

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 17, 2023

8:07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Alyse Galvin

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 148

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

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 139

"An Act relating to funding for correspondence study programs."

- 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
04/03/23	(H)	Heard & Held

04/03/23	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
04/05/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/05/23	(H)	Heard & Held
04/05/23	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
04/07/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/07/23	(H)	Heard & Held
04/07/23	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
04/17/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 139

SHORT TITLE: CORRESPONDENCE STUDY PROGRAM FUNDING
 SPONSOR (s): RUFFRIDGE

03/27/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/27/23	(H)	EDC, FIN
04/05/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/05/23	(H)	Scheduled but Not Heard
04/07/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/07/23	(H)	Scheduled but Not Heard
04/12/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/12/23	(H)	Heard & Held
04/12/23	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
04/17/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 148 on behalf of the House Education Standing Committee, sponsor by request, chaired by Representative Ruffridge.

SANA EFIRD, Executive Director
 Postsecondary Education Commission
 Department of Education & Early Development
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 148.

RANDY WOOTEN, Site Administrator
 IDEA Homeschool
 Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

LAURIE ZULLIGER

IDEA Homeschool
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

JENNIE BRYANT, School Board President
Galena School District
Galena, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

JEN SCHUTTE
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

DAWN COGAN
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

NOLA KURBER
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

CRYSTAL WARNER
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

BELINDA EBEL
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

MICHELLE MUSTERED
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

TAMRA DORN
IDEA Homeschool
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

DAN KULLENDAR
IDEA Homeschool
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

DEB MACKIE
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

ADELE PRIBBENOW
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

LEANNE CRAIGG
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

MARIAN WERTH
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

WALTER MARTINEZ
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

DEBBIE MICHAEL
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

WANDA REAMS
IDEA Homeschool
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

CHRIS REITAN, Superintendent
Craig City School District
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

EMMA DEETS
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

MELISSA FRITSCH-SITE
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

CINDY MORRIS
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

JAN CUMMINS
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

GALE THIBODAUX
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

LINDA TROUSIL
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

JANICE SALMAN
IDEA Homeschool
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

SHERRY TUNILLA, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

DEAN O'DELL, Director
IDEA Homeschool
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

KACINEHA MIZZETTI
IDEA Homeschool
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

VALERIE DELAP, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

MARCILLA JAVIER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

TRACY FICK, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

SARA LINDAMOOD, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

SCOTT GINGRICH, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

ELLEN ANDERSON, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

STEPHANY FORESTER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

ED MARTIN, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

LAURA LOWDERMILK, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

AMBER CARNES, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

MARK JOHN
IDEA Homeschool
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

JIEUN MCDONALD, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 139.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:07:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives McCormick, McKay, Himschoot, Story, Allard, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representative Prax arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present was Representative Alyse Galvin.

HB 148-AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

[8:08:02 AM](#)

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

[8:08:47 AM](#)

BUD SEXTON, Staff, Representative Justin Ruffridge, Alaska State Legislature, presented HB 148 on behalf of the House Education Standing Committee, sponsor by request, chaired by Representative Ruffridge. He paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) is a highly valuable program in Alaska which provides Alaska's brightest students with an incentive to attend postsecondary education in Alaska. Studies show that upon completion from college, students most often will choose to live and work near the college where they graduate. In order to meet current and future workforce needs, we need more Alaskan students to learn at Alaskan colleges.

HB 148 makes meaningful changes that will encourage a greater number of Alaskans to attend postsecondary schooling by providing them with financial resources to help students reach their educational goals. Since the APS program began, award levels have remained constant while the cost of education has risen. HB 148 increases the award levels and provide students with greater financial resources they can apply towards the cost of higher education.

HB 148 makes changes to recognize the increasing role of career and technical education (CTE) for many students in high school by adding CTE curriculum as a qualifying path to earn an APS.

Parents, students, and educators have expressed desire for the earlier notification of awards for the Alaska Performance Scholarship Program. HB 148 legislation provides for earlier notification of financial scholarships available to assist families when determining which postsecondary school to attend and the net cost for in-state versus out-of-state institutions.

HB 148 removes the APS requirement for college entrance exams such as SAT/ACT testing prior to attending college. A large number of colleges across the United States are taking similar measures since the pandemic. In Alaska, the current requirements for testing often create a hardship for students who are required to travel to Anchorage or other locations where testing services are offered. The cost of travel from many communities off the road system are very high. When combined with testing fees, hotel, food, and other travel related expenses, many families may choose to forgo the potential of earning an APS based solely on whether they can afford for their student to travel to a testing center.

Some students in high school may not fully achieve their educational goals in high school for one reason or another, and their grade point average (GPA) may not reflect their true abilities. HB 148 includes a "step-up" provision which allows the college to review the student's GPA on an annual basis after completing two semesters. If the student works diligently in college, and their GPA increases as a result of their hard work, the amount of funding they receive for their APS will increase to the level commiserate with their new GPA. The "step-up" provision encourages diligent effort by students during their postsecondary education.

The Education Committee believes these enhancements to the Alaska Performance Scholarship Program will help foster a greater level of benefit to attend University of Alaska schools, and will prepare Alaskans to meet

the current and anticipated workforce development needs for many years to come.

[8:10:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE noted that the committee had received four amendments and a conceptual amendment to Amendment 4.

[8:10:44 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:10 a.m. to 8:11 a.m.

[8:11:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 148, labeled 33-LS0624\B.1, Marx, 3/31/23, which read:

Page 2, following line 28:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(h) Not later than January 15 of each year, a district shall provide to each student in the district who is enrolled in grade nine or grade 10 information about the Alaska performance scholarship."

Reletter the following subsections accordingly.

Page 3, line 9:

Delete "(l)"

Insert "(m)"

Page 3, line 11:

Delete "(k)"

Insert "(l)"

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected for the purpose of discussion.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD spoke to Amendment 1. She stated that the amendment would move the notification timeframe of when students are notified of the scholarships to grades nine and ten. She added that for the purpose of student retention in Alaska, the sooner they know they have the funds to do so, the better, and outside universities would not have the advantage of enticing students to leave Alaska.

[8:12:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered her understanding that districts do this already. She requested that Sana Efird be asked to confirm that.

[8:13:05 AM](#)

SANA EFIRD, Executive Director, Postsecondary Education, Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), responded that she cannot speak to the school district; however, she stated that she works closely with the counselors in the districts, and they provide information about the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) with hopes of every student being informed as early as possible.

[8:14:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether the mandate proposed under Amendment 1 would place a burden on schools.

[8:14:22 AM](#)

MS. EFIRD replied that she cannot speak to the impact on districts. She reiterated that she provides information and training about the scholarship that is accessible for the school district, anything else would have to be directed to the district, she added.

[8:15:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE withdrew his objection to the Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[8:15:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HB 148, labeled 33-LS0624\B.2, Marx, 4/4/23, which read:

Page 2, line 30:
Delete "academic"

Page 3, line 6:
Delete "and"

Page 3, lines 7 - 11:
Delete all material and insert:
" (2) inform the applicant that the
commission may disburse the award only if the

applicant meets the requirements described in (l) of this section;

(3) for an applicant awarded an Alaska performance scholarship under AS 14.43.825(a)(1), inform the applicant that the commission will adjust the applicant's award under the circumstances described in (k) of this section; and

(4) inform the applicant that the commission will adjust the applicant's award under the circumstances described in (m) of this section."

Page 3, line 16, following "scholarship":

Insert "under AS 14.43.825(a)(1)"

Page 3, line 26:

Delete "and"

Page 3, following line 28:

Insert a new subparagraph to read:

"(C) met the minimum score on a college entrance examination if required under AS 14.43.825(a); and"

Page 3, following line 31:

Insert new subsections to read:

"(m) If a student is awarded an Alaska performance scholarship under

(1) AS 14.43.825(a)(1) and enrolls in a qualified career and technical school program during the scholarship eligibility period described in AS 14.43.825(b), the commission shall adjust the student's award to the award level described in AS 14.43.825(a)(2);

(2) AS 14.43.825(a)(2) and enrolls in a qualified university or college during the scholarship eligibility period described in AS 14.43.825(b), the commission shall adjust the student's award to the applicable award level described in AS 14.43.825(a)(1); the commission shall make the adjustment based on the student's high school grade-point average and college entrance examination scores.

(n) The commission may adjust a student's scholarship under (m) of this section only once."

Page 4, lines 1 - 15:

Delete all material and insert:

"* Sec. 4. AS 14.43.825(a) is amended to read:

(a) The maximum annual awards for the Alaska

performance scholarships are as follows:

(1) for a student enrolled at a qualified university or college

(A) the first award level is \$7,000 [\$4,755] and requires a

(i) [(A)] 3.5 grade-point average or above; and

(ii) [(B)] very high minimum score on a college entrance examination;

(B) [(2)] the second award level is \$5,250 [\$3,566] and requires a

(i) [(A)] 3.0 grade-point average or above; and

(ii) [(B)] high minimum score on a college entrance examination;

(C) [(3)] the third award level is \$3,500 [\$2,378] and requires a

(i) [(A)] 2.5 grade-point average or above; and

(ii) [(B)] moderately high minimum score on a college entrance examination;

(2) for a student enrolled at a qualified career and technical school program, the award level is \$5,500 and requires a 2.5 grade-point average or above."

Page 5, line 4, following "scholarship":

Insert "under AS 14.43.825(a)(1)"

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD spoke to Amendment 2. She related a story about her husband as a former student to illustrate that not everyone does well as a student, but can score high on the SAT.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD proposed a conceptual amendment to Amendment 2 by making an "and/or" option for a score of 1100 or higher..

[8:18:24 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:18 a.m. to 8:26 a.m.

[8:26:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD, in response to Co-Chair Ruffridge, withdrew Amendment 2.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that Amendment 2 had been withdrawn. He noted that he would not be offering Amendment 3 [in the committee packet, but not moved for adoption].

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated that before the committee moved on to Amendment 4, Co-Chair Allard had a conceptual amendment to offer. [The conceptual amendment had been intended as an amendment to Amendment 2, which had been withdrawn.]

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1, beginning on page 2, line 13, following ";" to insert "or" and reinstate the language on page 2, lines 14-22 that would be deleted under HB 148; on page 4, line 5, following ";" to [replace] "and" with "or" and reinstate the language on lines 6-7 that would be deleted under HB 148; on page 4, line 9, following ";" to replace "and" with "or" and reinstate the language on lines 10-11 that would be deleted under HB 148; page 4, line 13, following ";" to replace "and" with "or" and reinstate the language on lines 14-15;

CO-CHAIR ALLARD explained that "Conceptual Amendment 1" would give the opportunity for students to qualify based on their GPA or SAT scores.

[8:29:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected for the purpose of discussion.

[8:29:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD, in response to Representative Story, repeated the changes that would be made under "Conceptual Amendment 1."

[8:30:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY surmised that the committee would probably need the amendment written by Legislative Legal Services, but she welcomed discussion presently. In response to Co-Chair Ruffridge, she said she would like to hear from Ms. Efrid regarding "Conceptual Amendment 1."

[8:31:14 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:31 a.m. to 8:43 a.m.

[8:43:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE indicated that the committee would get some amendments redrafted. He announced that HB 148 was held over.

HB 139-CORRESPONDENCE STUDY PROGRAM FUNDING

[8:43:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 139, "An Act relating to funding for correspondence study programs."

[8:44:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on HB 139.

[8:44:56 AM](#)

RANDY WOOTEN, Site Administrator, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. He explained that both his children and grandchildren were homeschooled. He proclaimed that many students have thrived through Interior Distance Education of Alaska (IDEA), after not succeeding in the traditional school system.

[8:47:15 AM](#)

LAURIE ZULLIGER, teacher, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139, as equal funding would provide needed services and resources for the educational needs of Alaska's students.

[8:48:51 AM](#)

JENNIE BRYANT, School Board President, Galena School District, testified in support of HB 139. She stated how important and valuable the bill would be in supporting the correspondence program, particularly for support of special education (SPED) homeschool students.

[8:50:20 AM](#)

JEN SCHUTTE, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she is a homeschool mother of three, and what her children have in common is a tailored education that fits their needs.

[8:52:26 AM](#)

DAWN COGAN, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that families seeking SPED support are funded out of [IDEA Homeschool's] general fund. She believed that if HB 139 could offer proper funding, the students would be better served.

[8:54:21 AM](#)

NOLA KURBER, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that 13 of her grandchildren are being homeschooled, and as a taxpayer, she would like to see an equally balanced financial consideration between homeschool and building based schooling.

[8:55:45 AM](#)

CRYSTAL WARNER, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she has been with IDEA for seven years and has two children with special needs enrolled. Without additional SPED funding, important supports are lacking, she said, adding that additional funding would come with HB 139.

[8:57:20 AM](#)

BELINDA EBEL, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139 and the additional support the bill would provide.

[8:58:21 AM](#)

MICHELLE MUSTERED, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She said the funding would ensure all the vital services so that students could reach their full potential.

[8:59:37 AM](#)

TAMRA DORN, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stressed the challenge of meeting special needs while staying in the allotted parameters of funds received from the state. She said SPED funding would help meet those needs with HB 139.

[9:00:46 AM](#)

DAN KULLENDAR, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. He stated that he is grateful for the options the homeschool program brings, adding that HB 139 would help provide resources on an equitable level, especially for students that may have unique needs.

[9:03:04 AM](#)

DEB MACKIE, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139, as the full base student allocation (BSA) is vital for students to receive the education they deserve in the correspondence program.

[9:05:06 AM](#)

ADELE PRIBBENOW, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She pointed out that the statewide correspondence program has expenses, and funding SPED correspondence students in remote or outlying areas would help them reach their full potential.

[9:07:11 AM](#)

LEANNE CRAIGG, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139, which would bring fair and equal funding for each student enrolled in the correspondence program. She read excerpts from a letter written by her daughter who is an IDEA homeschool graduate.

[9:09:46 AM](#)

MARIAN WERTH, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that the funding for each student enrolled in the correspondence program is important to the continuation of this educational option for families in Alaska.

[9:11:43 AM](#)

WALTER MARTINEZ, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. He expressed gratitude for being able to homeschool his kids and appreciated that the bill would help provide the necessary materials and tools for success in his children's education.

[9:12:46 AM](#)

DEBBIE MICHAEL, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139, and urged the committee to support the bill.

[9:14:43 AM](#)

WANDA REAMS, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139, and asked for full, fair, and equal funding for all students, including SPED students, for the success of all.

[9:15:38 AM](#)

CHRIS REITAN, Superintendent, Craig City School District, testified in support of HB 139. He stated that correspondence students deserve the same level of support as their peers in brick-and-mortar schools. He requested that the committee pass HB 139 and move it forward to the House Finance Committee.

[9:18:00 AM](#)

EMMA DEETS, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She said she raised four boys through the homeschool program, noting that she was also homeschooled. She expressed her belief that whether a student is educated through a building-based school, or homeschooled, equal funding should be received. Each child's education is equally valuable and should be equally funded, she said.

[9:20:12 AM](#)

MELISSA FRITSCH-SITE, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She expressed her strong belief that the BSA for each student in the correspondence program should be fair and as equitable as any building-based student. Student needs, she said, are the same regardless of where they receive services and therefore funding should be equal.

[9:22:03 AM](#)

CINDY MORRIS, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she is a SPED teacher, and provided her belief that homeschooled students deserve to receive 100 percent of the BSA, adding that special needs should have equitable funding. More equitable funding, she explained, would allow teachers to individualize their services even more than they do already and provide more support groups for more students and their parents and teachers.

[9:25:02 AM](#)

JAN CUMMINS, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She provided her background in education, stating that she has now served as a special education teacher in IDEA for the past

three years. She expressed her appreciation for all the support received, and said she strongly believed that students deserve to be funded at 100 percent. She shared her belief that it is essential that SPED also receive funding.

[9:27:07 AM](#)

GALE THIBODAUX, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She shared her belief that one thing the COVID-19 pandemic revealed was the need for educational options for all children. As an educator, she said, she has advocated for the best education that meets the needs of each child and their families. She explained that in her time in IDEA, she coordinated standardized testing for 14 years and saw firsthand the increased expenses that homeschool programs bear in providing mandated testing to all their students. She urged the committee to support HB 139.

[9:29:29 AM](#)

LINDA TROUSIL, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She said that 100 percent funding for each student enrolled in a correspondence program is the equitable and necessary way to serve families throughout the state. She added that some families live outside the geographical boundaries of building based schools. She stated that support becomes more costly when SPED is added, noting that fair and equal funding would reduce the financial limitation on home school children's education.

[9:31:21 AM](#)

JANICE SALMAN, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that 100 percent of funding for each student enrolled in a correspondence program is vital to make sure students receive a quality education and become an asset to their communities. Fair and equal funding for curriculum, supplies, support teachers, librarians, mandated standardized testing, clubs and groups, and SPED is necessary to safeguard the quality of each child's education. The support for HB 139 is necessary for every student whether they are educated in a brick-and-mortar school, or in-house, she said.

[9:33:50 AM](#)

SHERRY TUNILLA, parent, testified in support of HB 139. She offered her belief that each student enrolled in a home school correspondence program should receive 100 percent of the

funding, and even more so for SPED students. She gave a personal example of her son's experience in a building-based school that she said limited his academic study and created challenges for him. She reiterated her support for HB 139 and stressed the importance of funding for students with special needs.

[9:35:58 AM](#)

DEAN O'DELL, Director, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. He stated that his support for the bill is about fairness in funding Alaska's correspondence programs and their obligation to the law. He said correspondence programs not only have certain responsibilities, but some expenditures are unique to correspondence programs that are not shared by brick-and-mortar programs. He urged the committee to support HB 139.

[9:37:50 AM](#)

KACINEHA MIZZETTI, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she supports the opportunities and choices that IDEA offers to students in Alaska, and believes in fair and equal funding of correspondence programs. It is crucial to give each student in Alaska equal educational opportunities, she said, in addition to ensuring that the necessary funds are available for SPED.

[9:39:29 AM](#)

VALERIE DELAP, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She offered her belief that the bill would ensure that all children are equally educated and funded. She shared her surprise upon learning that there was no "special money" given for SPED students, which, she said, require so much more. She commended prior testifiers and thanked the committee.

[9:40:25 AM](#)

MARCILLA JAVIER, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she currently has five grandchildren in the homeschool program, and that the access to resources is why she saw the benefit in correspondence programs. With many more people homeschooling, parents and students would like to have more clubs and groups, which means more building space. She urged the committee to pass HB 139 out of committee because students deserve 100 percent of the BSA, she said.

[9:42:57 AM](#)

TRACY FICK, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She said she supported full funding for all students in correspondence programs. She believed that fair and equal funding would ensure that children have access to SPED services, which they need to flourish, adding that children would receive support from exceptional educators.

[9:43:49 AM](#)

SARA LINDAMOOD, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that because of programs such as IDEA, her children had access to a wide variety of opportunities they otherwise would not have been able to enjoy, including SPED services such as speech, and tailored support for executive dysfunction. Her children, now in their adult lives, are independent and successful. A fair and just BSA for each child would allow for broader support, she said.

[9:45:54 AM](#)

SCOTT GINGRICH, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. He stated he hoped the passing of HB 139 would help provide better services for families, provide funds for special needs, and provide more resources for parents, students, and teachers. He added that it could also provide better technology to connect with world knowledge.

[9:46:57 AM](#)

ELLEN ANDERSON, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she homeschooled her granddaughter, who started reading at the age of four, adding that she could not imagine putting her into a public school at that time. She expressed her gratitude to IDEA for all the opportunities made available for her granddaughter and supported 100 percent funding for the correspondence program. She offered her understanding that legally, public schools have funding, but the home school program does not. She reiterated her support for fairness to all students in Alaska.

[9:48:52 AM](#)

STEPHANY FORESTER, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she and her family have been using IDEA Homeschool for the past 12 years, adding that she supports

correspondence programs getting 100 percent of the BSA as they deserve fair and equal funding. She noted that she supported SPED students being funded with IDEA, emphasizing it is vital to provide all Alaska's students equal funding.

[9:50:13 AM](#)

ED MARTIN, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. He said that his wife homeschooled their children in the 1980s, and believed prior testifiers had valid points about raising the allocation amount. He offered his belief that the whole program is under attack in the state's superior court, and he suggested that the legislature "look into this." He said he hoped HB 139 will pass out of committee and that SPED kids get the funding.

[9:52:22 AM](#)

LAURA LOWDERMILK, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She said her son has five separate SPED needs, adding that when SPED is not funded, she must supply the costs out of her family's household income. She expressed her thankfulness for having the opportunity to homeschool through IDEA and said HB 139 would be an effective use of money for education.

[9:55:21 AM](#)

AMBER CARNES, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She said she is speaking today because of her son, who receives speech therapy, occupational therapy, and needs additional help with reading. The additional support requires more materials, tutors, and can "eat through" the allotment money, leading her family to pay out of pocket. With equal funding, she added, students could thrive with more help and support.

[9:56:59 AM](#)

MARK JOHN, teacher, IDEA Homeschool, testified in support of HB 139. He stated that he is an educator and most of his experience has been in brick-and-mortar schools, but he wanted to speak on home schooling. He said full and equal funding through HB 139 would ensure educational equity and would support families with important educational opportunities and choices.

[9:58:09 AM](#)

JIEUN MCDONALD, representing self, testified in support of HB 139. She stated that she supports fair 100 percent funding for

the correspondence program to ensure that her children can reach their full potential.

[10:00:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE closed public testimony of HB 139.

[10:00:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that HB 139 was held over.

[10:00:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked the testifiers who called in.

[10:00:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented on the "stack of amendments" regarding HB 148, and asked the sponsors of the amendments to get together to make sure the bill still works.

[10:01:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY brought up a comment a testifier had made about a legal challenge in superior court, which he thought sounded significant. He requested that it be discussed further.

[10:01:39 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

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