspected that if the Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission became a successor entity, although people's perspectives would still be welcome, the commission would be looking at the data and adding context to the data and would not be making policy recommendations; therefore, the input may be a little less relevant.

[2:30:34 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter was trying to understand the value of having a family member of an incarcerated person as a

member of the board versus having the board hear from public comment when necessary. He considered that if the new commission was focused on data, it seemed to be a role for professionals who understood the system.

Ms. DiPietro replied it was difficult to predict how the discussions would go. From the perspective of the entity that would be staffing the commission, there would be no logistical or fiscal problem for the council to include such a person as a member. She noted it was hard to predict the value of their comments and observations, but it was also difficult to say there would be no value.

[2:32:32 PM](#)

Representative Johnson thought it opened up an interesting idea. She asked if there was value in having a family member of a victim on the board.

Ms. Stanfill replied affirmatively. When considering a balance, she had debated the question in her mind. She elaborated that currently there was a position that would be appointed by groups that worked with victims but there was not a position for a victim or family member of a victim. She would not discourage the idea and believed the perspective would be a good addition.

Representative Josephson referenced AS 33.16.020 pertaining to the board of parole, which was composed of geographic spread by judicial district and required the governor to use due regard for representation of the board based on ethnic, racial, sexual, and cultural populations.

Representative Edgmon asked for verification that the idea presented in Amendment 1 had been presented or considered in the past.

[2:34:44 PM](#)

Ms. DiPietro replied that when the commission had first been contemplated there had been robust discussion on the composition its composition. She believed the idea had been discussed; however, she had not been a part of the discussion.

Representative Edgmon stated it aligned with his recollection of SB 64 that created the commission.

Representative Johnson MOVED conceptual Amendment 1 to include an immediate family member of a victim of a felony crime.

Representative Wool explained the reason he had offered the amendment to include a family member of an incarcerated individual was because they had a different experience from the incarcerated individual. He believed the family member of a victim also had a different experience than the victim. He considered the idea and did not know whether the distinction between the victim and a family member was a pronounced. He stated there was a victim of a crime on the commission already. He referenced Representative LeBon's comment about redundancy because there was one formerly convicted person on the commission out of a total of 16 members. He remarked that the other 15 members included law enforcement, lawyers, judges, and commissioners. He did not believe adding the position proposed under Amendment 1 would create a tilt in the board composition. He believed a victim of the crime would be more on the side of law enforcement. His goal was to have a different perspective. He the sponsor of the conceptual amendment to discuss the different perspective the family member of a victim would offer.

[2:38:52 PM](#)

Representative LeBon stated there were two directions the commission could go: 1) data collection as a process and 2) interpretation of the data into a recommendation to take action by the legislature. He wondered if the commission was about more than data collection, whether the goal was to get as many voices at the table as possible. If so, he noted the conceptual amendment would add another voice to the table. He added that he would need to offer a subsequent conceptual amendment to add a banker to the table.

Representative Carpenter was opposed to heading in the direction of Amendment 1 if its intent of adding additional members to the commission for different perspective was to steer results or outcomes that were more friendly to incarcerated individuals or their family members. One of the things people should think about before committing a crime was about how the crime would impact their family. He did not want to see it made easier for people committing a

crime. He stated it was a consequence of committing a crime.

2:41:09 PM

Co-Chair Foster surmised that Representative Wool did not support Representative Johnson's conceptual amendment.

Representative Wool stated that under the bill, the commission included a victim's rights advocate. He commented on Representative Carpenter's remarks that a person should think about how committing a crime would impact their family. He did not think it was always that clear. He noted there was mental illness and substance abuse that contributed to crimes. He was not defending criminals, but there was more than one reason to commit a crime. He stated there were many problems in society and the solution was not as simple as locking people up and for longer. He recognized it reduced crime, but it produced other problems. He stated the family bore the brunt of much of it and they were innocent. He considered why corrections was a growing section of the state's budget. He remarked that there was opposition to adding to schools, but they were adding to corrections, police, and courts. He stated the problem needed to be addressed holistically. He opposed the conceptual amendment.

Representative Rasmussen asked to hear what each respective family member would bring to the commission from the proposed amendments.

2:44:18 PM

Representative Johnson replied that a family member of a victim had a unique perspective [poor audio quality]. She suggested adding the individual to add to the balance of the commission's membership. She believed the individual could bring a very different perspective to a situation than someone speaking about something academically.

Representative Thompson thought the commission was sounding more and more like the group that worked on SB 91. He elaborated that the working group had included the same list of individuals as the proposed commission in addition to several more. He relayed the group had come up with ways to reduce the cost associated with crime. He cautioned the need to be careful.

Representative Edgmon noted that SB 91 had passed in 2016 and done away with in 2019. He remarked that he and Representative Thompson had both served on the House Finance Committee at the time. He recalled extensive testimony on reform measures taking a period of time to be effective. He believed Representative Johnson's point on having the victim perspective was well taken. He noted the proposed commission already included a victim's rights advocate. He thought there seemed to be a nuance involved. He understood that the bill sponsor had been on the Criminal Justice Commission for a period of time. He asked to hear the bill sponsor's perspective.

[2:48:09 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, SPONSOR, relayed that Ms. Stanfill had served on the commission for several years and when her term ended, the governor appointed a man from Kotzebue whose daughter had been brutally murdered. The man was a member of a victim's rights group in Kotzebue. He explained that the individual had attended several meetings but there was a level of policy detail involved on the commission and Representative Claman believed it had been a hard place for the individual to be. He explained that Ms. Stanfill worked with victims daily and in working with domestic violence groups, the bill specified the groups would work together to select a person to serve on the proposed commission. He believed it was important to include someone who was in the business of working with victims. He pointed out that the notion of hearing from a victim on the commission may make it harder on the individual. He considered the amendment proposed by Representative Wool and thought it was an interesting discussion; however, in his experience as commission membership grew in size it became more unwieldy and complicated. He advised maintaining the current size and membership proposed in the bill.

Representative Rasmussen appreciated Representative Claman's comments about the size of the council growing too large. She agreed it could be a concern. She asked if he thought there was a difference in the level of competency that the relative of an incarcerated person had versus the relative of a victim. She asked if the two would experience parity in their policy knowledge.

Representative Claman answered that the knowledge of someone from the Network on Domestic Violence and their understanding of policy issues was much more in depth than the average family member of an incarcerated individual or the average family member of a victim. He believed the latter two would be very focused on the specific incident or events of their personal family experience. He believed it was incredibly important, which was the reason committees heard public testimony. He stated that in terms of policy expertise, people working with the issues more regularly brought a level of understanding that was hard to bring just from families. He was not in any way meaning to diminish the importance of families' participation.

Representative Wool referred to Representative Claman's mention of perspective of a professional advocate for victim's rights that was less emotionally attached in their professional experience in dealing with many victims and not only a family member. He noted that the commission included a formerly convicted individual, which he believed was a good perspective to have. He did not believe an advocate could have that same perspective. He discussed people who advocated for rights of families or incarcerated individuals. For example, the state's prison system had not allowed any visitors for over a year [due to the COVID-19 pandemic]. He remarked it was traumatic for families when they could not see a loved one for over a year. He asked if there was an advocacy group for families of incarcerated individuals.

Representative Claman replied that in serving on the commission for the last several years, the most frequent advocate for incarcerated individuals was the reentry coalitions. The commission had occasionally heard from families of incarcerated individuals. He relayed that the reentry coalitions did not have members on the commission, but they routinely attended meetings, provided public comment, and wrote to the commission with comments. He stated that lack of presence on the commission did not prevent people from getting information. He noted the issue about visitation had been discussed in recent commission meetings. He elaborated that DOC presented to the commission a couple of times to present on how the department was dealing with visitation in light of the pandemic. The fact that someone did not have a seat on the commission did not mean the concerns would not be brought forward.

[2:56:24 PM](#)

Representative Wool referenced Ms. Stanfill's recommendation to have a family member of a formerly incarcerated individual in order to avoid having a person on the commission with a personal agenda. He understood the commission was not for that purpose. He wanted to have the perspective of a person with an incarcerated family member. He would not be opposed to inserting the word "formerly" into the amendment.

Representative Wool WITHDREW Amendment 1.

[2:58:01 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:02:41 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Foster noted Amendment 1 and the conceptual amendment and had been withdrawn.

Representative LeBon MOVED to ADOPT Amendment 2, 32-LS0645\G.2 (Radford, 5/3/22) (copy on file):

Page 3, line 10, following "AS 44.19.642(a)":  
Insert ", as amended by sec. 135(23) of Executive Order 121,"

Page 4, line 14:  
Delete "and social services"

Page 13, lines 19 - 20:  
Delete "and Social Services"

Representative Wool OBJECTED for discussion.

Representative LeBon explained that the amendment was a cleanup amendment required in the wake of the split of the Department of Health and Social Services into two departments by Executive Order 121. The amendment clarified that one of the members of the commission would be the commissioner of the Department of Health or the commissioner's designee.

Representative Wool WITHDREW his OBJECTION.

There being NO further OBJECTION, Amendment 2 was ADOPTED.

Co-Chair Foster MOVED to REPORT CSHB 183(FIN) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

Representative Johnson OBJECTED. She believed the bill established something that was outside the scope recommended by the audit. The audit recommended the sunset of the commission and maintaining the data and analysis component to help the legislature make more informed policy decisions. She did not support the creation of a new council that would be similar to the Criminal Justice Commission that had brought forth SB 91. She noted the data did not lead the legislature in the right direction. She did not favor making policy changes within a board extension. She thought the commission was redundant. She pointed out that the University of Alaska's Justice Center had been established in 1975 to do the same work. She stated there were numerous groups to address the issues the commission would address. She thought setting up a commission deserved a more detailed policy discussion on how to address issues related to incarceration and recidivism in Alaska.

[3:06:40 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Wool, Edgmon, Josephson, Ortiz, Merrick, Foster  
OPPOSED: Thompson, Carpenter, Johnson, LeBon, Rasmussen

The MOTION PASSED (6/5). There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSHB 183(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, four "do not pass" recommendations, and four "no recommendation" recommendations and with one new zero fiscal note from the Department of Corrections; one new zero fiscal note from the Department of Health and Social Services for the Department of Health; one previously published zero fiscal note: FN1 (AJS); and one previously published fiscal impact note: FN3 (AJS).

[3:07:34 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:08:46 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb20

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 20 (FIN)

"An Act relating to teaching certificates for teachers holding out-of-state certificates."

[3:08:56 PM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, STAFF, SENATOR GARY STEVENS, thanked the committee for hearing the bill. He explained that the bill was a result of some emergency regulations enacted in 2020 due to COVID-19, which resulted in significant support from school districts in helping them find teachers to fill classrooms more quickly. The bill was a reflection of those amendments and the changes that had been made. The bill would lower barriers to entry and reduce some of the administrative bureaucracy for existing teacher programs coming into the system. The bill enabled teachers holding a regular teacher certification in another state to teach in Alaska. The individual had to hold a four-year degree, go through the standard background checks required to teach in Alaska, and complete multicultural education coursework within two years. Individuals would still undergo all of requirements pertaining to alcohol and drug awareness and abuse, sexual assault awareness, and suicide awareness and would have 90 days to complete their training.

Mr. Lamkin continued to explain the legislation. He explained that the concept of the bill applied to teachers with years of classroom experience who had taken the basic competency exam at some point in time. The bill would allow the individuals to teach without retaking the exam, which was fairly onerous.

[3:11:21 PM](#)

Representative Johnson asked how many other states had similar reciprocity agreements or arrangement.

Mr. Lamkin deferred to the department.

SONDRA MEREDITH, TEACHER CERTIFICATION ADMINISTRATOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT (via

teleconference), answered that most states had some form of allowances for individuals who were fully licensed in another state. She reported what the allowances looked like varied from state to state. There were a number of states that did not require individuals with regular licensure to take additional exams. She did not have an exact number.

[3:12:54 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Ortiz referenced Mr. Lamkin's statement that under the bill, in order for a teacher to receive one of the certificates they would have to have years of experience. He asked if the bill stipulated the number of years of experience required in order to qualify.

Mr. Lamkin replied that the bill was not that prescriptive. He noted there were regulations in place that Ms. Meredith could speak to.

Ms. Meredith responded that beyond what existed in current statute, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) had not added additional regulatory requirements to the type of certificate addressed in the bill. There was currently no stipulation for a certain number of years of experience to qualify under the certificate.

Vice-Chair Ortiz stated that theoretically a person could get certified in a different state for half of a year and perhaps get a certificate in the State of Alaska. He asked what the certificate category would be called.

Ms. Meredith answered that the department currently referred to the certificate as an initial out-of-state certificate. Through the changes proposed in the legislation, an individual would qualify after they had done the Alaska multicultural coursework for the regular professional license in Alaska.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked for verification it was possible a person could come directly out of school without any previous experience and still qualify for the certificate.

Ms. Meredith confirmed it would be possible if the individual qualified for a regular license, meaning they had done all that was necessary in their state to gain the license in another jurisdiction.

3:15:53 PM

Vice-Chair Ortiz appreciated the bill and was aware of the issues the state was having with obtaining teachers. He clarified his questions were not meant to indicate objection to the purpose of the bill. He asked about the J-1 Visa program that DEED had in place and how it may differ from the certificate requirements offered under the legislation. He remarked that J-1 was more for foreign based teachers. He asked if they were the same kind of education requirements.

Ms. Meredith answered that the J-1 Visa individuals coming to Alaska were not qualifying through the initial out-of-state certificate. The individuals were frequently required to go through emergency licensure when they did not have the testing when they first began in Alaska. After the emergency licensure the individuals moved into one of the state's initial licensures where they had to demonstrate they had the training with the equivalent to a four-year degree in Alaska in addition to the completion of a teacher preparation program. The certificate under the bill differed significantly and would not be one that J-1 Visa applicants would qualify for.

3:18:18 PM

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked which would have a higher bar for a teacher: the J-1 Visa program or the SB 20 proposal.

Ms. Meredith responded that she did not know that she could equate the two except for the fact that the J-1 Visa individuals still needed to do the testing requirements after the emergency certificate, whereas the testing requirements would not be necessary for the certificate under SB 20.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if it was currently possible for a teacher from another state to obtain temporary certification to teach in Alaska in the coming fall.

Ms. Meredith responded that the current statutory language allowed for a form of reciprocity where the individual had to provide proof of a bachelor's degree and valid regular certificate. She explained it gave the individual a one-year period of time to provide evidence of the basic competency exams. She elaborated that the individuals then

moved on to complete the two required courses. The route was currently available but on occasion the individuals coming in through the route had multiple years of experience (sometimes 15 to 20 years) and were required to locate or retake the basic competency exam, which could be a challenge.

Vice-Chair Ortiz stated his understanding that the bill removed the competency exam from the process of obtaining a certificate that was currently in place for anyone who wanted to come to Alaska to work as a teacher (regardless of prior experience).

Ms. Meredith answered that it was a primary feature of the bill.

[3:22:02 PM](#)

Mr. Lamkin clarified that currently in Alaska, all people preparing to teach had to take the competency exam. He highlighted that the exam was difficult; however, not entirely because of its content, but by its administrative nature. He referred to an anecdote from an individual in rural Alaska who had tried to take the exam online and the system had crashed in the middle of the exam. The individual had already spent hundreds of dollars to take the exam that he felt he did not really need to take because he had come from out-of-state with years of experience. He stated the exam was bemoaned by many people. The bill would alleviate the burden. He elaborated it was presumed that in another state where a teacher had received a regular teacher certification that they had undertaken the same process and had already taken that type of competency exam in the past.

Representative Josephson referenced Ms. Meredith's testimony that currently a person could obtain a preliminary certificate. He thought she had stated a person had to meet some obligation within a year [after obtaining the preliminary certificate]. He observed the legislation gave people two years to take a course or do the things needed to be certified in Alaska. He asked if the timeframe was one difference between existing law and the bill.

Mr. Lamkin replied affirmatively. He elaborated that individuals were required to take cross-cultural, multicultural coursework to help sensitize individuals

coming in from out of state to Alaska's unique culture, geography, and circumstances. He explained that the University did not offer the course every semester; therefore, the two-year window gave individuals time to align their schedules with the course schedule.

Representative Josephson referenced Mr. Lamkin's statements about the difficulty of the administrative nature of the test. He shared that he was currently a certified teacher and had a master's degree in education that had required all sorts of tests. He did not recall a basic competency test. He asked how to ensure the state was not going to get washed-out teachers from the Lower 48.

Mr. Lamkin deferred to the department.

[3:25:44 PM](#)

Ms. Meredith answered that the quality of educators coming into Alaska was checked by a number of different things beginning with and likely most effectively, through the hiring process. The hiring process looked at level of expertise and recommendations. Additionally, there were certification processes that ensured the credentialing of the individual met the statutory and regulatory standards. She relayed the individuals were evaluated after one year to determine whether the districts felt their expertise warranted another year of service.

Representative Josephson looked at the repealers in the bill that included AS 14.20.015 (f), which specified that a preliminary teacher certificate and any endorsements were valid for three years and may not be renewed. The removal of that suggested they were valid forever or that they may be renewed. He asked if there would be people who were preliminary teachers forever or if the bill was designed to mean the individuals would be regular teachers and not preliminary teachers who would comply with the terms within the specific window.

Ms. Meredith replied it was her understanding that the repeal of the sections allowed the certificate to be recognized as a regular certificate and after the two classes were completed, the certificate would be extended to a five-year period and could be renewed through the renewal requirements set out in regulation.

Representative Josephson spoke to his personal experience working as a teacher for a year and a half in the past. He asked Mr. Lamkin what the teacher demand was that was not currently being met. He asked if he should be concerned that the legislation lowered the standards.

Mr. Lamkin answered the demand had been an outcry from Alaska's districts for some time. He relayed there was upcoming invited testimony to speak to the need. The bill was prompted by emergency regulations that were taken up with great success. Additionally, the bill sponsor had been contacted by Kodiak, Anchorage, and others who applauded the emergency regulations and hoped to see it put more solidly in statute for the long-term.

Representative Josephson asked if teachers should be concerned the bill watered down the standards.

Mr. Lamkin answered that the issue had been deliberated in earlier committees, particularly education committees. He expounded that an amendment had been made to page 2, Section 2, line 11 that added a valid regular teacher certificate. He stated that to date everyone had been satisfied that the bill did not establish a system that brought in washed up teachers from out of state.

[3:31:28 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick moved to invited testimony.

PEGGY RANKIN, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF TALENT MANAGEMENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), reiterated a few words shared previously by Dr. Deena Bishop regarding Senate Bill 20:

This bill provides the needed flexibility for school districts at just the right time. We have fewer and fewer going into education across the nation. This is a very important bill to be able to support incoming teachers. Senate Bill 20 provides additional avenues for school districts to seek and find top educators. Many states presently allow alternative teacher certification pathways and programs and its not the traditional university setting or student teaching experience. They utilize a blended approach to gaining certification. Many of these include co-teaching, substituting, on the job training and they're

increasing in popularity as one in five new teachers in the U.S. become a teacher through a means other than the traditional four-year undergraduate program or master's degree in traditional universities.

Also, second career educators are more inclined to enter into the alternative certification program. These alternative path educators are also a more diverse as a whole. They mirror their communities much more than traditional path educators. As you mentioned, concerns of the past have been around lowering of AK teacher certificate standards. Please know that that is not the intent of this bill. Rather, we choose to expand the candidate pool.

We have many immersion programs here in the Anchorage School District and we hire many out-of-country educators. Most of them do not and have not participated in the traditional student teaching world. This Senate Bill 20 would allow for a new out-of-country candidate to move to the professional certification. Right now, they can only have the initial certification because they do not have the student teaching requirement, which would not allow them to move to the professional and also often lessen their stay in Alaska because of that. This senate bill allows the time and flexibility needed to transition to Alaska with a certificate from another state. We continue to hold our standards, but it does allow time to complete those Alaska-specific certification requirements. None of that goes away.

Ms. Rankin thanked the sponsors of the bill that directly and deliberately responded to the needs of Alaska school districts, schools, and students.

[3:35:22 PM](#)

Representative LeBon stated that the Anchorage School District had quite a few school buildings and a pretty sizeable number of principals and assistant principals. He asked if the district was experiencing the same challenges with hiring and filling principal positions as it was having with hiring teacher positions.

Ms. Rankin replied that most often the district's principals came from within its teacher forces. The

district tended to grow its own principals who were familiar with the curriculum. She relayed the district did not frequently hire principals from outside. She highlighted that applicant pools across the nation were reduced in all teaching professions. Additionally, individuals were not entering programs at universities.

Representative LeBon agreed with the practice of growing and developing your own. He asked if the district was still experiencing interest from instructors on seeking out higher certification to become an assistant principal and ultimately a principal.

Ms. Rankin confirmed there was a strong interest. She informed the committee that several cohorts of the district's teachers were involved in administrative programs to obtain their administrative certificates.

Vice-Chair Ortiz referred to Ms. Rankin's testimony about out-of-country candidates. He asked if the candidates had the ability to become teachers in Alaska entirely through the J-1 Visa program.

Ms. Rankin responded that the district was not currently hiring out-of-country teachers on J-1 Visas. She explained that regardless of their ability to get a certificate, it was merely the individual's status to come to Alaska to work in the district, whether it was through an H-1B or J-1 Visa.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if there had been a significant increase in the two aforementioned visa programs over the past several years. Alternatively, he asked if they had always been used by the Anchorage School District.

Ms. Rankin replied that the district had recently been speaking with some smaller school districts in Alaska and working closely with DEED in regard to what the various J-1 Visa programs and sponsorship looked like. She stated the J-1 requirements had support components that had to be put in place. Currently, the district was hiring for hard to fill positions.

Vice-Chair Ortiz clarified his question. He asked if the district had seen increased use of the programs in the past several years.

Ms. Rankin replied that the Anchorage School District had only been using the process for several years.

3:39:58 PM

TAMMIE PERREAULT, NORTHWEST REGIONAL LIAISON, DEFENSE-STATE LIAISON OFFICE, OPERATING UNDER THE DIRECTION OF UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS (via teleconference), provided prepared remarks:

Our mission is to be resource to state policy makers like this committee as you work to address quality of life issues for military families. On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense, I'm here to express support for the policy changes proposed in Senate Bill 20, a bill that revises teacher licensure for personnel entry in Alaska and requiring the adoption of an expedited licensure process for military spouses.

Ms. Perreault referenced an earlier question on how many states had implemented a process similar to the one proposed under the bill. She shared that specifically for military spouses, about 30 states had similar processes. She continued to read from prepared remarks:

The process for teachers licensed in other states to become fully licensed in a new state can require extensive documentation, additional testing and coursework, and may involve application processing delays that create further barriers for military spouse teachers to seamlessly continue on their career paths. Policies such as those contained in this bill will contribute to the morale, economic stability, and well-being of our military families. As a military spouse myself, I cannot tell you the number of times I have talked to fellow military spouses who have simply chosen not to teach in a state where they moved to because of the rigorous challenges of getting licensed even though they may have held years of teaching experience and multiple teaching certificates from across the nation.

Teaching is one of the most prevalent professions among our licensed military spouses and while our society is becoming more mobile, the percentage of military spouse population that moves across state

lines is over 14 percent annually, compared to only 1 percent for civilian spouses; 88 percent of our military spouses report they want or need to work. We appreciate the tremendous efforts that Alaska has historically made to support our military service members and their families. We're grateful to Senator Stevens and to the work of his staff for bringing forth this important piece of legislation.

[3:43:02 PM](#)

Representative LeBon remarked that military spouses benefited various sectors including teaching and banking. He remarked that experience in the banking industry was very transferable. He recalled that at one time he had three commercial loan processors who were all married to military members. He stated that it was possible to say there was risk of losing the employees; however, while stationed in Alaska the employees were loyal with low turnover. He added that in many cases their tenure with the bank was longer than a non-military employee. He liked that the bill aimed to do something about the teacher shortage "in this manner." He thanked Ms. Perreault for calling in.

Co-Chair Merrick thanked Ms. Perreault for testifying and emphasized that the committee members loved the military families living in Alaska.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked for the names of the teacher competency exams currently being used in Alaska.

Ms. Meredith replied that the state primarily used the practice exam offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The department had a list of a number of other tests accepted across the country such as the Washington-based skills test called the WEST-B and the California test called CBEST. Additionally, the department honored the SAT, ACT, and GRE and a number of state-specific exams.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if Ms. Meredith had listed the SAT for teacher competency.

Ms. Meredith responded that the competency exam was a reading, writing, and math exam and portions of the SAT could be used. She noted there was an established minimum test score for that purpose.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if the type of competency exams used was at the discretion of the local school districts as long as the exam was state approved.

Ms. Meredith answered that all of the information had to be part of a teacher's file with DEED. The only exams that could be used were those approved by the state board.

Co-Chair Merrick thanked the testifiers and presenter.

CSSB 20(FIN) was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[3:47:35 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:06:05 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#hb283

HOUSE BILL NO. 283

"An Act making appropriations, including capital appropriations, reappropriations, and other appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; and providing for an effective date."

[4:06:09 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick relayed that public testimony would be taken from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. She provided the email address and call-in numbers.

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY

[4:06:13 PM](#)

BRYAN HAWKINS, CITY OF HOMER AND ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF HARBOR MASTERS & PORT ADMINISTRATOR, HOMER (via teleconference), supported the \$750,000 in the capital budget to complete the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers general investigation for Homer's large vessel port expansion project. He highlighted the funding was important match funding of \$750,000 set aside by the City of Homer and it would leverage \$1.5 million in federal funds. He shared that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly and Alaska federal delegation were aligned in their support for the

project. The project was the district's top capital priority. Additionally, he urged full funding of \$20,160,000 for the Municipal Harbor Grant Program. He stated that the program was an equitable and effective mechanism for completing deferred maintenance projects.

[4:08:49 PM](#)

BRUCE FRIEND, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill. He shared that he was an active member of the Homer Marine Trades Association. He provided information about the organization. The organization was intimately involved in the expansion of the harbor; it was an extremely important addition to the current port. He emphasized the need for the harbor expansion. He noted it would bring commerce to the area and would provide alternate port capability in the event of a disruption in traffic in Cook Inlet.

[4:11:23 PM](#)

JON ERICKSON, CITY MANAGER, YAKUTAT (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its work in the current year. He had seen significant progress. He highlighted the community's PFAS problem. He shared that he had spoken with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Congressional delegation to get PFAS funded to take care of the airport. He spoke to the importance of funding sewer and water projects. He spoke in support of the Municipal Harbor Grant Program.

[4:13:12 PM](#)

BAL DREYFUS, MATSON, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify. He detailed that Matson was a leading ocean carrier cargo providing lifeline services to three Alaskan ports. He requested the committee's support for Port of Alaska funding. He stated that the port received 50 percent of the state's incoming goods that 90 percent of Alaskans relied on. He spoke to various communities that relied on the shipments. He stressed that the port was the only Southcentral Alaska facility with waterfront infrastructure and workforce to support the cargo needs. He shared that port users, the Municipality of Anchorage, and the Anchorage Assembly were aligned in support for the project. He highlighted various support for the project. He stressed

the need to fund the state's most critical infrastructure projects. He supported a \$200 million appropriation and \$200 million in matching funds as currently outlined in the bill.

Representative Rasmussen stated there was another version of a budget bill that included \$25 million for the port. She asked if it would be a sufficient contribution from the state.

Mr. Dreyfus replied in the negative.

[4:16:24 PM](#)

BOB SCANLON, CEO, BLOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for the Blood Bank's inclusion in the budget. He requested a \$3 million increment in the capital budget. He stated that funding would allow the blood bank to end a serious vulnerability to Alaska's blood supply by making the blood bank wholly self-sufficient. He detailed that the funds would be used to create in-state donor testing and laboratory services. He shared that donor testing currently done out of state was a substantial bottleneck and ongoing dangerous vulnerability for the state, impacting blood supply operations, routine operations, medical trauma, and/or states of emergency. He spoke to other benefits of in-state donor testing and self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency would assure predictability, consistency, versatility, and shorter response times in the event of disaster.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if the blood bank had received funds in the capital budget in the past.

Mr. Scanlon replied that the blood bank had received appropriations in the past for the construction of the Blood Center in Anchorage.

[4:19:44 PM](#)

MIKE BROWN, SELF, PALMER (via teleconference), appreciated state support for the Arctic Winter Games. He stated that a \$1 million appropriation would assist with hosting the games. He supported a request for transportation system funding. He shared that the assembly had put several transportation projects before voters, which were approved by a nearly two to one margin. The city was requesting

state support as the borough had already appropriated several million dollars to the projects. He detailed it was a way for the state to partner with a local government match. He shared that a 50 percent match would total \$30 million. The city would appreciate consideration of an increment of at least \$20 million. The borough appreciated the inclusion of funds for a first responder training facility. The assembly had already appropriated matching funding. He asked the committee to continue to support the request. He thanked the committee for its service.

[4:21:59 PM](#)

DOUGLAS OLERUD, MAYOR, HAINES (via teleconference), testified in support of the Haines Borough Lutak dock rehabilitation project. He shared that the community had received a \$20 million federal grant that was dependent on a 20 percent match. The borough had put \$2.4 million towards a long awaited overhaul of the dock that was crumbling and had holes in the concrete decking. All of the fuel and freight for the community arrived at the dock. He provided detail on the request for \$3.2 million to complete the match for the shovel ready project. He thanked the committee.

Representative Rasmussen reviewed the numbers provided by Mr. Olerud.

Mr. Olerud replied affirmatively.

[4:23:46 PM](#)

EDNA DEVRIES, MAYOR, MAT-SU BOROUGH, PALMER (via teleconference), thanked the legislature for including \$1 million for the Arctic Winter Games. She thanked the legislature for funding for the first responder training facility. She spoke to the importance of proper training. She requested additional funds for transportation project package that the voters approved two to one in a recent election. The borough had already contributed 27 percent of the total amount. She spoke to the importance of road improvements to handle increased traffic resulting from population growth.

[4:26:03 PM](#)

CARA DURR, FOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of items for food security in Alaska. She highlighted that between years of lean budgets and a pandemic the Food Bank saw record numbers of Alaskans in need of its services. She reported that the state's food bank and food pantry system was strained. She stressed that a dramatic spike in costs drove increased need and operational challenges. The budget request would go far in addressing the problems. The funds would address critical capital needs such as refrigeration, vehicles, space modifications, and other. The investments would increase the organization's ability to distribute food. She provided additional program information and benefits. She appreciated the committee's consideration.

Representative Rasmussen asked if Ms. Durr saw the Port of Alaska as an area that could jeopardize food security if it was not addressed.

Ms. Durr replied affirmatively. She shared that the Food Bank received much of its food through the port. The organization was in support of funding for the Port of Alaska.

[4:28:31 PM](#)

JOHN HANDELAND, MAYOR, CITY OF NOME, NOME (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the Port of Nome state matching funds. He stressed that matching funding was needed immediately, and any delay risked losing the opportunity to build the port. He detailed that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released \$250 million in federal dollars. He provided detail about the project and work done to bring it to fruition. He shared that Nome's economy was struggling. He stated that the port would have long-term economic benefits to the region. He spoke to other sectors that would benefit.

[4:31:18 PM](#)

SARAH KATHRYN BRYAN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the AWAIC shelter and transitional living renovation projects for a 67-bed emergency shelter and 10-bed transitional housing program. The project would impact the lives of hundreds of victims escaping from abusive situations. She spoke about the organization's mission to provide shelter for female and male victims of

domestic violence and sexual assault. The shelter would save lives. The increment was for \$347,000. She thanked the committee for its consideration.

4:32:48 PM

DIANNE HOLMES, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. She stated that the port served most of Alaska. She emphasized that other projects would cost more for materials and equipment if the port project did not occur. She stated that the port deserved to be funded at a higher level than the level she had heard was in the budget. She asked the committee to support the port's replacement.

Representative Rasmussen stated that the House version of the bill included \$200 million with \$200 million in matching funds. She believed the other body had \$25 million for the project in its version of the budget. She asked if Ms. Holmes believed \$25 million was insufficient or the \$200 million was insufficient.

Ms. Holmes stated that \$200 million was not adequate for a \$1 billion project.

Co-Chair Merrick replied that the budget included \$200 million in addition to up to \$200 million in matching funds. If the federal funds were secured, the amount would be up to \$600 million. She noted the \$600 million was the original request.

4:35:25 PM

JASON LESSARD, NAMI ANCHORAGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), provided details about his affiliation and work with various entities. He supported \$1.5 million for Careline Alaska to rebuild its facility. He spoke to the effectiveness of the Careline component. He stated that 90 percent of the calls could be handled at the call center level and did not require any additional response. He asked the committee to consider adding behavioral health treatment capacity funding. He stated it had been a number of years since the continuum of care had received an influx of cash for capital improvements. He spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. He stressed that the port was in dire need and the state depended on the port for food security.

Co-Chair Merrick clarified that the House version included \$1.5 million for the Careline.

Representative LeBon stated that approximately \$275,000 would likely be sufficient as Careline was not looking to purchase a building currently.

[4:38:41 PM](#)

MARGARET HENSON, NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of money for the Alaska Technical Center student/family housing. She provided detail about the district. The center provided training in construction, health occupations, culinary arts, and technology. The Red Dog Mine and the Ambler mining belt was located in the region. She shared that employment opportunities in the region frequently went to non-local individuals. She elaborated that while many residents desired to obtain certification to pursue career opportunities, the individuals were having difficulty securing necessary housing while attending training. She requested \$1.2 million for the project. They were confident other funding partners would be available.

[4:42:00 PM](#)

PAUL OSTRANDER, CITY MANAGER, KENAI (via teleconference), thanked the committee for the inclusion of \$6.5 million for the Kenai River bluff stabilization project. He thanked Representative Carpenter and Co-Chair Merrick for including the increment. He detailed that the funding would be combined with \$5.25 million from the City of Kenai. The funds would be leveraged with \$22 million to \$23 million of federal funding. It had been a top priority capital need for at least 30 years and was a critical step in the revitalization of oldtown Kenai, which was an area of cultural and historical significance. There had been no capital investing in the area for at least three decades and the bluff continued to erode at three feet annually. The project would stabilize the bluff. He thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify.

[4:44:24 PM](#)

ROBIN MINARD, MAT-SU HEALTH FOUNDATION, WASILLA (via teleconference), asked for additional funding to support

behavioral health treatment capacity. She spoke to the importance in access to healthcare. The funding would be needed even in normal times; however, life post-COVID-19 was anything but normal. She highlighted examples. There was more need now more than ever for behavioral health support. She thanked the committee.

[4:45:57 PM](#)

KELLY LESSENS, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), highlighted the district's backlog in deferred maintenance, which exceeded more than \$800 million. She supported the \$100 million for major maintenance in the capital budget. She stated the funding would allow the district to move forward on updates to enable children to attend school in safe conditions.

Representative Rasmussen asked if the board had a position on the Port of Alaska.

Ms. Lessens answered that it was not something the board had engaged with. She noted that the district's supplies came in and out of the port. She referenced food security and supplies for capital projects that came through the port. She personally supported action on securing a functional port.

Representative Rasmussen asked how many students received meals through the district.

Ms. Lessens answered that more than half of the district's students were economically disadvantaged. She believed all children were eligible for meals nationwide. She did not have the exact figures, but she could follow up with the information.

[4:49:06 PM](#)

HEIDI HILL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$347,000 for AWAIC's shelter and transitional living renovation project. She highlighted the terrible rates of domestic violence in Alaska. She provided detail about the existing shelter. She stated that the shelter provided housing for domestic violence and sexual assault victims. She saw the impact of the programs on the lives of individuals on a daily basis. She relayed that the repairs

would be significant in terms of support for victims. She appreciated the committee's support.

[4:50:39 PM](#)

BRENDA MOORE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), asked for support of \$11 million for behavioral health treatment capacity. Needs had risen and the pandemic had substantially impacted behavioral health, yet the capacity to treat behavioral health in Alaska had not seen significant investment. She thanked the committee for its commitment to Alaskans.

[4:52:27 PM](#)

DAVID KARP, SALTCHUK, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. He represented multiple port users. He believed there was a significant role for the state, federal government, and users to cover funding for the infrastructure project. He had witnessed multiple starts and stops on the project during his three years on the project. He stated that each iteration of the project over the years resulted in lost time and additional expense. They reached a moment in time where there was an agreed upon scope of work, timeline, and price. He implored parties to understand that each day wasted created additional exposure for the majority of the state's population as it pertained to the potential for a catastrophic failure of the existing facility. It was critical infrastructure that was currently at risk. He urged support of funding in HB 283.

[4:54:38 PM](#)

ERIC WYATT, PRESIDENT, ALASKA MARICULTURE ALLIANCE (via teleconference), testified in support of a one-time funding request for a mariculture matching grant program with a goal to double private investment. He shared that the program was supported by existing farmers and new entrants. Product demand had increased substantially in recent years. He spoke to the demand for shellfish. The program would allow the disbursement of funds to opportunities maximizing industry growth in the future.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked about the amount of the funding request.

Mr. Wyatt replied that the original ask was \$25 million in the governor's budget request.

[4:56:42 PM](#)

GALE VANDOR, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), thanked the committee for including funding for the United Human Services Teal Street center. She strongly supported service coordination in one building ensure comprehensive planning to provide assistance to people with disabilities that would enable them to remain in their homes and communities. Services would also be made available to patrons of the Glory Hall. She highlighted the resource room in the center that would enhance services for disabled persons in Southeast. She provided details about the center and clinic. The project had been in the works for more than a decade. She appreciated the committee's time and attention.

[4:59:05 PM](#)

KURT BUCHHOLZ, SELF, SOLDOTNA (via teleconference), supported the Blood Bank of Alaska funds to build a testing lab. He was a practicing physician and had been a Blood Bank medical director for several facilities. He shared information about his work with the Blood Bank. The Blood Bank provided sufficient blood to handle trauma and it had been a great partner responding to facilities' medical needs. The two elements that were incomplete included performing testing on all of the blood units and testing blood in the current environment was the safest it had ever been. He spoke to the importance of reference labs in rural communities. Moving the work to Anchorage would provide a quicker response in critical situations in order to give the proper, compatible blood.

[5:01:58 PM](#)

VIRGIE THOMPSON, MAYOR, CITY OF HOUSTON, HOUSTON (via teleconference), requested the inclusion of the city of Houston's installation of a natural gasline, which also included the extension of power to areas that were currently off-grid. The project would provide safe and cost-effective heating fuel for residents and would improve the cost of living for all impacted residents. The request was for \$993,410. She asked for support for the construction of a commercial building to house fire department and public works supplies, which would provide

fire protection to surrounding areas. She supported \$1.2 million for the Houston school's campus paved walking bicycle pathway. She provided detail on the benefits of the pathway. She spoke in support of \$723,000 for Bear Paw activities park recreational area.

Representative Rasmussen asked how much Houston had contributed towards the requests.

Ms. Thompson answered that the community currently had no contributions to the natural gas project. She added it would be shovel ready because there was only institution installing natural gas. The city owned the property for the fire station. The community did not have any contributions for the pathway, and it owned the property and had the design phase completed for the activities park.

Representative Josephson referenced the natural gas infrastructure with a cost of \$993,000.

Ms. Thompson agreed that it would cost \$993,410 to put natural gas in three sections of the city, which would affect approximately 600 people.

Representative Josephson asked how much the fire station cost was.

Ms. Thompson answered, "\$2.5 million."

Representative Johnson thanked Ms. Thompson for calling in.

Ms. Thompson added her support for behavioral health funding. She shared it took her granddaughter 17 hours for intake when she had extreme need.

[5:06:41 PM](#)

BRYAN HAUGSEAD, AWAIC, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported funding for AWAIC, which gave critical aid to victims of domestic violence. He asked the committee to support the request the renovation of the AWAIC facilities. He encouraged funding for the Blood Bank of Alaska. He had personally had to leave the state for medical care and the funding would be significant for everyone in Alaska.

[5:07:21 PM](#)

CLAY BEZENEK, SELF, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), shared a food safety and biological issue had been identified in the fall. He had been working with Vice-Chair Ortiz on the issue. He requested support for a remote operated vehicle (ROV) that went to a depth of 200 meters that would be used to survey rockfish stocks in Southeast Alaska. Rockfish was an important food staple for the community. He relayed that the ROV would be used to survey from Sitka to the inside waters of Ketchikan. There was currently one ROV located in Homer that was only available for Southeast for three days per year. He noted the community was not attached to the road system and if there was a calamitous event, the community would need to harvest out of the ocean.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked about the current status of local residents' ability to harvest rockfish. He stated his understanding it was limited.

Mr. Bezenek answered that they could not harvest any yellow eye rockfish in Ketchikan. He detailed that the Board of Fish had recently discussed the issue extensively. He shared that it had been a crushing blow to the economy and food safety.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked what the ROV would cost.

Mr. Bezenek replied it was a \$250,000 purchase for a machine that would last about 10 years. He detailed that the Department of Fish and Game would come up with surveying costs for the first year. He remarked that if the issue would have been identified sooner it would have been included in the budget in a different way. He appreciated the support.

[5:11:12 PM](#)

PATRICK MAYER, SUPERINTENDENT, ALEUTIAN EAST BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, SAND POINT (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its continued support of education in Alaska. He supported school bond debt reimbursement and school major maintenance. He shared that the funding would enable districts to improve aging school buildings and ensure students had a safe school environment. He highlighted the increase in cost. The district had a structural roof and foundation repairs to bring it up to ADA compliance. He thanked the committee for making children a priority.

Vice-Chair Ortiz thanked Mr. Mayer.

[5:12:46 PM](#)

CHUCK HOMAN, SELF, EAGLE RIVER (via teleconference), testified in support of \$1.5 million for the Starner Bridge replacement. The funding for maintaining and repairing the roads was through local property taxes. He explained that the taxes were split between road maintenance and capital projects. He relayed the Starner Bridge was in poor condition with a rating of three tons. There were concerns the bridge would be closed by the bridge inspector and the homes served by the bridge would be completely cut off. He elaborated that the bridge was currently unsafe for emergency vehicles. Funding the bridge replacement with entirely local funds would wipe out the city's capital projects budget for the year. He relayed that \$1 million in local tax dollars had been approved. He urged the committee to include the \$1.5 million.

[5:14:39 PM](#)

JOAN O'KEEFE, UNITED HUMAN SERVICES OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Teal Street center social services hub in Juneau. She detailed that the center would collocate nine organizations in a hub to serve seniors, low income individuals, and people with disabilities. She listed various tenants. The center would also host providers in a in a resource room to provide tools including employment services, mental health education, legal resources, youth mentoring, housing navigation, and disability access. She provided additional details about the center. The investment came at a critical point in the fundraising effort. She highlighted escalated costs. The total project had increased to over \$10 million. She supported a \$3.7 million increment.

[5:16:50 PM](#)

BRANDON CALCATERRA, SELF, EAGLE RIVER (via teleconference), testified in support of \$100 million for school major maintenance and previous funding for school bond debt reimbursement. He stressed the funding was critical to ensure students had functional facilities. He thanked the committee.

[5:17:59 PM](#)

JOY BAKER, CITY OF NOME, NOME (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$175 million for the Port of Nome. The funding was needed to match the \$250 million Army Corps funding that would construct the only Arctic deep draft port in the country. She spoke to the importance of the Arctic port. She highlighted the benefits of the port including food security, environmental safety, scientific research, national security, and other. The current ability to meet the needs in the Arctic were currently marginal at best. She stated there were currently serious limitations for providing response capacity for spill response and life safety. She listed additional benefits of the port. She spoke to developing resilient and stable infrastructure necessary to support the national security fleet. The increment was required by the corps. She thanked the committee.

[5:21:10 PM](#)

JULIE DECKER, ALASKA FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WRANGELL (via teleconference), spoke in strong support for a \$25 million mariculture matching grant program included in the governor's capital budget. She discussed that mariculture would benefit Alaska's communities, environment, and economy. She highlighted it was an opportunity to grow a new industry. Investing \$25 million in state funds was a wise investment that would be returned to the state through increased economic activity for years to come. The funds would increase the trajectory of the industry growth. She reviewed various growth scenarios that depended on government investment.

[5:23:45 PM](#)

SUSANNE MARCHUK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA CARELINE, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), shared that she had been a part of Careline for 16 years. She shared that Careline had been a frontline of defense for Alaska's crisis care system for nearly 20 years offering a statewide resource for Alaska's most vulnerable. She highlighted the benefits of the program. The entity was the only designated suicide lifeline contact center in Alaska. She shared that the center would begin receiving 988 contacts in July 2022. Projections predicted nearly 45,000 contracts in FY 23, which was a substantial increase. She shared that Careline

reduced the burden on law enforcement, EMS, and the judicial system. She highlighted a lease agreement secured. She believed it was in the best interest to purchase a building. She thanked the committee.

[5:26:25 PM](#)

LAURA LANN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$347,000 for the AWAIC transitional living renovation project. The project was important to the community because it provided critical renovation to the 67-bed emergency shelter and 10-bed transitional housing facilities. She shared that AWAIC was the only provider of emergency shelter and transitional housing for domestic violence victims in Anchorage. The funds would address multiple issues throughout the shelter and transitional living facilities. She thanked the committee.

[5:27:30 PM](#)

JAN CAROLYN HARDY, STATE PRESIDENT, AFSCME, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the proposal for a spending cap, protection of the Permanent Fund, and energy relief payments concurrent with the payment of the PFD. She stated that the budget reversed cuts to human services. She discussed that public health services had become more significant and necessary over the past couple of years. She discussed the need for long-term care for dementia and Alzheimer's patients. She listed other health related needs for individuals with developmental disabilities, behavioral health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and other. She supported the inclusion of funds for education and school bond debt reimbursement. She spoke in support of Pre-K and WWAMI. She spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. She stated the port was critical to Arctic commerce. She supported funding for the Port of Nome.

Representative Rasmussen thanked Ms. Hardy's comments in support of the items.

[5:30:49 PM](#)

HEATHER MCCARTY, CENTRAL BEARING SEA FISHERMAN ASSOCIATION, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke in support of \$5 million for the mariculture matching grant program. She highlighted the original request for the program was \$25 million and she believed it could successfully support continued

mariculture growth and development in Alaska. She requested an increased amount allocated to the program. She stated that fully funding the program would provide stability and potentially for shellfish enhancement. She stated that crab had suffered over the past several years and was in a disastrous situation. She provided detail about legislation that was working to help.

5:33:22 PM

DAVE BRONSON, MAYOR, MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Port of Alaska and deep water Port of Nome. He stressed that the projects were critical to the prosperity and security of Alaskans. He stated that the ability to raise federal funds for the port was directly related to the state funding secured. He supported the HB 283 increments for the ports. He stated failing to finance the Port of Alaska, the state would face a humanitarian crisis if there was a seismic event. He supported the \$200 million appropriation with the \$200 million match for the Port of Anchorage.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if a spending plan had already been submitted in regard to how \$200 million would be used.

ROSS RISVOLD, FINANCE OFFICER, CITY OF ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), replied that the \$200 million would be committed funds for the cargo dock 1 and 2 replacements. The funds would be committed to the \$1.1 billion replacement. The funds would not go to a particular item.

Representative Rasmussen stated the committee had heard from several other local governments. She believed Anchorage had contributed funding toward the project. She asked for the figure.

Mr. Risvold replied that the municipality currently had \$222 million pf funds on hand. The municipality had requested state funding in the amount of \$600 million. The port was seeking \$281 million in federal funds. Anything short of the State of Alaska request would be made up with Port of Alaska revenue bonds.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if the city had submitted an application for Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds for the project.

Mr. Risvold answered that the plan finance included a variety of fund sources including Port Infrastructure Development Grants and RAISE grants in the \$25 million range. The port would also apply for IIJA funds as long as it qualified.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if the port planned to apply for the IIJA funds but had not yet done so.

Mr. Risvold answered affirmatively. He did not believe applications were available yet.

Representative Josephson asked for verification that the \$281 million in federal funds was spread over many years.

Mr. Risvold answered that the port had a reasonable expectation that the \$281 million could be spread out over more than one year.

Representative Josephson wondered how many years.

Mr. Risvold answered that the port needed to have committed funds in place by 2025 totaling \$1.1 billion. The port would continue to pursue federal funding until that timeframe and the municipal assembly would have to authorize revenue bonds if the \$1.1 billion had not been achieved.

[5:41:26 PM](#)

SUZI PEARSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ABUSED WOMENS AID IN CRISIS, requested \$347,000 for the AWAIC shelter and transitional living renovations project. She provided detail on the project that would allow AWAIC to address multiple issues in all of the facilities. She relayed there were additional fund sources being used to support the project. She thanked the committee.

STEVE WILLIAMS, ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY, JUNEAU, spoke in support of \$8 million to stand up crisis stabilization services in Anchorage. The increment would enable Alaska to stand up the first 23-hour crisis stabilization facility in the state. He elaborated on the benefits of the project. He testified in support of funding for the Careline, which was the first response to someone in a behavioral health crisis.

Representative Josephson thought he had seen the number \$9 million for the center.

Mr. Williams believed the increment was \$8 million but he was not positive.

Representative Josephson asked where the facility site was located.

Mr. Williams believed it was the old Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) facility off of Piper.

[5:45:15 PM](#)

TOM CHARD, ALASKA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), requested an addition of \$11 million for behavioral health treatment capacity. He spoke to the dramatic increase in need during COVID. He reviewed the benefits of the treatment services. He spoke about legislation that had authorized the use of 1115 Medicaid waivers for behavioral health and substance abuse. Capital funding would help recruit and retain counselors, upgrade electronic health systems, and other. He thanked the committee.

[5:47:08 PM](#)

MARIYA LOVISHCHUK, THE GLORY HALL, JUNEAU (via teleconference), testified in support for funding for the United Human Services on Teal Street Center. She provided detail on the center. She stated that collocating the services would move the needle on homelessness. She stated that homelessness was a problem and difficulty getting to appropriate resources was a problem. The project would improve service delivery and was in the right place at the right time. She thanked the committee.

[5:48:34 PM](#)

BRUCE BUSTAMANTE, ANCHORAGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke to the mission to support growth and success for members and economic strength and resiliency for Anchorage. He spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. The current port was beyond disrepair. The port was the highest priority of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce. He spoke to the assets of the port. He cited a study by the McDowell Group

highlighting the port's critical nature. He supported a \$200 million appropriation and \$200 million match.

[5:51:20 PM](#)

JERRY JENKINS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), asked for additional funding for behavioral health treatment capacity. He thanked the committee for taking his testimony.

[5:52:03 PM](#)

MORIA SMITH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for including \$100 million for school major maintenance. She thanked the committee for funding school bond debt reimbursement in the operating budget. She stated that her son's elementary school was in sore need of improvements. She thanked the committee.

[5:53:21 PM](#)

JULIA LUEY, VOA ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), provided information about VOA Alaska that provided therapeutic services to youths and their families. She listed attributes of the program. She thanked the legislature for including \$960,000 for VOA's school-based mental health program. She requested support for behavioral health treatment capacity. She stated that with the Medicaid 1115 transformation, providers could not stand up new service lines without funds. She highlighted the youth mental health crisis impacting youth in Alaska. She discussed the large increase in calls and in suicidal inclination. She provided further detail. She urged the committee to prioritize youth mental health.

Co-Chair Merrick remarked that she had visited the VOA facility and had been very impressed.

[5:56:29 PM](#)

JESSICA LEONARD, SELF, HOUSTON (via teleconference), requested the addition of City of Houston capital projects to the capital budget. She spoke in support of funds of the local fire station and public works facility. She supported pathways for the local school, which had been needed for a long time. She noted dangerous traffic in the area. She

spoke in support of funding for the Bear Paw Park. She provided detail. She thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Merrick asked who the senator and representatives were for Houston.

Ms. Leonard did not know.

[5:59:10 PM](#)

HALEY JOHNSON, ALASKA TRAILS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of Alaska trails. She thanked the legislature for support for the Alaska long trail in the past. She supported funding for land and water conservation fund, recreational trails program, fee stations for state parks, and sanitation and deferred maintenance funds for state parks. She stressed that state managed public lands were in dire need of funding for recreational purposes. She encouraged additional funding for public use cabins.

[6:01:08 PM](#)

DR. GENE QUINN, ALASKA HEART INSTITUTE, ALASKA HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared information about his work with the Alaska Health Information Exchange. He took care of individuals who had heart attacks. He did not always have patient's records. The Health Information Exchange provided a way to transfer records. He noted there had been a mistake in the budget. The \$6 million had been removed in the Senate because they thought there was federal COVID relief funding available. There was not. He was asking for the item to be included in the budget to fund the Health Information Exchange for the next two years. He stated the federal government and the state had put tens of millions of dollars into creating the infrastructure. He appreciated the committee's consideration of reinserting the item in the budget, which was critical infrastructure for Alaska's healthcare system.

Representative Josephson had heard about the funding source problem. He hoped the issue could be fixed.

Co-Chair Merrick asked if Dr. Quinn was working with someone in the Senate to offer an amendment on the Senate floor.

Dr. Quinn referenced lobbyists for the Health Information Exchange. He relayed there were multiple individuals working on the issue including the commissioner and Dr. Anne Zink. He was happy to reach out to someone if he needed to.

Representative Rasmussen suggested the issue should be brought to Senator Mia Costello's attention as well.

[6:05:57 PM](#)

DONNA ADERHOLD, HOMER CITY COUNCIL, HOMER (via teleconference), appreciated the \$750,000 for a general investigation study for the harbor's large vessel expansion project. The funds would match funds the city had already set aside in addition to federal funds. The city had outgrown its current harbor. She thanked the legislature for including full funding for the municipal harbor grant program. She spoke to the benefits of the program.

[6:07:25 PM](#)

ED HENDRICKSON, ANCHORAGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the growth and support of business. He supported the Port of Alaska. He detailed that the current port had reached the end of its life and had experienced severe corrosion. He stressed the need for urgency. He supported the \$200 million included in HB 283. He stated that the port supported military operations in Alaska, the Arctic, and the Pacific Rim. He stressed the importance could not be over emphasized. He stated failure to act was not an option. He thanked the committee for its support.

[6:09:52 PM](#)

POLLYBETH ODOM, SELF, MAT-SU VALLEY (via teleconference), asked for support for additional funding for behavioral health treatment capacity. She had seen an increased need for services and less money for services needed. She requested support for AWAIC and the Port of Alaska.

Representative Rasmussen thanked Ms. Odom for calling in support of the port.

[6:11:17 PM](#)

CARL WEISNER, NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in support of a \$1.5 million request for a public safety facilities for the villages of the Northwest Arctic Borough to store firefighting and search and rescue equipment in order for communities to have access to the equipment when needed. He stressed that outdoor temperatures made things difficult. He shared four members of a family had lost their lives in a house fire the previous month. He elaborated that the equipment the community had been attempting to use had been frozen. He thanked the committee.

[6:12:58 PM](#)

CHRIS MANCULICH, SELF, MAT-SU (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. He stated that a catastrophic failure of the current port would cost the lives of longshoremen would be lost. Additionally, an even would impact food security. He supported any money they could get immediately.

Representative Rasmussen asked if the \$25 million proposed in the Senate would be sufficient to meet the needs.

Mr. Manculich answered that he thought the increment was \$200 million.

Representative Rasmussen clarified that the House version included \$200 million with a \$200 million match whereas the Senate version included \$25 million with a \$25 million match.

Mr. Manculich answered that \$25 million was not sufficient when talking about a \$1.2 billion project. He highlighted longshoremen had worked at the port during the pandemic with no plumbing because it had been frozen. He stated there had been a lot of deferment waiting for funds that were not there. Without complete funding, the project would still be in limbo.

[6:15:36 PM](#)

CARTER COLE, CITY OF HOUSTON COUNCIL MEMBER, HOUSTON (via teleconference), thanked the committee for the opportunity to testify. He was in support of funding highlighted by the Houston mayor earlier in the meeting. He supported a project related to natural gas in the community. He shared

that the project plan had originally been driven by residents, but there was no funding mechanism within the city to help them. He worked with the third-party gas supplier have gas costs as reasonable as possible. He remarked it was rare to find unanimous consent by the public. The projects were well-supported.

[6:17:23 PM](#)

SUZANNE LAFRANCE, ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Port of Alaska. She discussed that rebuilding the port had been an ongoing priority for the assembly and of the current and prior administrations. She supported a request to assist with repair, design, and modernization. She asked for continued support for the port. She listed stakeholders who were united around the plan. She shared that an investment would help in the pursuit of federal funds and would reduce the amount borne by most Alaskans through tariffs. She thanked the committee.

[6:19:12 PM](#)

KATIE BETHARD, SEAWOLF HOCKEY ALLIANCE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of \$340,000 for upgrades to the UAA sports center. She shared information about the volunteer alliance. She stated that previously the organization had raised over \$3 million through private donations during COVID to save the hockey team from elimination. The organization was asking for some state funding to make improvements to keep spectators and the fan base safe. The current bleacher situation was unsafe. The money would go toward the installation of new bleacher seating and a jumbotron. She thanked the committee for its time.

[6:22:13 PM](#)

GEORGIANA PAGE, HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Health Information Exchange. She provided details about the exchange and its benefits. She stated that a loss of the exchange would be a major setback and would place an undue burden on public health employees and lead to reporting delays. She stated that the exchange had played a vital role in COVID test results reporting. She provided further

detail about the operations of the exchange. She asked the committee to consider the funding.

[6:24:34 PM](#)

CARLIN EVANOFF, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Health Information Exchange. The exchange provided point of care access. The exchange provided care coordination and other serving individual Alaskans and reducing the overall cost of healthcare in Alaska. The secure storage of health data would allow for analysis of healthcare gaps, needs for services, and allocation of healthcare resources to those needing it the most. She requested support for the exchange to support individuals, public health, and pandemic management.

[6:26:54 PM](#)

STEVE NERLAND, MIRACLE LEGION BASEBALL, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of a \$200,000 request for Miracle Legion Baseball. He shared information about the legion. There was seasonal maintenance and the legion paid umpires. There was no building for the organization, and it had low operational cost. The funds would go toward working with matching grants from private organizations for various fields statewide. He thanked the committee.

[6:29:05 PM](#)

NORIA CLARK, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Port of Alaska. She thanked Representative Rasmussen in regard to the Sand Lake Road study. She remarked on the lights on Sand Lake. She noted there were safety issues on the road. She thought the assembly needed to stop wasting the community's money. She appreciated the state stepping in. She thanked the committee for its hard work.

[6:31:56 PM](#)

TOM ATKINSON, CITY MANAGER, CITY OF KOTZEBUE, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Cape Blossom Port and road. He shared that the city had been working on the port for many years with other regional stakeholders. Kotzebue was the gateway to 11 villages in the region and represented about 10,000 residences. The project would help reduce the cost of goods in the region. He highlighted that

many residents paid prices that were up to 61 percent higher than Anchorage. He relayed it would be an economic driver for the region. He provided detail about the current status of the project. He spoke about an 11.5 mile road out to the port site. Phase 2 of the road would cost was also a Department of Transportation and Public Facilities project. The community had received federal infrastructure funding in the amount of \$27.7 million. The estimates for the road were between \$40 million to \$50 million, leaving a shortfall of \$13 or so million. The community had applied for a federal RAISE grant in addition to another grant. The port would be the only one above the Arctic Circle. He hoped the committee would consider support for the project.

[6:35:11 PM](#)

JUNE ROGERS, FAIRBANKS CITY COUNCIL, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for a law enforcement range and training facility. The current facility was located on the Fairbanks International Airport property and the rules made basic training difficult. In 2018 law enforcement agencies were notified the range would be shut down. There was no other firearm range training facility. A new facility would serve every local, state, and federal law enforcement agency in Interior Alaska. A professional training environment was essential. She thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Merrick asked if the amount requested was \$6 million.

Ms. Rogers answered in the affirmative. The estimate for the range was \$16 million and there was an additional \$225 in a Department of Environmental Conservation grant to the Alaska Peace Officers Association for the design of the facility.

Co-Chair Merrick asked if it would be helpful to receive half of the \$6 million.

Ms. Rogers answered that everything was helpful. She added that the City of North Pole was looking at the possibility of donating land. She stated that looking at working together to move forward was incredibly helpful.

[6:38:28 PM](#)

VICTORIA KILDAL, KODIAK AREA NATIVE ASSOCIATION, KODIAK (via teleconference), asked for additional funding support for behavioral health treatment capacity. She thanked the committee.

[6:39:04 PM](#)

JOANN RIESELBACH, JUNEAU YOUTH SERVICES (JYS), JUNEAU (via teleconference), requested \$11 million for behavioral health treatment capacity within the state. She spoke about the services JYS provided to young people. The program provided outpatient services and facility services. Additional funds would enable the organization to increase its capacity. She elaborated that the funding would allow providers to better focus on youth crises. The absence of funding hampered the ability to respond to the crisis. She spoke to the need for funding for long-term strategic planning. She thanked the committee.

[6:41:56 PM](#)

BRENT FISHER, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), shared that he worked for JYS. He asked for support for behavioral health treatment capacity. He thanked the committee.

[6:42:40 PM](#)

TIM POTTER, ANCHORAGE SKATES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), underscored the need for behavioral health services and facilities to diagnose, treat, and make headway with the local population. He strongly supported funding for the Port of Alaska. He stressed that if the current port failed, the whole state would be in trouble. He highlighted a request of \$650,000 for a year-round warming facility chalet for Anchorage Skates at the Cuddy Family Midtown Park in Anchorage. He elaborated that the park was used by residents and tourists. He had been in an office located directly next to the park. He stated the park was a huge benefit for mental health. The chalet would allow for increased user safety and would help families with small kids. He thanked the committee for its time.

Representative Josephson thanked Mr. Potter for his testimony.

[6:46:24 PM](#)

RICHARD TULUK, CITY OF CHEVAK, CHEVAK (via teleconference), testified in support of airport improvement funding for the Chevak airport. He stated the funding was critical for the city. Additionally, Chevak was designated as a postal hub serving six other communities. He spoke to the importance of addressing the needs of supplies and goods coming into the airport to meet the needs of economic success for communities. He discussed it would improve services for villages around Bethel. He stated that airline companies would benefit from increased service, and it would benefit the community. The airport would most importantly help the City of Chevak when it built a hotel to accommodate visitors from an ecotourism program. It would also enable residents to develop small business opportunities. He thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Merrick CLOSED public testimony.

[6:49:28 PM](#)

AT EASE

[6:54:22 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Merrick noted the meeting would adjourn.

HB 283 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[7:20:19 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.