

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 24, 2021

3:18 p.m.

**DRAFT**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Zack Fields, Co-Chair  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz, Co-Chair  
Representative Calvin Schrage  
Representative Liz Snyder  
Representative David Nelson  
Representative James Kaufman  
Representative Ken McCarty

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S):            INFORMATIONAL        HEARING        ON        SCHOOL        TO  
APPRENTICESHIP &WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JOHN HAKALA, Director  
Alaska Office of Apprenticeship  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation on youth apprenticeship trainings entitled "Apprenticeship for High School Students Providing a Foundation for Career Success and Skilled Workers for Businesses."

MISSY FRAZE, Director  
Career and Technical Education  
Anchorage School District (ASD)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation entitled "Education & Industry: Developing tomorrow's workforce today"

JONI SIMPSON, Director  
Career and Technical Education  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation entitled "Pre-Apprenticeship Opportunities in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District."

MARI SELLE, Director  
Workforce Development  
Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented a presentation entitled "APCA Apprenticeship Program & APU Partnership."

HILTON HALLOCK, Provost  
Alaska Pacific University  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented a presentation entitled "APCA Apprenticeship Program & APU Partnership."

PAM CLINE, Business Representative  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)  
Wasilla, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of new apprenticeship programs.

RYAN ANDREW, Business Representative  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of new apprenticeship programs.

HEIDI DRYGAS, Attorney and Lobbyist  
Drygas Group, LLC  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of new apprenticeship programs.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:17:55 PM](#)

[Due to technical difficulties, the first few minutes of audio was not captured; however, the pertinent information has been provided from the secretary's log notes.]

**CO-CHAIR ZACK FIELDS** called the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:18 p.m. Representatives Fields, Spohnholz, Snyder, Kaufman, Schrage, McCarty, and Nelson were present at the call to order.

**PRESENTATION(s): Informational Hearing on School to  
Apprenticeship & Workforce Development**

[3:18:05 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS announced that the only order of business would be an informational hearing of school to apprenticeship and workforce development.

[3:19:09 PM](#)

John Hakala, Director, Alaska Office of Apprenticeship, U.S. Department of Labor, offered a presentation entitled "Apprenticeship for High School Students Providing a Foundation for Career Success and Skilled Workers for Businesses" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He read from slide 2, "Youth Apprenticeships are on the Move!" which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Youth Apprenticeships are on the Move!

Communities across the country are launching new programs that engage students in apprenticeships during their high school years. These high school apprenticeship programs provide results for youth, schools, and businesses.

DOL's Youth Apprenticeship portfolio supports apprenticeship programs for youth between the ages of 16-24 that combine academic and technical classroom instruction with work experience through an apprenticeship program.

The portfolio provides policies, investments, partnerships, awareness raising, and tools to organizations that are working to raise awareness about Youth Apprenticeship and to start programs.

Between FY15 -FY19, the number of youth apprentices has grown by nearly 50% (from 34,765 in FY15 to 52,050 in FY19)

National Apprenticeship Act of 2021 includes youth and pre-apprenticeship

MR. HAKALA then read slide 3, "High School Registered Apprenticeship," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

High School (HS) Registered Apprenticeship programs combine work-based, on-the-job learning with relevant technical education in the classroom.

Students who participate in these programs graduate with a high school diploma, may earn college credits, and national industry credentials.

They also start on a career path that continues after high school graduation -whether that is a continuation of their registered apprenticeship along with college, college only, registered apprenticeship only, or other full-time employment.

HS Registered Apprenticeships benefit businesses as well by providing a fresh source of talent developed from within their community.

MR. HAKALA paraphrased from slide 4, "For Students," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

You can easily get the essential skills and experience you need for your future career through a Registered Apprenticeship program.

These programs combine your current high school curriculum with critical on-the-job training from a local employer.

As an apprentice, you will receive classroom education, technical skills training, and work experience while earning a paycheck.

Upon completion, you will earn a portable credential that recognizes the dedication you put forth and expertise you now have in a particular career field without student debt.

MR. HAKALA then paraphrased from slide 5, "For Parents," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

You want the best for your child, including the best possible start to their professional career.

High School Registered Apprenticeship enables your high school-aged student to gain the skills for

in-demand occupations while earning a paycheck in a safe environment.

The program also helps ensure your student's academic success: high school completion is a necessary part of the program.

Structured on-the-job training paired with classroom instruction relevant to a viable occupation create the right combination to prepare your child for a promising career.

MR. HAKALA then paraphrased from slide 6, "For Educators," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Preparing students to be the next generation of skilled workers is vitally important.

By partnering with local businesses, your school district can create additional opportunities for learning and growth through High School Registered Apprenticeship.

The high school curriculum and career and technology training you offer are integral pieces of the program.

In addition, High School Registered Apprenticeship enhances your academic success goals as high school completion is a program requirement.

[3:23:27 PM](#)

MR. HAKALA directed attention to a portion of slide 6, "For Educators," with a photo of current high school senior Kayden Gilia of Akiak School, and shared that Ms. Gilia is the first ever youth apprentice for the associate teacher occupation, a program which is sponsored by Akiak School.

MR. HAKALA then paraphrased from slide 7, "For Businesses," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

What skills will your workforce need over the next few years? How will you replace retiring employees?

High School Registered Apprenticeship can help employers address these challenges.

Cooperation and partnering with your local school district allows you to professionally develop a high school junior or senior apprentice through on-the-job training, that you help to customize.

The program essentially allows you to create your next-generation workforce.

MR. HAKALA then paraphrased from slide 8, "Pre Apprenticeship for Youth," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Students take courses directly related to the apprenticeship field, in addition to their required high school coursework, which count toward high school graduation.

Youth may engage in pre-apprenticeship as an on-ramp to apprenticeship.

They participate in on-the-job learning activities (beginning at age 16), which can count toward entry into an apprenticeship program.

Students can apply to an apprenticeship program leading up to or upon high school graduation.

MR. HAKALA then moved on to slide 9, "Resources," which included a list of resources for information on apprenticeship programs, and asked if there were any questions.

[3:25:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked about the largest apprenticeship programs in the state.

MR. HAKALA responded that the department works with programs across multiple occupations and industries, and stated that some of these programs only have one apprentice and some have upwards of 300 apprentices.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON clarified that he would like to know what the largest apprenticeship programs in the state are and asked Mr. Hakala to share the names of these programs.

MR. HAKALA responded that the majority of department's programs are in the construction field, the largest of which include carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and pipefitters. The larger programs are the joint partnership between the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), referred to as the Alaska Joint Electrical Apprenticeship and Training Trust. He also identified the Associated Building and Contractors of Alaska as the largest non-union group. The multi-employer

programs typically have more apprentices than the single employer, he continued, and so the number varies. He mentioned the Alaska Primary Care Association as a group that has a high number of health care apprentices, and stated that he could provide the committee with a list of the registered programs and the number of apprentices enrolled in each of the programs if the committee desires it.

[3:28:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE asked what the typical duration of an apprenticeship program is, and what percent of apprentices start in high school.

MR. HAKALA responded that the program includes occupations that last from one year to five years. The department responds depending on the demand from the industry and occupation. In health care for example, it's typical to have programs that last from one to two years, and he perceives that time range to be trending in the field of social services as well. He said that the department has school-to-apprenticeship linkage agreements that all the major programs implement into their selection process, and that programs have always tried to work on a track with youth. Youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are not included in the federal regulations, and he explained that that is why he included information in his presentation about the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021, because if it becomes part of the department's regulation, the department will begin to track it more. He gave the example of Akiak School from his presentation and stated that the department developed the standards of the apprenticeship programs directly with the school to get the program standards "as close to the employment site" as possible.

[3:30:47 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked Mr. Hakala to describe the opportunities that would be available to the state should the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021 pass.

MR. HAKALA responded that he thinks it would be a "game-changer" and that each state would receive significant funding. He shared that the expectation of the department is that, as organizations embrace youth apprenticeship, there would be support from the federal Department of Labor & Workforce Development to assist the programs. He referred to his presentation again and stated that there are national

investments in youth apprenticeship that may already be looking for partners. He hopes that Alaska is attentive to funding streams for these youth apprenticeship programs to help the programs launch more robustly in the state.

3:32:30 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER asked whether the on-the-job training occurs during school hours, or after school.

MR. HAKALA responded that due to child labor laws, part-time work, which is typically no more than 20 hours per week, is what the department is expecting. The department expects that students would be working full-time in the summer. In response to a follow-up question, he stated that it is a possibility that on-the-job training could occur during school hours. The department would have a discussion with the various industries about their particular needs and it would be agreed upon as a group. He doesn't believe that it would preclude working during school hours as long as students stay focused on their schoolwork and achieve academic success, which he stated is the first priority.

3:34:35 PM

MISSY FRAZE, Director, Career and Technical Education, Anchorage School District (ASD), shared her presentation on Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities that exist currently in the Anchorage School District (ASD), entitled "Education & Industry: Developing tomorrow's workforce today." She turned the committee's attention to slide 2, "What is happening in CTE?" and summarized the information on it, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Over 5,000 students accessing CTE courses across ASD

- ☐ Biomedical
- ☐ Certified Nurse Aide
- ☐ Culinary
- ☐ Computer Science
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Diesel Maintenance
- ☐ Engineering Technology
- ☐ Entrepreneurship
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Metal Fabrication
- ☐ Welding

☐ And more...

MS. FRAZE added that ASD has over 14 career clusters and 30 different pathways that students can pursue while in high school. She shared that ASD has programs in 9 high schools and 10 middle schools.

MS. FRAZE moved to slide 3, "What we do," and paraphrased from it. She explained that the district's goal is to give students the opportunity to get hands-on experience, learn from professionals, and learn technical skills. The slide read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- ☐ Career Exploration & Development
- ☐ Technical Skills Training
- ☐ Certifications
  - ☐ AWS Welding
  - ☐ Certified Nurse Aide
  - ☐ EMT ☐ Serve Safe
  - ☐ CPR/First Aid
  - ☐ NCCER ☐ OSHA 10
  - ☐ And more ...

MS. FRAZE shared slide 4, "Why CTE Works," and explained that the goal is to increase CTE opportunities because students have shared that these courses are a "light at the end of the tunnel" of high school. The slide read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Provides purpose for learning
  - ☐ Engages ALL learners
- ☐ Higher graduation rates for CTE Concentrators (2 credits in a pathway)
  - ☐ 94% overall vs. 81% district average

MS. FRAZE moved on to slide 5, "King Tech Direct Entry," and defined "direct entry" as students having a secured slot in a registered apprenticeship program directly out of high school. She explained that this process is due to the district's close relationship with its partners and requires a significant amount of work with these partners during a student's tenure in high school. The slide read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- ☐ Average between 5 and 8 direct entry students each year (.1% of CTE students)

- ☐ IBEW
- ☐ Carpenters
- ☐ Laborers
- ☐ Sheet Metal
- ☐ Plumbers & Pipefitters

[3:39:10 PM](#)

MS. FRAZE explained that her proposed solution for increasing the percentage of CTE students going into direct entry is to expand the opportunities outside of the registered apprenticeship programs.

MS. FRAZE directed attention to slide 6, "What we need to expand," and paraphrased the content, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

We need collaboration & partnerships through a state supported coalition.

☐ All stakeholders at the table (education, industry, commerce, labor, post - secondary, etc.)

☐ Dedicated team to advancing the work

☐ Graduation pathways with dual credit

MS. FRAZE concluded that there are laws in place that can be prohibitive to a youth apprenticeship program, and that it is important to have "a lot of people at the table" talking about the structure of the programs. She shared that other states that have been successful in implementing these programs, Colorado for example, have people dedicated to establishing partnerships to expand the programs. She expressed that the district needs people who are dedicated to helping the industries understand more about apprenticeships and the opportunities and benefits of these programs. She added that graduation pathways are important to discuss as well, and that it is vital to ensure that apprenticeship pathways are also graduation pathways, meaning that students can utilize the education received while on a job to count towards graduation. She said that some of these students are learning "more advanced math than some college kids" in these apprenticeship programs, and that this should be recognized in the standards .

[3:41:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked Ms. Frazee how many [credit] hours she sees a student realistically being able to obtain.

MS. FRAZE responded that it largely depends on how much of a student's day would be dedicated to the program. She stated that some students have more flexibility in their schedules, and that summer hours are helpful in getting more hours towards an apprenticeship.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY followed up with a question about concurrent enrollment, asking whether Ms. Frazee is encouraging students to get high school education credit while getting trade recognition and credit at the same time.

MS. FRAZE responded that yes, concurrent enrollment would be beneficial. She added that this is similar to students taking college classes while in high school, getting credit for both.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY - using an example wherein a student is taking classes that qualify as concurrent enrollment but the high school already acknowledges "workability" credits - how many hours one credit is worth and how many credits a student take outside of school that qualify for trade.

MS. FRAZE said that the district uses the Carnegie credit unit of 80 hours per class and that a class is worth 0.5 credits. One full credit is worth about 160 hours. The district has what it calls "work experience credits" which are general electives and do not count towards any core academic credit. She added that looking at the standards of apprenticeships and determining whether they meet the education and academic standards is important.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked how many elective credits students can get that would count towards the trade apprenticeships.

MS. FRAZE responded that the guidelines would vary by school district, but that ASD allows students to repeat their "work experience" so that they may get two or three credits that fall under that category.

[3:47:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON referred to slide 2 of the presentation and asked about the average number of apprenticeship hours that students get throughout their time in high school.

MS. FRAZE explained that right now, ASD does not have registered apprenticeship programs for its students, but the district does

have direct entry. She added that the district is looking at establishing youth apprenticeship which would allow students to earn apprenticeship hours during high school. The number of hours that they would earn would vary depending on each student's schedule and flexibility.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked whether Ms. Frazee has a gross estimate for the number of hours a student usually obtains that counts towards work experience.

MS. FRAZEE responded that she is unable to give an average because it depends on the student. Many high school students who work have a maximum number of hours they can work due to labor laws for children regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor.

3:50:18 PM

JONI SIMPSON, Director, Career and Technical Education, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, introduced her presentation "Pre-Apprenticeship Opportunities in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District" and stated that she wants to speak to the committee about some pre-apprenticeship programs that the Fairbanks North Star School District (FNSSD) has available. She said that the district has a direct entry program in Fairbanks, Alaska, similar to the one Ms. Frazee mentioned that has been around for about 10 or 11 years. She shared that, although there was interest and students successfully direct entered into apprenticeship programs, the district found out a year or two into the program's existence that there was a high attraction rate and the retention rate was about 35 percent. She stated that she is going to share what the district did to help change those statistics.

MS. SIMPSON moved to slide 2, "Introduction to the Trades," and explained that the district has a partnership with the Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center (FPTC). In partnership with FPTC, the Carpenter's Union, IBEW, and the Plumbers and Pipefitters [union], the district created a program called the "Introduction to the Trades." She explained that the classes are taught at the FPTC, which requires that students leave their high school and work in an unfamiliar environment, work with students from all over the district, and the teachers of the program are directly out of the training centers for the different unions. She added that this gives the students an idea of what it would be like to truly enter an apprenticeship and be successful.

MS. SIMPSON proceeded to slide 3, "Industry & Union Partners" and explained that they started with the Plumbers and Pipefitters and Carpenters Unions and IBEW, but have since expanded into other industries. She listed these from the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Plumbers and Pipefitters, Local 375
- IBEW, Local 1547
- Carpenters Union, Local 1243
- Operating Engineers, Local 302
- Laborers Union, Local 942
- Process Technology, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Alaska Works Partnerships

[3:53:47 PM](#)

MS. SIMPSON moved to slide 4, "Recruit Students," which showed an image of an example flyer intended to recruit students. She explained that the district's duty in the partnership with the industries is to recruit students, and therefore they distribute this flyer to families digitally and via hard copy to all of the schools in the district and ensure that all CTE teachers have them displayed in their classrooms and their shops. She an example of a flyer that goes out to families. She shared that the CTE teachers also are often speaking to the students about the value of the program and the students are required to apply for the program if they are interested. Initially the district was hoping to get enough applications to satisfy the program and now there is an extensive waitlist due to the perceived value of the program. She explained that the educational materials such as the flyer expose students to seeing people who look like them and are successful in the programs.

MS. SIMPSON continued that the training partners set up a real experience for the students. The FNSSD's training partners set up their classrooms as a "real experience" for the students that mirrors the environment in real apprenticeship programs. The district heard from students that they struggled with the switch from social to work environment, which is what they believe contributed to the low retention rates, and it was not a matter of the students not having skills. She shared that the classes are set up to treat the students like responsible adults; there are no excused absences, and the students have to be there every day unless they are ill, unlike in school. The students themselves are asked to communicate with the training

coordinator if they are ill and coordinate a way to make up missed time. It is a real work environment where students are required to always stay busy and on task. She acknowledged that students might be a little bit nervous initially, but at the end of the program, they are "walking tall." At the end of the class, students have the opportunity to apply for direct entry for the program of their choice. She said that the district always has about 10-15 students "direct enter" every year. Now it has about 70-75 percent retention, which is higher than the adult population.

[3:57:56 PM](#)

MS. SIMPSON moved on to slide 5, "Classes," and went through the options, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Electrical
- Welding
- Carpentry
- Laborer Academy
- Heavy Equipment Maintenance
- Process Technology

MS. SIMPSON reiterated that these classes involve much more than skill building; they allow the students to learn about life and how to be in a true working environment as well. She proceeded to slide 6, "The Reward for Students and Industry," and stated that the reward of the program is for the students who have direct entered. She shared that the unions get the students lots of "swag," and they make a big deal out of the direct enter process.

MS. SIMPSON turned to slide 7, "Expansion..." and said that the district wants to expand and create "a dozen more" opportunities for its students. She agreed with Ms. Frazee that to be successful, the district would need support for the program and something to act as the "glue" that keeps things moving.

[4:01:11 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked about the percentage of students that go into apprenticeship programs.

MS. SIMPSON responded that the district puts about 72-80 students through the Introduction to the Trades classes and about 15 students a year direct enter per year. The district has about 5,000 high school students. She reiterated that the

number is not due to lack of interest, it is due to capacity because they have more interest than they do seats in the program.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY followed up and asked whether the district has the ability to do "cohort type things" to have more capacity, rather than in the hourly classroom manner.

MS. SIMPSON responded that the district does implement a cohort model in its certified nursing assistant program, but still the capacity is only about 20 students. She believes the main takeaway is that more instructors, more facilities, more of "everything" is needed. Even in the trade courses taking place in professional facilities there are only about 15 seats available at a time. The district is always looking to expand this program, but it has not put together a plan yet.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked what the waiting list procedure is like and how students get into these programs.

MS. SIMPSON shared that there's an application process the students have to go through and after they are selected, there is a rank order for the students that are waitlisted. Letters of recommendation are also part of the application process; occasionally an application will with an outstanding letter of recommendation stating that "this program will change [the applicant's] life" will catch the attention of the district and a district employee will call and have a conversation with the reference. She said that the union trainers prefer that students do not enter the program late but if someone drops out within an appropriate amount of time, they immediately contact the students that were on the waitlist. The district always places senior students first because they have less time before they are "launched into the world." It also communicates openly about junior students regarding their chances for next year, and encourages them to apply again.

[4:07:13 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ directed a question to Ms. Frazee regarding a statistic she supplied in her presentation, asking whether the 5-7 students that direct enter into apprenticeship programs each year refers solely to the students at King Tech High School (KTHS) or to the entire ASD.

MS. FRAZEE clarified that that number refers just to KTHS.

4:07:58 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE asked Ms. Simpson who bears the cost of the CTE programs.

MS SIMPSON responded that FPTC receives a grant from the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) and the center covers the cost, facilities, instructors, and materials. The district's position is to recruit the students, to be the liaison between parents and instructors, and to perform the logistics behind the scenes. If the district didn't have that money, then the program would be impossible to run.

4:09:42 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER asked Ms. Simpson whether it is correct to assume that most of the youth apprentice programs for students still in high school are paid.

MS. SIMPSON responded that no, the students are not paid. The opportunities are pre-apprenticeship programs not youth apprenticeship programs and the students earn a 0.5 elective credit for their participation.

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER asked whether there is any concern there could be other high school students who may need a paycheck after school and whether Ms. Simpson sees that as a challenge.

MS. SIMPSON responded that no, that has never come up.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS clarified for the committee that a registered apprentice is employed and is earning a wage and a pre-apprentice is preparing to enter a program and can be a student that is not being paid.

4:11:18 PM

MARI SELLE, Director, Workforce Development, Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA), directed attention to slide 2, "Apprenticeships at APCA," and explained that the APCA is a member organization that supports community health centers. She shared that in 2017, APCA recognized the potential for the registered apprenticeship model to be an advantage to their community health centers. The organization has very remote health centers across Alaska and these health centers need a qualified workforce to staff the centers. The organization partnered with DLWD to start the registered apprenticeship

program and also started providing pre-apprenticeship trainings or Preparing Alaskans for Training in Healthcare (PATH) academies, where they are trained in basic medical techniques as well as receive soft skills training. She shared that the apprenticeship program has been successful for APCA thus far. She continued to paraphrase from the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Began in 2017
- Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship (PATH Academies)
- Focus on Community Health Centers
- Occupations:
  - Community Health Workers
  - Medical Assistant
  - Medical Admin Assistants
  - Biller Coder Specialist
  - Electronic Health Records Specialist
  - Direct Support Professional (NEW)
  - Pharmacy Technician (Coming in 2021)

[4:14:30 PM](#)

MS. SELLE proceeded to slide 3, "Health Care Apprenticeship Success Factors," and shared that APCA has 78 apprentices currently, which is a "squishy" number because it includes the apprentices that APCA is currently enrolling. She continued to paraphrase from the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Currently have:
  - 78 Apprentices
  - Samuel Simmonds Hospital, Cross Road Medical Center, Iliuliuk Family Health Services, Yukon Flats Health Center, Kodiak CHC, Kodiak Area Native Association, Seward Health Center, Sunshine Health Center, Peninsula Community Health Services, Providence Alaska Medical Center
- Willing Employers
- Distance Delivery
- Real-time classroom training
- On the Job training by community-based mentors
- Certification
- Undergraduate Certificate from APU

MS. SELLE added that she believes this program has been successful in part due to the unique relationship that APCA has

with Alaska's community health centers as the health centers have been willing to try this new model of employment. The program is delivered in an online format but the classes take place in real time. The students are simultaneously putting into practice the information they learn in the classes, which is a process that is monitored by a mentor that works with the apprentice. The apprentices earn a national certification from the National Health Career Association and certification from the federal apprenticeship program. She concluded that they are also able to earn an undergraduate certificate from Alaska Pacific University (APU).

[4:17:09 PM](#)

HILTON HALLOCK, Provost, Alaska Pacific University, continued the presentation on slide 4, "Undergraduate Certificate Options," and explained that the Health Occupations program at APU includes an undergraduate certificate that is aligned with APU's registered apprenticeships, which include Clinical Medical Assistant, Community Health Worker, Electronic Health Records Specialist, Medical Administrative Assistant, and Billing and Coding Specialist. She added that APU also offers an associate degree in Health Occupation that integrates the credits of the apprenticeships and the undergraduate certificate. She said that the undergraduate certificate program typically lasts one to two years depending on concentration. The academic credits that APU awards considers both the didactic portion as well as the instructional time that takes place during on-the-job training. Students are typically working full-time in the community health centers. The program was designed to include coursework centered around the skills and concepts that are related to the field in which the students are working. She stated that the goal of the program is to ensure student success while also ensuring that APU meets its own academic standards and is supporting APCA's expectations for its apprenticeship programs.

MS. HALLOCK proceeded to slide 5, "Continuing Degree Pathways," and explained that APU tries to design its programs so that it's easy for students to move on to the next degree when they're ready, making it easier for students who "stop in and out of college," which she shared is very common in Alaska in particular. She explained that if a student locks in a certificate or an associate degree, the receiving school is more likely to accept a student's credits and transfers. She paraphrased from the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Health Occupations Certificate •  
Billing & Coding Specialist  
Medical Administrative Assistant  
Electronic Health Records Specialist  
Community Health Worker  
Clinical Medical Assistant  
Associates Degree  
Associate of Applied Science  
Associate of Applied Science/Community Health  
Bachelor's Degree  
Health Sciences (Pre-Health, Behavioral Health,  
Health Care Management, Pre-Nursing)  
Environmental Public Health  
Counseling Psychology  
Business Administration-Health Care Management

[4:22:10 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS noted that for a long time, Alaska has forced graduating high school seniors to make a choice between going to college, forgoing income, and oftentimes taking on debt or working to support themselves without an option to complete a college degree. He opined that what is so remarkable about the APCA and APU partnership is that it allows Alaskans to both have a living wage job and work towards having a degree. He then invited questions from the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY directed attention to slide four and asked Ms. Hallock how many of the undergraduate certificate programs have high school students enrolled in them.

MS. HALLOCK responded that none do because APCA requires that students have high school degrees or GEDs.

[4:23:48 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked Ms. Selle for elaboration about PATH academies and how they link up with jobs and college pathways upon graduation.

MS. SELLE responded that APCA's program is for adults, which includes the PATH academy. There are similar trainings offered by APCA for high school students, but these programs do not have the same requirements as the adult program. She said that especially in healthcare, it would be very difficult for anyone under the age of 18 to find employment. She stated that APCA

has started a youth apprenticeship program to train youth 18-24 years of age.

[4:25:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY followed up and asked if there are federal or state Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) laws that prohibit training individuals under the age of 18.

MS SELLE responded that yes, there are Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) rules that must be followed, though there may be opportunities in the human services field for people under the age of 18 but APCA has not explored that at this time. She shared that APCA is occupied with expanding the apprenticeship program.

[4:27:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked Ms. Selle whether, due to COVID-19, she has seen an increase in interest in the apprenticeship programs in healthcare fields.

MS. SELLE replied that APCA's fall cohort was quite large last fall but that it is difficult to say why it was so large. There was a lot of shuffling that had to occur, and recently clinics have been extraordinarily busy with vaccine rollout and most are back to at least full capacity. She shared that APCA has seen a small dip in its current cohort in the number of registered apprentices that were able to sign on.

[4:28:51 PM](#)

PAM CLINE, Business Representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), shared that she has represented the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center ("Mat-Su Regional") employees since 2008 and also worked there 2000 to 2008 as a certified pharmacy technician ("tech"). She continued that Mat-Su Regional has had a problem recruiting operating room and sterile processing room techs. She shared that the reason for this is that Alaska has no schools in the state that provide education for these jobs and so individuals are leaving the state to receive this education and then not returning. She explained that she was contacted by Mr. Hakala, and she sat down with hospital management to determine what Mat-Su Regional can do to train its own techs and keep them in Alaska. In 2017, the hospital started a surgery tech program along with a sterile

processing tech program. At the time, there were about 350 qualified or near qualified employees at Mat-Su Regional, and so they conducted in-house training first and had over 40 applicants for the first opening of the apprenticeship. Also in 2017 she said, she helped create the first magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technical program in the United States, which required convincing trainers that they could provide online training and that type of training would be sufficient for the program.

MS. CLINE continued that in 2018, Mat-Su Regional Hospital realized that the state of Alaska had an issue with not having the capacity to properly address mental health problems and took the steps to be able to open a behavioral health wing. Subsequently, the hospital management came to IBEW to create a behavioral health apprenticeship program in order to have the staff for the new wing. At the end, the program graduated 16 behavioral health techs. Surgery techs, operation room techs, sterile processing techs, and MRI techs have all stayed at Mat-Su Regional.

[4:33:00 PM](#)

MS. CLINE concluded with enthusiasm for new apprenticeship programs. She stated that if people go through pre-apprentice programs, then they will have the qualifications to apply for apprenticeship programs when they open up. She shared that it was difficult to get other hospital employees who went the college route on board with the apprenticeship program, but once they came around it was a "huge success." She said that a reason why the number of apprentices is small is because the ratio of mentors to apprentices has to be 1:1. She explained that individuals have to have to get a specific certification to become mentors, and she gave the example of a recent MRI tech who had to "copy [the mentor's] schedule for a year" because there were so few mentors. She stated her belief that if hospitals, pharmacies, etc. could be convinced that apprenticeships work, the workers would stay in Alaska.

[4:36:20 PM](#)

RYAN ANDREW, Business Representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), opened with his personal experience with registered apprenticeship. Prior to working as a Business Representative for IBEW, he taught apprenticeship classes through the IBEW/NECA partnership program. He shared that he is a journeyman electrician first and foremost and owes

the opportunity he received to enter into that apprenticeship program to King Tech High School. He took the electrical course and was direct entered into the IBEW/NECA apprenticeship program, which he said was a tremendous opportunity for him. He spoke about "signing day," an event that celebrates the students signing their apprenticeship agreements, and said that it is a huge moment for them. He said that he agreed with Ms. Frazee that there is room for expansion for the program and said that IBEW plans to continue its partnership with the school district and King Tech High School.

[4:39:56 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS introduced former DLWD commissioner Heidi Drygas and explained that he asked her to be present during the meeting because she was commissioner when the APCA and APU programs started and the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center Apprenticeship Program started, and he thought she would be valuable in speaking about capitalizing on these opportunities and continuing to expand these programs.

[4:40:59 PM](#)

HEIDI DRYGAS, Attorney and Lobbyist, shared that her entire professional career has been in the interest of advancing Alaska's workers. Alaska has a long history of apprenticeship programs and she shared that when she began working as commissioner of DLWD, the state was facing steep budget cuts and many critical workforce development funds were in danger of getting cut. She said that the DLWD made a decision to seek as many federal dollars as possible to continue to fund workforce programs and policies and was committed to expanding and elevating registered apprenticeship in Alaska. She stated that apprenticeship in Alaska has flourished in the construction industry in particular. Apprenticeship programs in the building trades are managed by "joint labor and management committees," and she shared that they are the gold standard for model apprenticeship programs in Alaska and across the country. The department concentrated on expanding apprenticeship programs in high-growth industries like healthcare, aviation, and maritime. She continued that over the course of four years, DLWD received more than 20 million dollars in competitive federal grant funds to boost workforce development, and it used a large portion of these funds to expand registered apprenticeship programs in Alaska.

[4:43:07 PM](#)

MS. DRYGAS continued that she fears that the state is missing opportunities to reach young people and expose them to potential apprenticeship opportunities. She explained that studies have shown that kids should be exposed as young as elementary school to career opportunities, and certainly by middle school and high school. She stated that it is important for Alaska's kids to be exposed to many different career paths, including vocational and registered apprenticeship paths. She stated that one of her biggest frustrations now and when she was commissioner is the mindset that a successful student is a student that is on a college track. She acknowledged that college is a terrific track for many, but it is not the track for everyone. She expressed her frustration that when other options are not presented to students on an equal footing with college, the state is losing valuable opportunities to grow Alaska's skilled workforce and provide a career pathway for Alaskans in the vocational trades. Apprenticeship leads to careers with good pay, benefits, and advancement opportunities. The biggest complaint she hears from employers and young Alaskans is that people don't know about these opportunities. She shared that on average, apprenticeship completers earn over \$300,000 more throughout their lifetime than peers who do not complete apprenticeships.

MS. DRYGAS concluded with the sentiment that she is glad that the committee is discussing school to apprenticeship programs and that it is a critical time to ensure that the state is supporting employers who choose to use apprenticeship in developing their workforces. She hopes to expand apprenticeship in Alaska and to push for more college credit through apprenticeship opportunities, such as dual credit for CTE programs including apprenticeship. The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), DLWD, and the University of Alaska all have critical roles to play in this endeavor, she said. Over the years, the federal government has promoted registered apprenticeship programs as the premiere path for workforce development. She continued that the Obama and Trump Administrations embraced apprenticeship programs, and it's clear that the Biden Administration intends to continue this effort. She concluded that federal programs to promote and expand apprenticeship programs can and will benefit Alaska, but only if the state positions itself to take advantage of the programs.

[4:46:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked Ms. Drygas whether she has any specific recommendations for legislature that would help prepare for any additional funding or opportunities coming from the federal government.

MS. DRYGAS responded that there are certain things the legislature can do to encourage employers to utilize apprenticeships. She mentioned that there are bills that are "floating around" right now about enhancing school-to-apprenticeship opportunities in secondary school and that these are good conversation starters, but she said that she will reflect on that more and perhaps come back to the committee with any other recommendations.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ commented that there are some great apprenticeship programs out there, but there seems to be much more that the State of Alaska can do if the state was more ambitious. She mentioned that although not everyone wants to go to college, it is not an "either/or" situation because a person can be an apprentice while attending college. She said that she would love to see more aggressive promotion of apprenticeship from a very young age and more ambition coming from the University of Alaska regarding the promotion of apprenticeship programs and opportunities.

MS. DRYGAS responded that the University of Alaska has been a champion for expanding career and technical education and that there was a lot of coordination involved in cooperation with the university. She stated that she gets the impression from interim University of Alaska President Pat Pitney that the university is "laser focused" on workforce development and meeting the needs of Alaska employers. She suggested that the legislature could pass a resolution to support registered apprenticeship, but it is mostly important to go after the federal dollars. She shared that federal dollars were a huge help for the department when they were facing severe budget cuts. She speculated that there are going to be a lot more opportunities like this for federal funding.

[4:51:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON asked Ms. Drygas about her claim that kids in elementary school should be exposed to apprenticeship. He asked her to clarify if that is her opinion or if she has a source to back that up.

MS. DRYGAS recollected that she had said children should be exposed as young as elementary school to career opportunities, whether that is apprenticeship or any other type of career opportunities. She knows that those studies exist and remembers reading and reiterating that information while she was at the department, and she stated that she can look for these studies and would be happy to provide the committee with that information. She said that information is anecdotal from what she remembers from her time at the department.

[4:52:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked about Ms. Drygas' previous recommendation about labor ability individuals are able to procure because of their age. He noted that there are restrictions based on age and asked for elaboration.

MS. DRYGAS deferred to John Hakala on the federal restrictions, but noted there are age restrictions on entering apprenticeships that restrict children under the age of 18 from working. She said that she doesn't have these restrictions off the top of her head but would be happy to provide those to the committee. Even so, she said that she thinks there are some workarounds that could be employed to ensure that young people still get exposure to apprenticeship and other opportunities.

[4:54:47 PM](#)

MR. HAKKALA addressed Representative McCarty's question and stated that the federal minimum age for registered apprenticeship is 16 years, and that's what the apprenticeship programs have to follow. He states that he always refers people to the Alaska child labor laws which state what work can be performed by children. If a student under 16 were to be hired as a pre-apprentice, it would be an unpaid opportunity to teach them on-the-job activities. He acknowledged that kids can work before they turn 16 if they have a signature from their parents. There is nothing in the current regulations that says that a pre-apprentice cannot work and have a real job, but once they come into the registered apprenticeship program, they need to be 16 years of age.

MR. HAKALA gave an example that a couple of days ago, he was talking to a strategic director of John Deere from Iowa, a state which has a very robust apprenticeship program starting in high school. He stated that John Deere is the largest employer in Iowa. He asked the director about his decision to start

working with high school students, and the director responded that they had no choice because otherwise they would lose the high school population as potential workers if they don't engage the students while they are still in high school. The director said that they are hiring high school students in school-to-apprenticeship programs who are under 18 and doing it safely and productively with child labor laws in mind. Mr. Hakala said that he believes the legislature needs to come together and create a template and opportunity to run these apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs successfully.

[4:59:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked Mr. Hakala to address the age restriction set by (OSHA), because it seems to be that the issue is about age rather than safety when it comes to the logistics of hiring young workers.

MR. HAKALA responded that this is why child labor laws are so important, and that Employment of Children Pamphlet 200: Statutes and Regulations is the document in Alaska that refers to this information. The pre-apprenticeship programs are safe working environments for children under the age of 18, and within the child labor laws children under 18 are allowed to work in pre-apprenticeship programs where otherwise they would not. In every pre-apprenticeship program, there is a standard related to the safety and training of the apprentice on the job, and so it is built into the training program as part of the written and practice plan.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY commented that higher education seems to be considered solely a college track and yet he deems higher education as any education that leads to a great career. He expressed his hope that that term can be expanded upon.

[5:01:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN asked Mr. Hakala whether there is a matrix that shows what the funding looks like regarding the interface between schools and other entities. He asked whether some of the funding is extracted from typical high school funding or is supplemental.

MR. HAKKALA responded that funding is part of his challenge in promoting registered apprenticeship. His office does not provide funding, but he still works to direct program sponsors to employers and intermediaries. There are larger federal

investments that have been offered in the last five or ten years that he said the state needs to anticipate. Generally, he said, it is a combination of dollars. Out of the two federal grants, the state apprenticeship expansion grant and the American Apprenticeship Initiative, he believes that there were some grants that went unutilized. He recommended that the state be careful in allocating and spending these federal dollars, but that the state should use these grants to fund apprenticeship programs. He concluded that there needs to be organization created to fund these programs.

REPRESENTATIVE KAUFMAN stated that he might be the only person present who is certified by the American Welding Society and can relate to trades. He said he sees the funding as a complicated matrix of different entities and would like to see more clarity.

MR. HAKALA responded that many programs are self-funded, and John Deere acknowledged this and built that pay-for-play aspect of funding into its business model to make it sustainable for long-term success.

[5:05:45 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked whether Ms. Frazee or Ms. Simpson would like to talk about Perkins grants and how those support the CTE course.

MS. SIMPSON responded that FNSSD uses Perkins grants to support the variety of career pathways. She mused that apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships could be written into the district's plans for the grants and she thinks that the CTE department should be in on conversations like this. She stated that it's important to look at the high needs of the labor market and do things with intentionality.

[5:08:01 PM](#)

MS. FRAZEE added that one of the challenges with Perkins grant funds in Alaska is that some of the districts get as little as \$15,000. She shared that it is assumed that Perkins grants are intended to help start programs but that over time, the funds should be coming from general funds, not the grants. She said that making partnerships with employers and finding the "John Deere of Alaska" can help industries understand apprenticeships. She explained that Perkins monies can be very limited for school districts.

5:09:17 PM

CO-CHAIR FIELDS thanked the testifiers and expressed his hope that the committee can see some legislation on apprenticeships soon.

5:09:35 PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.