

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 3, 2023

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Justin Ruffridge, Co-Chair
Representative Mike Prax
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jamie Allard, Co-Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS (S) :

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION

Mary Carlson - Salcha

- CONFIRMATION (S) ADVANCED

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

James Fields - Glennallen

- CONFIRMATION (S) ADVANCED

PRESENTATION: ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 148

"An Act relating to the Alaska performance scholarship program."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 148

SHORT TITLE: AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

SPONSOR (s) : EDUCATION

03/29/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/29/23 (H) EDC, FIN
04/03/23 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

MARY CARLSON, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Salcha, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

JAMES FIELDS, Appointee
State Board of Education and Early Development
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the State Board of Education and Early Development.

SANA EFRID, Executive Director
Commission on Postsecondary Education
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation, titled "Alaska Performance Scholarship," and answered questions during the hearing on HB 148.

BUD SEXTON, Staff
Representative Justin Ruffridge
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of the sponsor, the House Education Standing Committee, of which Representative Ruffridge served as co-chair, introduced HB 148 with a PowerPoint presentation.

BRAEDEN GARRETT, Staff
Representative Justin Ruffridge
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of the sponsor, the House Education Standing Committee, of which Representative Ruffridge served as co-chair, gave the sectional analysis on HB 148.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:04:50 AM

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Prax, McKay, Himschoot, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representatives McCormick and Story arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

State Board of Education

State Board of Education and Early Development

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

8:05:34 AM

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the first order of business would be the consideration of the governor's appointees for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission and the State Board of Education and Early Development.

8:06:54 AM

MARY CARLSON, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, testified as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission. She stated she would be serving the higher education role in the commission. She shared that currently she is an assistant professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Education in the elementary program. She stated that she has worked for 20 years in education, in and outside of Alaska, as a teacher, principal, professional development coordinator, and now as an assistant professor. She stated that these experiences equate to a depth of knowledge in education. She expressed an obligation to give back; therefore, she is pursuing this type of position for the first time.

8:08:18 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX questioned whether there are any teaching standards, other than statutes, in school systems in other states.

MS. CARLSON replied that many states have adopted the common core standards, but Alaska has not. She stated that she has worked with teachers who have aligned with culturally oriented,

rigorous standards. She advised that it is important to do this.

[8:10:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE questioned whether there are any issues with the K-3 reading programs.

MS. CARLSON expressed the understanding that this is mandated, important work. She stated that the bottom line is to make sure every child has access to the highest level of reading instruction. Concerning the new mandates, she expressed the opinion that this will be a transition for teachers who have been teaching reading for a long time. At the university level, she stated that she has been researching pathways to help student teachers acquire this new knowledge base. She expressed the opinion that there needs to be more pathways for a smooth transition.

[8:12:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY pointed out the course, titled "Teaching with Poverty in Mind," and she questioned its main principles.

MS. CARLSON explained she had been a principal at a Title I school. She related that because of poverty these schools receive additional funding to help remove barriers to education. She continued that this course addresses literacy at a very early age in these schools. She pointed out that some students do not progress in reading because their parents are always working. In response to a follow-up question concerning how this relates to the commission, she shared that at a young age she had experienced poverty. She related how this has influenced her perspective on education, and from this understanding, she expressed the desire to raise awareness in teachers on how poverty influences all types of issues with students.

[8:18:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:18:58 AM](#)

JAMES FIELDS, Appointee, State Board of Education and Early Development, testified as an appointee to the State Board of Education and Early Development. He stated that he is the representative for the rural education attendance areas on the Board of Education, and he represents the Copper River School District. He stated that he has six children, who have attended both brick-and-mortar and correspondence schools, so he has experience in both types of these education systems. Pointing out some other qualifications, he stated that he had been on a local school board for 12 years and has been on the Board of Education for 10 years. He expressed the desire to continue to serve the board and help direct the initiatives, including Tribal compacting of education and initiatives concerning reading.

[8:21:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY questioned the role of the Board of Education in regard to networking with school boards and educator associations.

MR. FIELDS stated that he serves in a leadership role for the [Alaska Science of Reading Symposium], where he spends time with the leadership from the Alaska Superintendents' Association and the Association of Alaska School Boards. He expressed the opinion that these associations are critical for moving initiatives; however, he cautioned against mandates. In response to a follow-up question on the goal of having students reading by third grade, he stated that relationships with the Alaska Superintendents' Association and the Association of Alaska School Boards have been made, and he would go to the board with the issue of requesting annual updates from them.

[8:25:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY, with a follow-up on the linkages between different education associations, suggested that teaching programs should involve more communication between the University of Alaska, the Board of Education, and other education associations, so the skills needed in the schools are being taught for the science of reading and the statewide assessments. She questioned the level of this communication.

MR. FIELDS explained that some of these connections are difficult to make. He stated that at one time there was a joint committee with the Board of Regents and the Board of Education. He added that there is a new attempt at recreating this

relationship. He advised that some deans in the University of Alaska system have expressed concerns on the methodology of teaching reading; therefore, behind the scenes some work in this direction is needed. He reiterated that the joint committee needs to be reestablished, as this would be a more formal approach.

[8:29:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked how the Board of Education interfaces with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for establishing annual, long-range goals and objectives.

MR. FIELDS replied that originally, there was a strategic plan that created the priorities, but now the priorities are arranged, and these come to the committees for discussion and direction to DEED.

[8:30:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned whether there should be an increase to the base student allocation (BSA) this year.

MR. FIELDS responded that considering inflation, more funding is needed, whether it is through BSA or not. He referenced that local school board members would know better how this relates to the priority in reading. In response to a question concerning the location of the board's meetings, he stated that meetings are held in Kenai. He continued that meetings in the past had moved around so the members could interact with districts. He discussed the funding for this.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT suggested that it would be beneficial for the Board of Education to be able to move around the state. In regard to his third term, she questioned what he would still like to accomplish.

MR. FIELDS responded that "plenty" needs to be accomplished. He expressed the opinion that the education system needs to be more "nimble" and more representative of the state. He expressed difficulty in getting change to happen, and he referenced the perspective change concerning Tribal compacting of education. He expressed the desire to see this through and make it "right." He reiterated that there are many issues to be addressed in educating students in Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT expressed the understanding that according to Robert's Rules of Order, public testimony would need to be taken on each item brought before the board. She questioned whether he has ever used these rules.

MR. FIELDS responded that, concerning each motion, public comment would be allowed at each meeting. He stated that locally the board offers an opportunity for public testimony on both agenda and non-agenda items, as these items are separated. He stated that none of the boards he has been on has done this on a per-item basis. In response to a follow-up question, he stated that the best way to get the public to testify is to make sure there is widespread knowledge of the proceedings. If there were a specific for-or-against issue, DEED would relate to the board how it would affect the regulation. He stated that public testimony is important because of this, and he spoke about its variability.

[8:38:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT pointed out that, as chair of the board, he has the duty of setting the agenda. She questioned whether setting the agenda has a way of influencing public testimony.

MR. FIELDS responded in the affirmative and said that having the agenda available is important so the public will know well in advance.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT noted it was observed that during a recent board meeting a resolution was brought forward on the day of the meeting without a chance for public testimony. She questioned this process.

MR. FIELDS responded that a board member with two-thirds of a vote had brought the resolution forth. He advised that this be within the guidelines. He stated that as the chair he could not stop this, as the board can amend the agenda with the votes. In response to whether public testimony was invited on this item, he stated, "It wasn't not an option." He stated that a listener could have easily testified, but the notice was short. He noted that he would check on if public testimony could have been added to the meeting before the resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT expressed surprise that an item was added to the agenda with very little notice and no opportunity for public testimony.

8:42:10 AM

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE questioned what goals and objections would translate to the definition of a "nimble" education system.

MR. FIELDS answered that as a small business owner, he looks at the districts as small businesses. He referenced allowing each district the ability to make a change, such as in the classroom structure or in the instructional plan. He reiterated that the drivers of the districts are the school boards and superintendents, and they should be given the latitude through either regulation, or other avenues, to be nimble. He expressed the opinion that this as "a mindset," and leadership needs to learn to have the mindset of a small business and make a change, if it is needed. He suggested that highlighting the successes in some districts could help other districts make the same changes. He stated that Representative Story's suggestion to link the education entities was good but not easy. In response to a follow-up question on the changes that would produce more successful results, he stated that it could be a matter of reassessing the classroom structure; however, the questions are not easy, as there are different levels of learning. He continued that this would require asking some tough questions, whether it is a matter of how to use the teacher aids or how the funding is used. He suggested it could be a matter of trying something new, even if it fails.

8:47:28 AM

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE pointed out that the Board of Education is regulatory in nature. Concerning the districts' ability to work with individual items, he questioned whether there are barriers in the regulations for this.

MR. FIELDS acknowledged that there could be barriers. He added that statute allows districts the ability to share services, and there is funding which encourages this. He said this is a matter of awareness and making sure the districts know. He expressed the opinion that, from a personal perspective, there needs to be more shared services between districts, especially those that do not directly influence the classroom. Concerning the regulations, he expressed the opinion that some are considered barriers and need to be reevaluated.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE, in regard to shared services and efficiencies, questioned how shared services would blend with the idea of local control.

MR. FIELDS expressed his personal opinion that there are ways to share services between close districts, such as superintendent services. He stated that some districts have done this in the past. He opined that this could save on administrative costs.

[8:50:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY, in response to the question concerning the resolution appearing before the board without a public comment period, expressed the understanding that, following Robert's Rules of Order, there would have to be another hearing on the item before an action could be taken.

MR. FIELDS responded with the opinion that, per the Board of Education's bylaws, it depends on whether it is a regulation. He explained that a resolution only holds a stance, and until it becomes a regulatory concern, it would not require two hearings.

[8:52:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:52:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated that the House Education Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications for the appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Mary Carlson, appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission; and James Fields, appointee to the State Board of Education and Early Development. He reminded the committee that this does not reflect the intent of any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

[8:53:13 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:53 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Presentation: Alaska Performance Scholarship

[9:00:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the next order of business would be the presentation on the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

[9:00:38 AM](#)

SANA EFRID, Executive Director, Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), provided a presentation, titled "Alaska Performance Scholarship" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She stated that the presentation would cover how the commission communicates to Alaska students and parents on the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). She moved to slide 3 and slide 4 and gave an overview of APS. She stated that ACPE, DEED, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) all have statutes regarding APS. She listed ACPE's role, as seen on slide 4, which includes setting up the application process and awarding the distributions. She stated that DEED's responsibility includes setting up course work to meet the requirements, while DOLWD oversees the eligible career and technical education programs. She continued that school districts make the determination for the eligibility. They report this to DEED, and then it reports to ACPE.

MS. EFRID stated that statute does not designate any one department to be the sole source of communication for the scholarship program; however, the school districts would be the initial point of contact. She continued that the school districts work closely with DEED, as DEED provides resources and information to districts on how students can meet the requirements. She noted that the brochures passed out to committee members are examples of resources provided by DEED. In addition, she noted that the committee members have received ACPE's reports on APS, as required by statute.

[9:08:47 AM](#)

MS. EFRID stated that ACPE does not have staff in school districts, and she discussed its outreach agenda. She summarized each bullet point as seen on slide 7, highlighting the Alaska Career Information System, of which ACPE provides free to every school district. This system helps students create a personal learning plan as early as middle and elementary school to prepare for APS. She noted that there is a guide on the system for parents. She continued discussing ACPE's outreach for educating and guiding students on APS. She proceeded to slide 8, which listed resource links for APS on

ACPE's website. She highlighted the link to the student aid portal and provided an explanation. She concluded by welcoming questions.

[9:15:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY noted that there had been funding for ACPS representatives to go into the districts.

MS. EFRID replied the ACPS had a program at one time made up of college and career counselors and advisors. She stated that staff went into targeted districts; however, this program ended around 2016. She commented on the success of the program. In response to a follow-up question on the success of the program, she offered to supply to the committee the program's final report. She expressed the understanding that originally a federal grant supported the program; however, once this ended the state did not continue with the funding.

[9:19:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed the understanding that recently only 17 percent of scholarship money was used. He questioned whether there is a goal in the program that defines success.

MS. EFRID responded that since the inception of the program, this past year had the lowest number of students who were eligible for APS. She stated that this was the 17 percent referenced. She continued that 2016, 2017, and 2018 were the highest years of eligibility and usage of the program. She pointed out that to use the program, students must stay in the state, and these students represent a high number of people who remain in the state and participate in the state's workforce.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed the understanding that the goal of APS was to give an advantage to students who are likely to be successful, attend UA, and stay in Alaska. He advised that this would "raise the prestige of the university system." He argued that lowering these standards would be missing the original objective. He questioned what has changed regarding APS.

MS. EFRID clarified that APS is not only for UA, but also for all the eligible institutions within the state for postsecondary education, and this totals around 24 institutions. She stated that the 10-year review addresses why students are not pursuing APS. She suggested that the amount of the scholarship is no longer an incentive for students to stay in the state, and she

expressed the understanding that the requirement of standardized testing is also a barrier, as taking the tests pose difficulties, such as the necessity to travel. She pointed out that the next committee agenda item will be HB 148. She stated that the presentation on this bill would address this issue. She offered to be available for questions during the hearing.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX expressed the opinion that there is not enough outreach on APS, and parents should be targeted with direct marketing. He questioned whether ACPE is reaching out to parents.

MS. EFRID reiterated that the school districts are the frontline for contact. In naming some outreach, she said that ACPE provides training to school counselors, a website, and career fairs. She continued that the schools have contact information for the parents, not ACPE. She expressed agreement that parents should be included in the communication. She reiterated that every teacher has access to ACPE's Alaska Career Information System, as well as the parents and students.

[9:29:57 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:29 a.m. to 9:32 a.m.

HB 148-AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

[9:32:52 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 148, "An Act relating to the Alaska performance scholarship program."

[9:33:18 AM](#)

BUD SEXTON, Staff, Representative Justin Ruffridge, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of the sponsor, the House Education Standing Committee, of which Representative Ruffridge served as co-chair, introduced HB 148 via a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He provided an overview of the number of students who have been involved in the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) program. He pointed out the discrepancy that around 30,000 students have been granted APS while only around 11,000 students have used it. He noted that \$100 million has been awarded to students. He moved to slide 3, which listed the topics which would be discussed during the presentation. The list included notification, financial

barriers, and eligibility. He stated that the provisions in HB 148 would address such topics as the step-up provision and the new pathways for career and technical education.

[9:36:07 AM](#)

MR. SEXTON moved to slide 4 which addressed the notification issue with APS. He stated that currently students are not notified of their eligibility early enough. He explained once students were notified that they had received the scholarship, 44 percent had already committed to another school outside of Alaska; in response to this issue, the proposed legislation would add new dates to APS. He moved from slide 5 to slide 7 which addressed the following new proposed dates: APS would be awarded 18 months before graduation, as opposed to 16 months; on December 31 of their junior year, students would be notified of the requirements needed to be awarded APS; and final verification that all requirements have been met would be on August 15, as opposed to September 30.

[9:39:37 AM](#)

MR. SEXTON moved to the next slide, which listed the change from 2010 to 2022 in the cost of tuition in several of Alaska's postsecondary schools. He stated that most schools have increased tuition dramatically, while the amount of the APS award has not changed. He moved to slide 9 which listed the current award amounts for APS, in comparison with the proposed amounts in HB 148. He moved to the next slide and pointed out the steady decline in the number of students using APS. He discussed the contributing factors concerning the decrease in students using APS. He explained that 2016 was the last year the state paid for standardized testing. He continued that in 2018 APS's funding was vetoed. Even though this was overturned, he opined that the attempted veto created uncertainty for students. In addition, he added that access to standardized testing has been difficult for rural students. On slide 11, he continued discussing the issue of standardized testing, pointing out that once the state stopped paying for the test in 2016, and the number of students taking the tests dropped by 1,100 the next year. He mentioned that colleges in the Lower 48 are moving away from the standardized testing requirement.

[9:44:52 AM](#)

MR. SEXTON discussed barriers to eligibility, with the graph on slide 12 showing that test scores are the biggest barrier. He

stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic testing requirements were waived, and there was a surge of eligible students across Alaska.

MR. SEXTON moved to slide 13, which addressed the "step-up provision" in the proposed legislation. He explained that some students do not excel in high school, but once in college they find their "path." He continued that the step-up provision would recognize a student's efforts once he/she is in college, as every year a student's efforts would be reevaluated, and APS increases would be made accordingly. He argued that this would reward hard work and effort.

[9:47:51 AM](#)

MR. SEXTON moved to the next slide and expressed the opinion that APS encourages students to graduate college. He pointed out those students who receive APS, versus those that do not, graduate at markedly higher rates.

MR. SEXTON moved to slide 17 and pointed out that students who receive APS will stay in the state more often and become part of the workforce. He moved to the next slide and stated that 24 postsecondary schools in Alaska offer APS, with the University of Alaska having the highest percentage of students. He addressed a Department of Labor and Workforce Development study of the graduating classes from 2014 and 2015. He pointed out that the data shows a high percentage of APS students stay in Alaska. On the final slide, he pointed out the links to the reports that were created in response to the goal of the committee concerning HB 148. He expressed the understanding that this goal is to look at the issues and barriers for APS.

[9:51:16 AM](#)

BRAEDEN GARRETT, Staff, Representative Justin Ruffridge, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of the sponsor, the House Education Standing Committee, of which Representative Ruffridge served as co-chair, gave the sectional analysis on HB 148, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1 AS 14.43.820(a) amends:

AS 14.43.820(a)(2) Changes to eighteen months, the date when the commission shall determine an award for the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

AS 14.43.820(a)(3) Adds language to include a student "who is enrolled in or plans to enroll in" the curriculum required to earn an Alaska Performance Scholarship.

AS 14.43.820(A) Adds "or career and technical education" to the coursework under the Alaska Performance Scholarship Program.

AS 14.43.820(B)(ii) Adds "career and technical education, one year of which includes two semesters of sequentially more rigorous content within a career cluster; or

AS 14.43.820(C) Adds "three years of mathematics, four years of language arts, three years of science, four years of social studies, one year of which may be career and technical education, and two years of a foreign language or an Alaska Native language; and"

AS 14.43.820(a)(5) and (a)(6) removes these subsections that required minimum scores for either a college entrance examination, or standardized examinations, or is currently enrolled in good standing in a course of study at a qualified postsecondary institution in Alaska.

Section 2 AS 14.43.820(g)(1) amends:

Added the definition of "career cluster" to mean a group of jobs and industries that are related by skills or products;

Section 3 AS 14.43.820 is amended by adding new subsections:

Subsection (h) establishes a date of December 31 for students in grade 11 to be notified of remaining academic requirements in order to be awarded an Alaska performance scholarship, and (i) establishes August 15 of every year as the date the commission shall notify students that they have been awarded an Alaska performance scholarship, and what level scholarship that student has received.

Subsection (j) requires the district to provide information about the requirements to increase an award level whenever they communicate with a student regarding the Alaska performance scholarship.

Subsection (k) states that the applicant award level will reflect their GPA level upon graduation from high school.

Subsection (l) confirms an award will be given only if a student completes all of the necessary requirements.

Section 4 AS 14.13.825(a) amends:

AS 14.43.825(a)(1) changes the first award level amount from \$4,755 to \$7,000 and removes the very high minimum score on a college entrance examination requirement.

AS 14.43.825(a)(2) changes the second award level amount from \$3,566 to \$5,250 and removes the high minimum score on a college entrance examination requirement.

AS 14.43.825(a)(3) changes the third award level amount from \$2,378 to \$3,500 and removes the moderately high minimum score on a college entrance examination requirement.

Section 5 AS 14.43825(b) amends:

AS 14.43.825(b) changes the timeframe of eligibility for students from six years to eight years after the date the student graduates unless the student qualifies for an extension.

Section 6 AS 14.43.825 is amended by adding new subsections:

Subsection (g) states that on an annual basis the qualified university or college shall review the students Grade Point Average. If the students' grades qualify under the GPA levels under (h) of the section, the student will qualify for an increase in the APS scholarship they receive.

(h) If an award recipient's university or college grade-point average is

(h)(1) 3.5 or above, the commission shall increase the student's award level to the amount described in (a)(1) of this section;

(h)(2) 3.0 or above, the commission shall increase the student's award level to the amount described in (a)(2) of this section.

(i) In this section

(i)(1) "award recipient" means a student who has received an Alaska performance scholarship at the second or third award level;

(i)(2) "university or college grade-point average" means the average of all grades on a four-point scale obtained by a student at a qualified university or college in this state.

[9:54:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX, in regard to looking for a return on investments, compared the APS process with oil taxes in the state. He suggested that the legislature should "think about" what the state would be "getting back" from this investment. Concerning APS, he questioned whether the return would be worth the funding. He suggested that performance measures be set so future success can be determined.

[9:56:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed agreement with Representative Prax's comments. She reflected on the usefulness of the statistics in the presentation.

[9:56:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY said, "It goes against my instincts to lower standards and give more money." He expressed confusion because APS has funding, but students are being denied.

MR. SEXTON replied that the money is there, but there are barriers related to standardize testing. He reiterated that the schools in the Lower 48 are dropping requirements for these tests, as a student's grade point average is a better metric.

[9:59:22 AM](#)

SANA EFRID, Executive Director, Commission on Postsecondary Education, Department of Education and Early Development, in response to question concerning whether the left-over APS funds

are swept, replied that the funding comes through the higher education investment account and is appropriated to APS. She clarified that any money not used goes back to the higher education fund.

[9:59:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE commented that when APS funding was vetoed in [2018], students received letters that stated they would not receive the scholarship.

[10:00:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK expressed appreciation for the acknowledgement of the struggles of young rural Alaskans. He stated that often it is not even an option for these students to travel in order to take the required assessment exams.

[10:00:56 AM](#)

MR. SEXTON expressed excitement at the opportunity to reinvigorate the APS program and to encourage students to stay in Alaska once they have graduated, as this would enhance the workforce.

[10:01:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that HB 148 was held over.

[10:01:41 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.