

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

March 4, 2022

9:07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative David Nelson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 58

"An Act relating to insurance coverage for contraceptives and related services; relating to medical assistance coverage for contraceptives and related services; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 58(L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 372

"An Act relating to exemptions from minimum wage."

- HEARD & HELD

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Workers' Compensation Board

Michael Dennis - Wasilla

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

Board of Marital and Family Therapy

Tristian Monterastelli - Eagle River

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors

Brent Cole - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy

Elizabeth Stuart - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

Marijuana Control Board

Bruce Schulte - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

Board of Pharmacy

Ashley Schaber - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

Board of Social Work Examiners

Sharon Woodward - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 58

SHORT TITLE: CONTRACEPTIVES COVERAGE;INSURE;MED ASSIST

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CLAMAN

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/15/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	HSS, L&C
04/15/21	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
04/15/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/15/21	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
04/20/21	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
04/20/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 58(HSS) Out of Committee
04/20/21	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
04/22/21	(H)	HSS RPT CS(HSS) 5DP 2DNP

04/22/21 (H) DP: FIELDS, SPOHNHOLZ, MCCARTY,
ZULKOSKY, SNYDER
04/22/21 (H) DNP: PRAX, KURKA
05/03/21 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
05/03/21 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
05/07/21 (H) L&C AT 8:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
05/07/21 (H) Heard & Held
05/07/21 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
05/12/21 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
05/12/21 (H) Heard & Held
05/12/21 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
05/17/21 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
05/17/21 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
02/28/22 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
02/28/22 (H) Moved CSHB 58(L&C) Out of Committee
02/28/22 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
03/02/22 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/02/22 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
03/04/22 (H) L&C AT 9:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 372

SHORT TITLE: ELIMINATE MINIMUM WAGE EXEMPTION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TUCK

02/22/22 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/22/22 (H) JUD, L&C
02/28/22 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/28/22 (H) Heard & Held
02/28/22 (H) MINUTE(JUD)
03/02/22 (H) JUD RPT 4DP
03/02/22 (H) DP: DRUMMOND, KREISS-TOMKINS, SNYDER,
CLAMAN
03/02/22 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/02/22 (H) Moved HB 372 Out of Committee
03/02/22 (H) MINUTE(JUD)
03/04/22 (H) L&C AT 9:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

MICHAEL MASON, Staff
Representative Chris Tuck
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 372 on behalf of
Representative Tuck, prime sponsor.

TANYA KEITH, Program Manager, Wage and Hour

Labor Standards and Safety Division
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 372, answered questions.

MYRANDA WALSO, Acting Executive Director
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of HB 372.

HEIDI LIEB-WILLIAMS, Chair
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of HB 372.

RIC NELSON, Chair
Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony in support of HB 327.

MIKE DENNIS, Appointee
Workers' Compensation Board
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Workers' Compensation Board.

TRISTIAN MONTERASTELLI, Appointee
Board of Marital and Family Therapy
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Board of Marital and Family Therapy.

BRENT COLE, Appointee
State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors.

ELIZABETH STUART, Appointee
Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy.

BRUCE SCHULTE, Appointee
Marijuana Control Board
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Marijuana Control Board.

ASHLEY SCHABER, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, Appointee
Board of Pharmacy
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Board of Pharmacy.

SHARON WOODWARD, Appointee
Board of Social Work Examiners
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Board of Social Work Examiners.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:07:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR IVY SPOHNHOLZ called the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. Representatives Schrage, Snyder, Fields, and Spohnholz were present at the call to order. Representatives Kaufman and McCarty arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 58-CONTRACEPTIVES COVERAGE:INSURE;MED ASSIST

[9:08:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 58, "An Act relating to insurance coverage for contraceptives and related services; relating to medical assistance coverage for contraceptives and related services; and providing for an effective date."

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ stated that the committee intends to rescind previous action taken on HB 58 and to then take up and move out a committee substitute (CS) that has a correct date for

conditional effect, changing the date on page 7, line 18, from 1/1/22 to 1/1/23. She explained that this was an oversight the committee wishes to correct.

[9:09:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to rescind the motion to report HB 58 out of committee. There being no objection, the committee's action to report HB 58 was rescinded.

[9:09:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 58, Version 32-LS0259\G, Marx, 3/1/22, as the working document. There being no objection, Version G was before the committee.

[9:10:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to report the proposed CS for HB 58, Version G, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 58(L&C) was moved out of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[9:10:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ announced that the committee authorizes Legislative Legal Services to make any conforming changes that might be necessary for CSHB 58(L&C).

[9:10:36 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:10 a.m. to 9:13 a.m.

HB 372-ELIMINATE MINIMUM WAGE EXEMPTION

[9:13:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 372, "An Act relating to exemptions from minimum wage."

[9:13:58 AM](#)

MICHAEL MASON, Staff, Representative Chris Tuck, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HB 372 on behalf of Representative Tuck,

prime sponsor. He stated that HB 327 and its Senate companion bill, SB 185, would clean up an unneeded section of state law that has not been used since 2018. He explained that in 2018 the State of Alaska repealed the regulations that allowed employers to hire a worker with a physical or mental disability and pay them a subminimum wage. Despite the repeal of the regulation, the section of state law authorizing the payment of the subminimum wage remains on the books, and the bill seeks to change that. Currently, nothing is in place to stop future regulations that would allow a subminimum wage for workers with disabilities. This bill would remove all reference to those with earning capacity that is impaired by physical or mental deficiency or injury, making it no longer legal in Alaska to pay a disabled person a wage below the minimum wage.

MR. MASON pointed out that, to date, Alaska, Hawaii, California, Colorado, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and several other states have eliminated these subminimum wages for people with disabilities. Also, legislation is currently pending in Georgia, North Carolina, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, and Virginia to eliminate or modify payment of subminimum wages to disabled persons. This bill, he continued, is important because paying a subminimum wage to those with physical and mental disabilities is a discriminatory policy. Disabled persons should be able to earn what they are worth, with the minimum wage as the floor for compensation rather than the ceiling. Disabled persons in Alaska should never be paid less than other workers based on their perceived capabilities rather than demonstrated abilities. Every day in Alaska, persons with disabilities prove those assumptions wrong. Mr. Mason read a quote from Tom Ridge, chairman of the National Organization on Disability: "There is no excuse for treating an entire class of American workers differently from others based solely on the characteristics of disability, yet that is exactly what current law allows."

MR. MASON noted that any proposal to exempt minimum wage must be approved by the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. He said HB 372 adds an additional minimum wage exemption to state law for anyone under 18 years of age who is temporarily employed by a qualified nonprofit organization. He further noted that HB 372 leaves in place the current exemptions for student learners and apprentices. He pointed out that the Alaska minimum wage is currently set at \$10.34 an hour, and the federal minimum wage, which has been in place since 2008, is at \$7.25 an hour.

[9:17:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked why HB 372 allows for a minimum wage exemption for people under the age of 18 if they are employed by a nonprofit.

MR. MASON responded that AS 23.10.070(1) currently reads, "an individual whose earning capacity is impaired by physical or mental deficiency, age, or injury, at the wages and subject to the restrictions and for the period of time that are fixed by the commissioner". He explained that HB 372 was drafted to remove the language dealing with disability, but it was wanted to leave in the exemption based on age, so that is where the language that is being inserted was put in there. He noted that Senator Micciche spearheaded this on the Senate side, so [Representative Tuck] basically took the Senate version and introduced it in the House side.

[9:18:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER stated that she had the privilege of carrying this bill in a previous committee, and that was the very question she had asked. The answer received, she related, was that it would be appropriate in certain training settings. She requested confirmation that that is the case or that it could be the case but not in all instances.

MR. MASON replied that it gives the commissioner the flexibility for those training opportunities for people 18 years or younger.

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER offered her understanding that it isn't an automatic ability to pay under minimum wage at nonprofits for those under 18 years of age; it must be an exemption approved by the commissioner.

MR. MASON answered yes, any proposal to exempt minimum wage must be approved by the commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. He said it will be heard in testimony that the minimum wage exemption for disabled persons had not been used for several years prior to 2018.

[9:19:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ requested a description of the context in which an exemption for paying minimum wage for people under age 18 working for nonprofits would be appropriate and how the

department currently approaches this and would intend to approach it moving forward.

[9:20:21 AM](#)

TANYA KEITH, Program Manager, Wage and Hour, Labor Standards and Safety Division, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), replied that the regulation has been removed which addressed how that specific exemption would be approved. So, currently, there isn't an exact process for that, and one would have to be developed. However, there would be strict guidelines about it, and since the provision says temporarily employed there would be a set period that they would be allowed to work.

[9:21:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER recalled hearing conversation about individuals being paid less than minimum wage at Juneau's Eaglecrest Ski Area, which she believes operates as a nonprofit. She inquired as to whether this has any relationship to the exemptions allowed under current statute and how HB 372 might change things.

MS. KEITH confirmed there is a current statute that exempts individuals aged 18 and older from the Alaska Wage and Hour Act entirely, which would probably be the exemption that [Eaglecrest] is using now.

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER requested clarification as to whether there is a different exemption for those 18 and older.

MS. KEITH answered yes, AS 23.10.05.

[9:22:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS offered his understanding that the ability to pay subminimum wage for minors is an anachronism and it is not being used right now. If it was going to be used, he continued, then new regulations would need to be promulgated to provide guidance on how to use it.

MS. KEITH replied yes, under that current statute there is nobody and there is no mechanism to ask for the exemption in that.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS commented that this exemption could therefore be eliminated, and it would have no impact on any actual people.

It would just provide statutory clarity around something that already exists, and he is inclined to think that this should be done. It is the same situation with HB 372, he continued, because under a previous commissioner the department eliminated the regulations allowing subminimum wage payment to people with disabilities and HB 372 cleans up the statute to align with that. So, it seems exactly like the same scenario.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ agreed with Co-Chair Fields.

[9:23:59 AM](#)

MR. MASON drew attention to the [3/1/22] memorandum from the sponsor to the House Judiciary Standing Committee regarding the Alaska Wage and Hour Act. Regarding Representative Snyder's question, he said the memorandum includes the exemptions that were listed under AS 23.10.050.

[9:24:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ opened invited testimony on HB 372.

[9:24:43 AM](#)

MYRANDA WALSO, Acting Executive Director, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), provided invited testimony in support of HB 372. She stated that as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities ("state DD"), GCDSE works with community and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participating in the planning and design of those services.

MS. WALSO noted she is joined today by several GCDSE council members and self-advocates. However, she continued, one member, Corey Gilmore, chair of the Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services Committee, could not attend due to his assisted living facility's schedule which governs when he is able to get out of bed in the morning and provides the transportation he depends on for basic care. She said challenges like this are an incredible barrier and are the reality that Mr. Gilmore faces every day, including affecting his participation in the public process. She related that Mr. Gilmore believes passionately in HB 372 and his written testimony has been submitted to the committee.

MS. WALSO specified that since the federal minimum wage was established in 1938, a special reduced compensation rate known as the subminimum wage was allowed for those with disabilities, which lets employers holding a 14(c) certificate from the US Department of Labor to pay those with disabilities less than the federal or state minimum wage using worker productivity rates as the sole factor for evaluating the performance of those with disabilities. She said this discriminatory method determines compensation only for those with disabilities and requires that they measure up to a standard their non-disabled coworkers are not evaluated on nor held to. "What if all individuals over the age of 65 had to prove they deserved to earn minimum wage at their job, but younger individuals did not?" she asked. This scenario, she argued, is just as archaic as this provision in Alaska law which holds to the notion that those with a disability do not have the same standing in the job market as their non-disabled peers, regardless of the quality of their work, talents, or skills.

MS. WALSO pointed out that [new] federal, state, and local policies have developed over the decades. At the federal level, she said, the new understanding is reflected in the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disability Education Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and others. In Alaska, the Employment First Act requires vocational services be provided to help people with disabilities become gainfully employed at or above the minimum wage. In 2018, the regulations enacting subminimum wages for those with disabilities was repealed, but the issue remains unsettled. She said GCDSE supports repeal of the statutory provision allowing any such regulations to be reintroduced in the future.

[9:28:25 AM](#)

HEIDI LIEB-WILLIAMS, Chair, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), provided invited testimony in support of HB 372. She shared that she has multiple disabilities but has broken barriers and received awards. She said those with disabilities have gifts and talents to offer, their work is just as valuable as that of others, and they should be paid fairly for their time and knowledge. Being judged based on a disability and being offered less pay than someone is worth is demeaning, she continued. People often define themselves to have purpose in life by doing work that serves others in the community and it matters that they are paid accordingly for making a difference to other Alaskans.

MS. LIEB-WILLIAMS read a statement from Mr. Corey Gilmore: "In 2018 we advocated for the DD shared vision, which put Alaskans receiving services in charge of their own care, and this bill is the next step in realizing the vision for all of Alaska. Not only does the vision give us the right to direct our own care but the repeal of the subminimum wage further solidifies that we are competent Alaskans with something to offer our state." She urged the committee to do what is right for a better future in Alaska.

[9:31:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ thanked Ms. Lieb-Williams for her work as chair of the Council and congratulated her for the awards she has received.

[9:31:28 AM](#)

RIC NELSON, Chair, Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, provided invited testimony in support of HB 327. An assistant read from Mr. Nelson's written statement as follows:

This bill is so important because all people no matter their disability should get paid at least minimum wage to do the same job as their able-bodied peers. Having a law that singles someone out as not deserving the same pay solely because of their disability is dehumanizing. As a person with a disability who has worked hard to have a successful career and earned a master's degree, I find that this statute reinforces the misconception that individuals with disabilities are somehow a liability for an employer. Keeping this statute sends the message that Alaska is the land of opportunity only if you are not disabled.

[9:33:08 AM](#)

MR. NELSON, responding to Co-Chair Spohnholz, stated that his master's degree is in Public Administration.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ thanked Mr. Nelson for his service to Alaska through the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

[9:33:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ announced that HB 372 was held over.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Workers' Compensation Board

Board of Marital and Family Therapy

State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors

Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy

Marijuana Control Board

Board of Pharmacy

Board of Social Work Examiners

[9:34:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ announced that the final order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointees to the Workers' Compensation Board; Board of Marital and Family Therapy; State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy, Marijuana Control Board; Board of Pharmacy; and Board of Social Work Examiners.

[9:35:40 AM](#)

MIKE DENNIS, Appointee, Workers' Compensation Board, testified for reappointment to the Workers' Compensation Board. He stated that this would be his second term on this board. He said he is an owner of Conrad-Houston Insurance and has been in the insurance industry for about 31 years.

[9:36:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked Mr. Dennis what the board has been working on for the last few years.

MR. DENNIS replied that the board specifically works on the rules and regulations of workers' compensation and how it affects employees and employers. The board also has hearings on injured workers to resolve conflicts and situations with workers' compensation and payment. He stated that because he

works with employers, employees, carriers, and adjusters, he has unique skills to give some insight on how those work together to ensure that workers get their fair compensation and coverage.

[9:37:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS commented that the decline in workers' compensation rates seems to mirror and be driven by the decline in on-the-job accidents. He inquired about the potential to continue improving workplace safety and driving down those rates.

MR. DENNIS, responding from his perspective of being in the insurance business, said he thinks part of why the rates are able to go down and will stay down is the advent of social media and cameras everywhere, which makes it much easier to combat fraudulent claims. Along with that, most employers with computers and other equipment can do workplace safety meetings to help workers know how to be safe.

[9:39:18 AM](#)

TRISTIAN MONTERASTELLI, Appointee, Board of Marital and Family Therapy, testified for reappointment to the Board of Marital and Family Therapy. She noted that her initial appointment began in June 2021, so she is still new to serving as a public board member but is excited to continue serving. Regarding her qualifications, she said she has her master's in state and local public policy with an emphasis in economics.

[9:40:19 AM](#)

MS. MONTERASTELLI, responding to Co-Chair Spohnholz, confirmed she is a full-time professional with the Office of Children's Services.

[9:40:48 AM](#)

BRENT COLE, Appointee, State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, testified as appointee to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors. He stated he grew up in Fairbanks, worked in construction, and put himself through college and law school. He received a clerkship with [Superior Court Judge] Seaborn J. Buckalew Jr., then worked five years with the district attorney's office, and then went into private practice which he has now done for more than 35 years. He said

he has an interest in this board because he is looking for some transition and to give back to the community. He wants Alaska to have a viable and exciting future, and because architects, engineers, and land surveyors build Alaska it is exciting to be a part of that.

[9:44:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked whether Mr. Cole has attended a meeting given that he is newly appointed.

MR. COLE replied that there was a meeting, but he was only able to listen to part of the second day due to other obligations. He said that in the future he will be able to arrange his schedule around the meetings.

[9:45:19 AM](#)

ELIZABETH STUART, Appointee, Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, testified as appointee to the Alaska State Board of Public Accountancy. She noted that she grew up in Alaska and after graduating from the University of Alaska Anchorage she joined KPMG, a public accounting firm. She said she has practiced as a CPA since receiving her CPA license in 1996 and is currently the managing partner of KPMG Alaska operations and leads a team of about 60 people. Her interest in the board, she continued, is because the integrity of the public accountant license is critical to her business and businesses around the state.

[9:47:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked what the issues might be for accountancy in the next couple of years.

MS. STUART responded reciprocity, particularly with the ability to work remotely now more than ever. She said there are also challenges associated with changes in the skill set that are necessary and being sure that the education and the licensing standards and requirements keep up with the changes in technology and the times.

[9:48:55 AM](#)

BRUCE SCHULTE, Appointee, Marijuana Control Board, testified for reappointment to the public seat on the Marijuana Control Board.

He said he initially became involved with this industry as an advocate in 2014 for Ballot Measure 2 to legalize cannabis in Alaska. He was later appointed to the board and served for about a year, most of that as chair, through development of the initial regulations. He stated he isn't a licensee himself and doesn't plan to be but has an interest in seeing that licensees and businesses succeed.

[9:50:46 AM](#)

ASHLEY SCHABER, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, Appointee, Board of Pharmacy, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, testified as appointee to the Board of Pharmacy. She stated she is licensed as an Alaska pharmacist, has worked within the Alaska tribal health system, and has practiced in medication safety and pharmacy quality improvement for the last 10 years. She said she has been active in leadership roles in the Alaska Pharmacists Association since 2014. Throughout her career she has sought training to improve her skills, including a master's in business administration, board certification in pharmacotherapy and quality improvement training. She oversees clinical and operational pharmacy services at the largest hospital in the Alaska tribal health system.

DR. SCHABER noted that during her service with the Alaska Pharmacists Association the association fostered partnerships to improve care access and support health care initiatives in Alaska. She served as the association's liaison to the Board of Pharmacy. She said her background of tribal health system pharmacy, public health, safety, leadership, and community involvement combined with her motivation make her an excellent candidate for a Board of Pharmacy position. She is looking for ways to use her background and her leadership to encourage public health, safety, and welfare for all Alaskans through the effective control and regulation of the practice of pharmacy.

[9:54:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS thanked Dr. Schaber for her work on the pharmacy technician apprenticeship, which he thinks is an exciting new workforce development program in the state.

DR. SCHABER replied that she is excited about it too.

[9:54:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY inquired about the percentage of demand on pharmacists' [time] regarding awareness, ensuring that diversion of medications in an illicit manner is not happening or is limited, and collaborating with providers that are writing prescriptions.

DR. SCHABER responded that it is a high percentage. Based on her experience, she said pharmacists work collaboratively with providers and health care team members to prevent and identify diversion. She said the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) is an important tool that community pharmacists have in Alaska to help with awareness of opioid use. As well, the Board of Pharmacy plays an important role in reviewing diversion related cases and what is being reported to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY inquired about Dr. Schaber's history with providers who do or do not use the PDMP, such that it is falling on the pharmacists to do so with the prescriptions.

DR. SCHABER answered that she works on the in-patient side, so she is not using the PDMP on a daily basis. However, she added, it is a cooperation, a partnership, with the pharmacists and the providers as well as the Board of Pharmacy to ensure that the program is being used appropriately.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY inquired about Dr. Schaber's experience with the PDMP and veterinarians regarding opioid prescriptions and concerns of diversion.

DR. SCHABER replied that the Board of Pharmacy has provided feedback regarding the veterinarians' use of the PDMP; it is a complex issue not just related to one discipline. The PDMP can be improved overall to help improve its use for all providers.

[9:58:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER asked whether there is anything else under the purview of the Board of Pharmacy, such as policy or regulation, that Dr. Schaber would like to see addressed.

DR. SCHABER responded that the Board of Pharmacy in general is looking at: rural areas in terms of health care access; ways to allow pharmacists and technicians to work at the top of their skills as well as receive a payment related to the services that they provide; streamlining and simplifying regulations that are already in place; and partnering with the Alaska Pharmacists

Association in support of working conditions to help ensure that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have healthy working environments so they can provide high quality service. She said the Board of Pharmacy would like to discuss apprenticeships, supporting the School of Pharmacy, and a partnership between the University of Alaska and Idaho State University.

[10:00:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked whether Dr. Schaber has recommendations about ways to make the PDMP more effective in addressing the opioid epidemic while making it easier for end-users.

DR. SCHABER answered that that is an important question to all the users of the PDMP as well as to all Alaskans to ensure that the intent of the PDMP and the intent of the legislature is being met. She said a partnership with the board for the users of the PDMP is important for considering the feedback of the end-users. Collaboration is a good way for improving the PDMP moving forward.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ noted that the committee will soon be having a hearing on licensing. She asked whether the Board of Pharmacy is running into any barriers to timely licensing processing in terms of resources, technology, or unnecessary regulation.

DR. SCHABER replied that the turnaround time is something the Board of Pharmacy is looking into for streamlining so it can continually provide a quicker turnaround time for licensees.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ stated that going forward the committee would like to hear about this issue from the Board of Pharmacy and the professional association.

[10:03:11 AM](#)

SHARON WOODWARD, Appointee, Board of Social Work Examiners, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, testified for reappointment to the licensed baccalaureate social worker seat on the Board of Social Work Examiners. She stated she received her degree in 2007 and is currently the director of social services at Wildflower Court, a skilled and long-term care nursing facility in Juneau. The primary population she has worked with throughout her career is the elderly. She said her interest in serving on the board is to use her experience to help other social workers develop what they need to become good social workers.

[10:04:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked Ms. Woodward whether the board is doing any work to address the difficulty of getting timely response from the board's staff for those social workers trying to get licensed or get their licenses renewed.

MS. WOODWARD responded that COVID-19 has made things difficult over the last two years without in-person meetings and the use of Zoom sessions. She said it has become much better and there are fewer people for whom she must do approvals, which tells her the board is getting them done quicker and in a timely manner.

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ asked whether fewer approvals could mean that there is a delay in applications getting through to the board.

MS. WOODWARD answered that she doesn't think so, it seems that things are being done within 2 months.

[10:06:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked Ms. Woodward whether the board can make decisions on candidates outside of board meetings or can only vote on licensing while in meetings.

MS. WOODWARD replied that every two weeks the board receives a list of new social workers who are applying, and the board does those outside of its normal quarterly meetings

[10:07:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ thanked all the appointees.

[10:07:16 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[10:07:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SPOHNHOLZ opened public testimony. After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[The confirmations were held over.]

[10:08:13 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:08 a.m.