

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 8, 2022
1:04 p.m.

1:04:40 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Bishop called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator David Wilson

ALSO PRESENT

Erin Shine, Staff, Senator Click Bishop; Elvi Gray-Jackson, Sponsor; Keith Bauguess, Staff, Senator Gray-Jackson.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Jason Lassard, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness Anchorage, Anchorage; Justin Pendergrass, Self, Wasilla; Johon Atkinson, Self, Metlakatla; Kathleen Wendemeyer, Citizen Commission of Human Rights, Seattle; Desiree Esuluk, Self, Toksook Bay; Lucas Johnson, Advisor, National Alliance on Mental Illness Anchorage, Maine.

SUMMARY

SB 72 SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

CSSB 72(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, and one "no recommendation" recommendation and with one new fiscal note from the Department of Education and Early Development.

SB 80 PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SB 80 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb72

SENATE BILL NO. 72

"An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

[1:05:44 PM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman MOVED to ADOPT the committee substitute for SB 72, Work Draft 32-LSO478\D (Marx, 2/3/22).

Co-Chair Bishop OBJECTED for discussion.

[1:06:06 PM](#)

ERIN SHINE, STAFF, SENATOR CLICK BISHOP, discussed the "Explanation of Changes" (copy on file):

Section 1

Page 2, line 12

Amends 14.03.076(e) to require a passing score of 70 percent.

Section 3

Page 2, line 30

Changes the effective date from July 1, 2022 to July 1, 2023.

Co-Chair Bishop REMOVED the OBJECTION. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

Senator Wielechowski discussed the fiscal note from the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

Co-Chair Stedman MOVED to REPORT CSSB 72(FIN) from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 72(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, and one "no recommendation"

recommendation and with one new fiscal note from the Department of Education and Early Development.

[1:08:09 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:10:09 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb80

SENATE BILL NO. 80

"An Act relating to mental health education."

[1:11:09 PM](#)

ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, SPONSOR, introduced the legislation.

[1:13:43 PM](#)

KEITH BAUGUESS, STAFF, SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON, discussed the Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

Section 1: This section is amended by adding a new section to read LEGISLATIVE INTENT. It is the intent of the legislature that the Board of Education and Early Development develop guidelines for instruction in mental health in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations.

Section 2: This section amends AS 14.30.360(a) by removing the word "physical" when referencing instruction for health education and adding "mental health" to the list of curriculum items each district includes in their health education programs.

Section 3: This section amends AS 14.30.360(b) by clarifying that health guidelines developed by the Board of Education and Early Development must provide standards for instruction in mental health and be developed in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services and representatives of national and state mental health organizations.

Section 4: This section amends AS 14.30.360 by adding a new subsection to read: (e) A district may not instruct a student in mental health as part of a program in health education under (a) of this section without informed consent from the student's parent or guardian. The district shall inform the child's parent or guardian, in the native language of the parent or guardian, of the time, date, and content of the mental health instruction, that consent is voluntary, and that consent may be revoked at any time. Before instructing a student in mental health, the district shall obtain written consent from the parent or guardian indicating that the parent or guardian understands and agrees to the student's participation in the mental health instruction.

Section 5: This section amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska by adding a new section to read "the state Board of Education and Early Development shall develop the mental health guidelines required by AS 14.30.360(b), as amended by sec. 3 of this Act, within two years after the effective day of this Act.

[1:16:52 PM](#)

A video was played for the committee that highlighted the legislation.

[1:21:10 PM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop OPENED invited testimony.

[1:21:37 PM](#)

JASON LASSARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS ANCHORAGE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation. He pointed out that 50 percent of all lifetime mental illnesses begin at age 14. He stated that 75 percent of lifetime mental illnesses show up at age 24. He stressed the importance of discussing mental health and mental illness with teenagers. He pointed out that many teenagers use internet search engines to figure out their mental health issues.

[1:26:18 PM](#)

Senator von Imhof remarked that the video suggested it was a mandate.

Senator Grey Jackson replied that the current bill only encouraged mental health education in K-12 schools, and did not mandate mental health education.

[1:27:13 PM](#)

JUSTIN PENDERGRASS, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation. He shared that he had a long history of struggling with mental health. He relayed his mental health history. He believed that building connection was a meaningful way to support people struggling with mental health. He felt that there was a lack of understanding and knowledge surrounding mental health and young people. He believed that the bill provided opportunity for mental health education for those who may currently lack the resources. He thought the current pandemic would have a ripple effect on young people.

Senator von Imhof appreciated Mr. Pendergrass's testimony and the work he did in his community.

[1:32:42 PM](#)

JOHON ATKINSON, SELF, METLAKATLA (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[1:37:40 PM](#)

KATHLEEN WENDEMEYER, CITIZEN COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SEATTLE (via teleconference), spoke in support of amending the legislation.

[1:40:36 PM](#)

DESIREE ESULUK, SELF, TOKSOOK BAY (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[1:41:57 PM](#)

LUCAS JOHNSON, ADVISOR, NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS ANCHORAGE, MAINE (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[1:43:28 PM](#)

Co-Chair Bishop CLOSED public testimony.

[1:43:41 PM](#)

Senator Gray-Jackson thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Bishop discussed the following day's agenda.

SB 80 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

[1:44:08 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.