

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

April 11, 2022

1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Acting Chair
Senator Joshua Revak, Vice Chair
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Mia Costello, Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 233

"An Act relating to allowable absences for permanent fund dividend qualification; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSSB 233 (L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 225

"An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION: Child Care in Alaska

- RESCHEDULED TO 4/13/2022

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 233

SHORT TITLE: PFD ALLOWABLE ABSENCE/MERCHANT MARINE

SPONSOR(S): LABOR & COMMERCE

03/15/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

03/15/22 (S) L&C
03/23/22 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/23/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/23/22 (S) MINUTE(L&C)

BILL: SB 225

SHORT TITLE: TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(s): EDUCATION

03/04/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/04/22 (S) EDC, L&C, FIN
03/07/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/07/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/07/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/09/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/09/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/09/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/14/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/14/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/14/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/16/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/16/22 (S) Heard & Held
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03/18/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/18/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/18/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/23/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/23/22 (S) Heard & Held
03/23/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/30/22 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/30/22 (S) Moved CSSB 225(EDC) Out of Committee
03/30/22 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
03/31/22 (S) EDC RPT CS 3DP NEW TITLE
03/31/22 (S) DP: HOLLAND, HUGHES, STEVENS

WITNESS REGISTER

KATIE MCCALL, Staff
Senator Mia Costello
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained Amendment 1 to SB 233.

ED KING, Staff
Senator Roger Holland
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 225 on behalf of the Senate Education Standing Committee.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator
Innovation and Education Excellence
Teacher Certification Section
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to SB 225.

DR. STEVE ATWATER
Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 225.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:32:39 PM](#)

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Revak, and Acting Chair Stevens. Senator Micciche arrived during the course of the meeting.

SB 233-PFD ALLOWABLE ABSENCE/MERCHANT MARINE

[1:33:41 PM](#)

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 233 "An Act relating to allowable absences for permanent fund dividend qualification; and providing for an effective date."

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS stated that this was the second hearing and there was an amendment for the committee to consider.

[1:34:09 PM](#)

SENATOR REVAK moved to adopt Amendment 1 to SB 233, [work order 32-LS1594\A.3].

32-LS1594\A.3
Nauman
4/9/22

AMENDMENT 1

OFFERED IN THE SENATE
TO: SB 233

BY SENATOR COSTELLO

Page 2, lines 6 - 7:

Delete "program that prepares students for careers in the United States merchant marine"

Insert "vocational program that
(A) trains students for a career in the United States merchant marine, including as a sea engineer, in the deck department, or as a steward;
(B) provides seagoing service that meets the requirements of the United States Coast Guard for United States merchant marine credentialing; and
(C) is approved by the United States Coast Guard"

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS asked Ms. McCall to explain Amendment 1.

[1:34:20 PM](#)

KATIE MCCALL, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, explained that Amendment 1 is in response to the concern the Department of Revenue (DOR) raised that the term "prepares" could be interpreted too broadly because a variety of programs could be seen as preparing students for careers in the United States Merchant Marine. Amendment 1 narrows the language and provides specific information about what constitutes a vocational program leading to a career in the United States merchant marine. She read the language in Amendment 1.

[1:36:00 PM](#)

At ease

[1:36:15 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS reconvened the meeting. He found no objection and Amendment 1 was adopted. He solicited the will of the committee.

[1:36:32 PM](#)

SENATOR REVAK moved to report SB 233, work order 32-LS1594\A, as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS found no objection and CSSB 233(L&C) was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:36:58 PM](#)

At ease

SB 225-TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

[1:38:19 PM](#)

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 225 "An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

[CSSB 225(EDC) is before the committee.]

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS asked Mr. King to introduce SB 225.

[1:38:35 PM](#)

ED KING, Staff, Senator Roger Holland, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 225 on behalf of the Senate Education Standing Committee, first reading the sponsor statement:

Alaska, like the rest of the United States, is facing tremendous difficulty putting high-quality teachers in front of our students. When districts can't hire enough teachers, it places a heavier burden on those teachers that do show up. Faced with an already difficult first day of work, these new teachers burn out quickly and leave the profession. The result is a revolving door of aspiring educators, never building the continuity and community that is found in effective schools. Ultimately, it shows up in our students' test scores.

The problem is multi-faceted and there is no single solution. That's why SB 225 attempts to compliment other legislation with a multi-pronged effort aimed at improving teacher recruitment and retention. This bill borrows from the innovative ideas found around the country and plucks the low hanging fruit that has already been identified in current statutes.

At the heart of SB 225 is the creation of a registered apprenticeship program for teachers. The bill directs the Departments of Labor and Education to assist districts in developing approved registered apprenticeships, opening new pathways for paraprofessionals and new funding opportunities to pay for it. Additionally, SB 225 establishes a teacher residency program as a new option for those with a four-year degree to become fully certified teachers. Good ideas remain on the shelf unless there is funding to support them. So, the bill also creates a teacher recruitment and retention grant fund. This fund will support ingenuity from districts to solve the problem at a local level, then disseminate that innovation for other districts to emulate. Additionally, SB 225 provides more flexibility to the state board of education to create additional pathways to certification without compromising the quality standards we need to uphold.

SB 225 is an important education bill to compliment other efforts currently underway. I hope you will join the Senate Education Committee members in supporting this bill.

[1:40:00 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE joined the committee.

[1:41:01 PM](#)

MR. KING presented the sectional analysis for SB 225, which read as follows:

Sec. 1

Adds creating a teacher pre-apprenticeship program to the department of education duties. This expands the educator pipeline into high school to prepare for entry into the apprenticeship program created under section 8.

Sec. 2

Creates a Teacher Residency Program within the department of education, including a new teacher residency teaching certificate.

Sec. 3

Amends the Alaska studies and multicultural education course requirements for teacher certification to include alternative training approved by the State Board of Education. Also explicitly allows districts to adopt a more stringent training requirement if the board requirements are not sufficient to the district.

Sec. 4

Authorizes the State Board of Education to provide alternative ways for teacher candidates to demonstrate competency while pursuing certification.

Sec. 5

Authorizes the State Board of Education to provide alternative pathways to teacher certification and provides teachers working under a subject-matter expert certificate more time to meet the requirements for full certification.

[1:44:31 PM](#)

Sec. 6

Provides teachers working under a subject-matter expert certificate more time to meet the requirements for full certification.

Sec. 7 Conforming change to the additional year provided in sections 4 and 5.

Sec. 8 Ensures that the board maintains standards for the approval of nontraditional and alternative programs that are comparable to existing standards.

Sec. 9

Updates the limited teacher certificate language to recognize the ubiquitous availability of online degree programs.

Sec. 10

Establishes a Teacher Apprenticeship Program at the Department of Education and Early Development. Also creates a new fund to provide grants to districts and nonprofits advancing efforts to improve Alaska's teacher recruitment and retention numbers.

MR. KING identified Section 10 as the heart of the bill.

Sec. 11

Adds the new apprenticeship program fund to the list of non-general fund accounts in AS 37.05.146(c).

Sec. 12 Repeals the following:

- AS 14.20.220, which limits service credit for teaching out-of-state.
- AS 14.20.022(c), which requires a competency exam for a subject-matter expert certificate. This requirement was moved into AS 14.20.022(b) by section 4 of the bill.
- AS 14.16.050(a)(3)(C), which is a direct reference to AS 14.20.220 (repealed in this bill)

Sec. 13

Requires the department of education to conduct a study on teacher housing needs.

MR. KING noted that the Senate Education Committee recommended the study after conversations with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

[1:49:31 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS asked if the department was comfortable it could perform the duties outlined in the bill with the funding it has.

[1:50:06 PM](#)

MR. KING said he would suggest the department respond, although the sponsor worked closely with the department on the changes and there has been general support from the department and stakeholders.

VICE CHAIR STEVENS asked Sondra Meredith to articulate the department's perspective of the requirements in the bill.

[1:50:50 PM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator, Teacher Certification Section, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, offered her understanding that the fiscal notes would provide the department with additional resources to meet the requirements in the bill.

VICE CHAIR STEVENS asked for the department's perspective of the bill.

MS. MEREDITH said the department worked with the Senate Education Committee to address teacher recruitment and retention and the bill aligns with what other states have done to address this matter. She described the bill as a step forward to meet the needs of educators in the state.

VICE CHAIR STEVENS asked Dr. Atwater to provide his testimony.

[1:53:05 PM](#)

DR. STEVE ATWATER, Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP), Anchorage, Alaska, read the following testimony in support of SB 225:

For the last 18 years the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project has provided support for early career teachers. My testimony this afternoon is in support for Senate Bill 225.

As you heard from Mr. King, there's a teacher shortage in Alaska. For the past several years our school districts have struggled to fill all of their teaching vacancies. Last fall, DEED reported to the U.S. Department of Education that 22 of our school districts are experiencing a teacher shortage. Also of note is that each fall, DEED conducts a first day vacancy survey of our school districts. This year's survey found that more than 200 vacancies existed on the first day of school.

At the national level, the number of students enrolling in teacher preparation programs peaked in 2009 at three-quarters of a million students, and is now half a million students. We also know that nationally, more than 44 percent of the teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching.

I mention these specifics because Alaska is a teacher import state. More than half of our state's teachers who are working today, prepared out-of-state. Adding to the shortage is the annual retirement of a portion of those teachers remaining in Tier II of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). Note that there are still a few Tier I teachers working, but they make up less than two percent of the active teachers.

For each of the past six years, an average of 285 Tier II teachers have started collecting retirement benefits. While retirements are expected, this is what is supposed to happen, it is important to note that these teachers are the most senior and the steadiest group of teacher workforce. The teachers hired to replace those who are retiring are, as you know, placed in Tier III. Although I'm not aware of a study of the career behavior of Tier III teachers, the often repeated anecdotes suggest that Tier III teachers' career behavior is far more unpredictable than those in the lower tiers.

This suggests that going forward there will be fewer long-term Alaska teachers. It's easy to conclude then, that the teacher shortage in Alaska is likely to be here for the next several years. This is why Senate Bill 225 is so timely and so important.

Senate Bill 225 does two things. It proposes policy that will make the pathway to becoming a teacher more attractive and easier to navigate. It also proposes to provide districts with resources to support activities that will lead to an increase in teacher retention. Although I'm optimistic that implementation of a recruitment strategy for the bill's sections and the good outreach to prospective teachers by the University of Alaska will lead to more locally prepared teachers, it will probably take two to three years for the state to realize the benefit of these actions. On the other hand, the retention support that the bill offers is more immediate and can make a difference in the coming year.

The final section of the bill includes grant funds to help districts with the recruitment and retention activities. This could include mentoring for both early career teachers and early career administrators, and that will lead to greater retentions.

In closing, I commend the Senate Education Committee for introducing Senate Bill 225 and encourage you to pass the bill from committee. The time for the state to help our school districts work to offset the teacher shortage is now. Our state's children deserve to be taught by well-qualified teachers and not by a series of long-term subs.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

[1:56:50 PM](#)

ACTING CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony on SB 225; finding none, he closed public testimony.

ACTING CHAIRS STEVENS found no questions or comments and stated that he would hold SB 225 for future consideration.

[1:57:32 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Acting Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 1:57 p.m.