

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 17, 2024

8:01 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 Jesse Sumner  
Representative Julie Coulombe

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

Bob Griffin - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) - ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 165

"An Act relating to charter schools; relating to correspondence study programs; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17

Urging the United States Congress to extend the deadline for the state to obligate American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief - Homeless Children and Youth funds.

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 165

SHORT TITLE: CHARTER SCHOOLS; CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(S): WAYS & MEANS

04/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/19/23	(H)	W&M, EDC, FIN
04/27/23	(H)	W&M AT 6:00 PM DAVIS 106
04/27/23	(H)	Heard & Held
04/27/23	(H)	MINUTE(W&M)
05/04/23	(H)	W&M AT 6:00 PM DAVIS 106
05/04/23	(H)	Moved CSHB 165(W&M) Out of Committee
05/04/23	(H)	MINUTE(W&M)
05/05/23	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
05/05/23	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
05/08/23	(H)	W&M RPT CS(W&M) NEW TITLE 4DP 1DNP 2NR
05/08/23	(H)	DP: MCCABE, MCKAY, ALLARD, CARPENTER
05/08/23	(H)	DNP: GROH
05/08/23	(H)	NR: TILTON, GRAY
04/17/24	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

BOB GRIFFIN, Appointee

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

LOREN LEHMAN, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the confirmation of Bob Griffin, appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

MARILYN PILLIFANT, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the confirmation hearing of Bob Griffin, appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

LAURA BONNER, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Bob Griffin, appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

CAROLINE STORM  
Coalition for Education Equity  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Bob Griffin, appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

DAVID BOYLE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the confirmation of Bob Griffin, appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

REPRESENTATIVE BEN CARPENTER  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, presented HB 165.

KENDRA BROUSSARD, Staff  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave the sectional analysis for HB 165 on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor.

DONNA ARDUIN, Staff  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 165 on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor.

DEBORAH RIDDLE, Director  
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence  
Department of Education & Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 165.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:01:14 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Prax, McKay, Himschoot, Story, Allard, and Ruffridge were present at

the call to order. Representative McCormick arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present were Representatives Sumner and Coulombe.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING**

**Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development**

[8:02:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the first order of business would be the confirmation hearing on the governor's appointee to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development.

[8:03:08 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Appointee, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, provided his professional background as listed on his resume [included in the committee packet] and highlighted that he had been involved in the "education space" for approximately 15 years. He said he became interested in education in Alaska, and the more he researched it, his goal was to improve outcomes in the state. He expressed concern about the expense and the amount invested in K-12 education. He drew attention to the increase in the last cycle of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores, which he said represented improvement. He conveyed his enthusiasm for the Alaska Reads Act being implemented and that he saw students showing hopeful signs, and he recognized that the Act is a critical task in K-12 education and early child literacy. He gave brief examples of other states' early child literacy outcomes in comparison to Alaska. He said he also served as chair on the State-Tribal Education Compacting committee and expressed excitement about its prospects. He welcomed questions from committee members.

[8:08:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD expressed her belief that it made a difference when people have children in the school system and asked Mr. Griffin whether he had children in the system.

MR. GRIFFIN confirmed he had and that they went through the Anchorage School District (ASD).

[8:09:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY referenced Mr. Griffin's comments about improvement but noted that she had heard many criticisms about local schools, and she asked whether the state board had plans to talk about the improvements schools are making.

MR. GRIFFIN replied absolutely. He related that he gave a briefing last year expanding on his optimism and "bullish" attitude towards the improvements that are being made.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Griffin about his role as a state board member and how he saw local control in the system of the elected school board.

MR. GRIFFIN responded that local control is paramount, and he reflected on recent conversations about charter schools which he opined are the ultimate local control. He added that the charter schools are controlled by the parents and staff but managed by the school districts.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY pointed out legislation that would have the state board be the authorizer of charter schools instead of the local board as the authorizer. She asked Mr. Griffin whether he supported keeping legislation as it is in the local school board.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that that was not his understanding of the pending legislation, he said his understanding was that the state board would be an additional authorizer that would be available. He further noted that this technique is popular in other states.

[8:14:51 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN spoke to charter school support and pointed out that Alaska only has one charter school authorizer.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY pointed out statute directing the local school board to manage the charter school and asked Mr. Griffin how he felt about working with the local school board that is "bypassing" and how it would impact its school.

MR. GRIFFIN replied it is a common technique used in almost every other state and he offered his understanding that the language meant the board would contract with "a" district in order to manage the charter school. He said he did not see charter schools being hoisted on districts that would disapprove of them.

[8:16:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked who controls the money under a scenario in which a charter school is located in one district but is chartered by another.

MR. GRIFFIN offered his insight that the money would still go through the district that is managing the charter school to the schools that are being chartered. He reiterated that it was a common technique used across the country.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Mr. Griffin how he would resolve conflicts managing money.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that it would be resolved by the contract that the charter [school] negotiated. The technique being proposed is similar to correspondence allotment programs, he said.

[8:19:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT referenced Mr. Griffin's comments about Alaska having the third-worst ranking on how charter schools are authorized but the highest performing charter schools. She asked why something needed to be changed.

MR. GRIFFIN responded that Alaska has the best student outcomes for charter schools in the U.S.; however, there is always room for improvement. The state is significantly below the national average in people who participate in charter schools, but there is a "huge thirst" for school choice programs in Alaska, he said.

[8:21:38 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:21 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.

[8:35:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the handouts provided by Mr. Griffin would be available on BASIS for the public online, and copies provided to those in the hearing room.

[8:36:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT circled back to her question about why anything should be changed when Alaska has the best performing charter schools.

MR. GRIFFIN reiterated that Alaska has the best charter schools, which is a great testament to the families who put them together despite the poor support they receive. He opined that just because they are very good does not mean they cannot be better, and it should be a goal. He provided an example of Florida charter schools, and he restated that Alaska is significantly below in the number of students that attend charter schools.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked how Florida authorizes charter schools.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that Florida has two different authorizers for charter schools: local school districts and the university system.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT referred to Dr. Peterson from Harvard [prior invited testifier] not recommending the university authorizers.

MR. GRIFFIN responded that both paths are available, and frequently the secondary path is not used; however, when there is a secondary path available it disarms an "asymmetric power relationship."

[8:40:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Griffin how many charter schools had been declined in the 30 years Alaska has had them.

MR. GRIFFIN said he did not know how many have been declined, but there are many people who have not bothered to go through the process.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether the state board was working on the teaching shortages in the state.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that there is a particular committee that covers that, which he is not a part of. He further noted that there were findings, and the state board has been very active in goals such as extending the types of certificates available in order to get specialists into positions.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT referred to the recently uploaded document about English language learners (ELL), and that there was a common misconception that ELL are people who were born overseas or a non-English speaking family, but they are typically born into families who do not use academic English at home, she explained. She asked Mr. Griffin what type of ELL there is in Alaskan and how they would be placed.

MR. GRIFFIN pointed out that the breakdowns were in the handout. Nationally, he said, 4.5 percent of students speak English less than very well, and in Alaska, it is 2.5 percent.

[8:47:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD thanked Mr. Griffin for understanding the pending legislation and stated that the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) members understand what is coming. She referred to a ruling that would impact how books and curriculum are purchased, and she asked Mr. Griffin what his opinion was on how this could impact Alaska students and families.

MR. GRIFFIN said the board is still in the analysis phase and there are many things that still need to be determined.

[8:50:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Bob Griffin.

[8:51:16 AM](#)

LOREN LEHMAN, representing self, provided testimony in support of Mr. Griffin. He gave his background as a past legislator, including some of the areas of education he worked on. His personal interest, he said, is his grandchildren in K-6 grades, and he expressed his belief that Mr. Griffin is one of the best prepared candidates for the Anchorage School Board that he has seen. He opined that Mr. Griffin's responses to questions today show his willingness to challenge the status quo yet provide meaningful and constructive support. He offered to be available for questions.

[8:54:10 AM](#)

MARILYN PILLIFANT, representing self, provided testimony during the confirmation hearing for Mr. Griffin and expressed her

concern that Mr. Griffin had been very vocal about the topic of transgender students. She said trying to weave the topic of transgender students into athletics is very tricky, and his vocalization takes away and discriminates from those students and takes away the parental decision making. She opined it was a disenfranchisement to kids and parents.

[8:58:22 AM](#)

LAURA BONNER, representing self, testified in opposition to the reappointment of Mr. Griffin because the state board of education has failed to make measurable improvements, she said. She further noted that Mr. Griffin is a member of the board of directors of the Alaska Policy Forum, and the policy forum is a private entity that pushes for state money to go to private institutions, which goes against the Alaska State Constitution; therefore, Mr. Griffin has a conflict of interest and should not be confirmed, she opined.

[9:00:44 AM](#)

CAROLINE STORM, Coalition for Education Equity, testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Griffin. She noted that Mr. Griffin is a member of an extreme right-wing organization called the Alaska Policy Forum, and while Mr. Griffin has been on the state board, he failed to maintain equity requirements. Mr. Griffin's drive to expand charter [schools] is not a solution in remote and rural Alaska and it would disenfranchise remote and rural students, she opined. She urged the committee to consider an applicant whose values align with public education, the state's constitution, and DEED's mission.

[9:02:39 AM](#)

DAVID BOYLE, representing self, testified in support of the confirmation of Mr. Griffin, appointee. He stated that he is a fellow veteran and that in the military, Mr. Griffin learned self before service, integrity above all, and he opined Mr. Griffin is nonpartisan. He added that Mr. Griffin's focus had been on what is best for Alaska's children and not the system, and that he was instrumental in getting the Alaska Reads Act formulated and implemented. He said Mr. Griffin has data and facts on any state's K-12 systems, and he urged the committee to confirm Mr. Griffin to the State Board of Education.

[9:04:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE, after ascertained that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation of Mr. Griffin. He welcomed Mr. Griffin to respond to public testimony that related what might be seen as a conflict.

MR. GRIFFIN stressed that he made clear that the Alaska Policy Forum is a nonpartisan think-tank that advocates for a variety of different policies and not focused on anything other than improving student outcomes.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked if the forum had an outlined plan for its vision for Alaska education.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that he did not recall but there was a strategic plan that he could provide to the committee at a later date.

[9:07:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Griffin how he vetted the data and points he looked at and then stuck with the "raw numbers."

MR. GRIFFIN, referring to bullet point on allocating resources, explained that the numbers there are hyperlinked to the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development data center numbers that analyze a 20-year period. He further explained the analysis and how the numbers were verifiable.

[9:11:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY shared that she spoke to local school boards and parents involved in their communities and asked Mr. Griffin how he viewed the need for more funding for K-12.

MR. GRIFFIN reiterated that he supported the pending legislation that would add \$680 to the base student allocation (BSA) and he offered his belief that the bigger concern is that resources have been poorly allocated and many are being intercepted by buildings and bureaucracies. He added that it is appropriate to have increases in K-12 education, but a deep dive should be taken into how resources are allocated.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE alluded to Mr. Griffin's comment about the allocation of resources and some of the testimony given about his role with the Alaska Policy Forum, as well as a document in reference to an allotment for correspondence programs being used to pay for private school tuition. He asked Mr. Griffin if he

had thoughts about how "these things link up," and the constitutionality of it.

[9:14:56 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN responded that he was not familiar with the document, but correspondence content providers have almost always been private sector content providers, and he stated he could not think of any public sector content providers over the years. As for the constitutionality of it, he said there was not any direct benefit that should be going to any private schools or education entities and that the allotment goes to the parents.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE offered his belief that typically the allotment is given to the correspondence program and no actual funds are given to the parents. He read from the Alaska Policy Forum's page in reference to using state monies for private schools and asked Mr. Griffin how that aligns with his role with the board when drafting regulations and having some oversight with state funds.

MR. GRIFFIN said his understanding was that parents pay for the programs and are reimbursed by the entities, and in most cases, they must show receipts to be reimbursed so there is no money going to private sector providers. He provided examples of correspondence allotment programs and the monies involved.

[9:20:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE affirmed that his question was very specific and that his understanding of Mr. Griffin's opinion was that he thought public monies - as long as they are not directly paid to a private school but indirectly find a way there - is something he condones.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that it gets down to the content provider and that he supported the restriction that is in place.

[9:22:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked for clarification whether the Alaska Policy Forum reimbursed parents or had any other type of authority.

MR. GRIFFIN responded it does not.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Mr. Griffin, as a current member of the board, when parents ask for reimbursements for allotments whether they provide the receipts from the school from which the students attend.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that was his understanding of the process.

[9:24:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK referred to Mr. Griffin's time on the State-Tribal Education Compacting committee and asked to hear his views on where it is going in the future. He added his concern over the one charter school he represented which is Yup'ik speaking.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that he was proud of the tribal compacting work that has been done, and that in Representative McCormick's district, the English language arts proficiency rates are double that of underlying districts that surround, and the charter school is a high performing Title 1 school, he confirmed.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK stated that he was gravely concerned regarding Mr. Griffin's public comments about major maintenance needs and asked Mr. Griffin to provide corrections if the comments were taken out of context. He further provided examples of the unfavorable conditions of schools in his district, and that some are "falling apart." He asked Mr. Griffin whether he had visited Western Alaska and was in touch with the realities the region faced.

[9:29:13 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN replied that he shared Representative McCormick's concerns and noted that there is approximately \$2 billion to \$3 billion in deferred maintenance problems. He stated that he witnessed an escalation in building costs that have outstripped the rate of inflation. He offered his belief there should be a commission launched that figures out how to do things more efficiently and effectively because all schools deserve safe, clean, and well-lit spaces where they can conduct their operations, but not when there is an inability to fund. He said he believed it could be mitigated.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked, "How do we mitigate that?"

MR. GRIFFIN reiterated the idea of launching a commission to "get to the bottom of these things."

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK shared that growing up in rural Alaska, he had heard "time and time again" about proposed solutions, and the need for studies, but he emphasized that more funding was the biggest need and that maintenance costs money.

[9:33:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether money spent for allotments is spent for the benefit of the student as opposed to the teacher or provider.

MR. GRIFFIN confirmed that is correct.

[9:34:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY referenced the "Molly Hootch Case" [Tobeluk vs. Lind] and Mr. Griffin's no-vote on funding deferred maintenance and asked how he reconciled that with Molly Hootch laws in the state.

MR. GRIFFIN expressed his belief that the state had been very compliant with Molly Hootch court decisions, but the escalation in the cost of the facilities could be better addressed. He said the reason for his no-vote was that he did not see it as being sustainable.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said there is an obligation to provide funding and it is important for the state to honor its commitments to rural Alaska. She asked Mr. Griffin how he envisioned working with local school boards and superintendents to get information about how they are experiencing current situations.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that it had not been an avenue that has had enough communication and could definitely be improved.

[9:39:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Griffin if Anchorage should consolidate classrooms and schools.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that they should, based upon Anchorage being built out of capacity, and projections show there will be around 34,000 students by 2028.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT observed that if families receive funding it should be reported as income, and she inquired whether the families were issued 1099s under the allotment system.

MR. GRIFFIN said he had not "gotten into the weeds" in that process and had no knowledge whether 1099s were issued.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD interjected that is not income; it is allotments for education and there is no 1099 issued.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT referred to Mr. Griffin's comment about excellent outcomes from home school programs and asked him to elaborate.

MR. GRIFFIN explained that the value of education in neighborhood schools had prompted parents to move their kids into correspondence allotment programs. He pointed out the choice for students to opt out of testing and that students who did not test have successfully continued to college from correspondence programs.

[9:43:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said she was concerned with the investment of the public dollar and asked for evidence and data that communicates how well students are doing and how many have proceeded to college. She further noted that the NAEP testing data was not shared publicly, and she referenced competition with other schools and state data going back to 2003.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE gave Mr. Griffin the opportunity to make closing comments.

[9:46:34 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN agreed that performance was better in 2003 and in 2019, things "turned around a little bit." He said the figures available on DEED's website showed data over the last 20 years as well as outcomes due to flat funding. He thanked the committee for its time and consideration.

[9:48:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated that the House Education Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee and recommends that the following name be forwarded to

a joint session for consideration: Bob Griffin, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development. He said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[9:49:13 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:49 a.m. to 9:51 a.m.

**HB 165-CHARTER SCHOOLS; CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAMS**

[9:51:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HB 165, "An Act relating to charter schools; relating to correspondence study programs; and providing for an effective date."

[9:51:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BEN CARPENTER, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 165 and paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided:

HB 165 would allow Parents to have a greater choice in their child's education.

Parents in several states can choose the best education option for their child. That may be a neighborhood public school for one child, but a charter school or correspondence program for another child.

HB 165 would allow the state Board of Education to authorize charter public schools anywhere in the state. Charter public schools authorized by the state Board of Education would be operated by a local school board. The bill also allows the Board to make available a state correspondence study program if it finds the necessity for one.

Currently, school districts have the decision authority over the existence of these entities. Currently, correspondence study programs receive a

fraction of the funding for a student than for a student in any type of public school. Alaska statutes require schools to meet the same instructional standards, provide the same level of curriculum, and meet the needs of students, regardless of if the student is receiving their education from a physical school, or a home-based school.

There are 28 thousand students enrolled in charter or correspondence schools in Alaska, or 20% of Alaska's students. 22 thousand correspondence students are 17% of total students in Alaska, but only account for 5% of total funding.

The current funding formula for a correspondence student is 90% (0.9) of the BSA with no additional multipliers. HB 165 would change that formula to 121.5% (1.215) of the BSA, which the same multiplier in the public school funding formula that is tied to every student, regardless of school .

HB 165 also allocates an 11 times multiplier for intensive needs students. HB 165 allows parents of all income levels to determine the most appropriate method of schooling for their child. HB 165 is likely to incentivize more parents to choose charter or correspondence programs for their children, which will have an additional benefit of saving the state money.

[9:56:46 AM](#)

KENDRA BROUSSARD, Staff, Representative Ben Carpenter, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor, gave the sectional analysis for HB 165 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

#### **Section 1**

Adds intent language to uncodified law to be clear the legislature intends that school districts spend the increase in funding for correspondence schools on allotments to parents and not on administering the program.

#### **Section 2**

Creates a new section of law under charter schools that allows the State Board of Education to establish a charter school in a school district under procedures established by the Board. Procedures include the establishment of an academic policy committee consisting of parents of students attending the school, teachers, and school employees. The district local school board will operate the charter under the charter school law (AS 14.03.255 -14.03.290).

#### **Sections 3 and 4**

Amends to the duties of the department of education (AS 14.07.020 (a)) to offer and make available to any Alaskan through a centralized office a correspondence study program if required to do so by the State Board of Education. Calculate the amount allocated to each district that offers a correspondence study program, the amount allocated to the district under the program and inform the district of the calculation.

#### **Section 5**

Adds to the duties of the State Board of Education that the Board shall adopt regulations regarding establishment of charter schools by the Board.

#### **Section 6**

Amends the state funding calculation for correspondence program by adding together the results of multiplying the ADM (student count) by 1.215 (121.5%) instead of 0.9 (90%) and multiplying the correspondence intensive student count by 11.

This new calculation takes into account that public school funding formula for every ADM adds to the BSA a special needs factor of 1.2 and a school vocational and technical instruction factor of 1.015, for a total multiplier of 1.215.

In addition to the 1.215 BSA multiplier, as well as school related factors, every ADM with intensive needs receives an additional multiplier of 13 from the public school funding formula. This new calculation provides for intensive needs correspondence study

program students but leaves some of their funding in the district for administration.

### **Section 7**

Adds a new subsection of the calculation of the calculation for state funding for correspondence study by defining intensive services and correspondence intensive student.

### **Section 8 and 9**

Provide effective dates

[9:59:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE drew attention to Section 7 and, in light of recent court decisions, asked Representative Carpenter to speak to the inclusion of the language in the section.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER stressed the importance of transparency and that state law is clear to what the expectations are for charter, correspondence, and "brick and mortar" schools. The language helps to bring transparency to the process, he said.

[10:02:04 AM](#)

DONNA ARDUIN, Staff, Representative Ben Carpenter, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor, added that a strong suggestion was to make sure records were kept on how allocations were being spent. She proffered that if the legislature had the opportunity to make sure records are kept regarding how reimbursements have been made by the districts to the correspondence programs and parents, then it may help with "the lawsuit."

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER added that the parents might assume great records are being kept, which may be the case for most schools but not for all schools. The state is required by the constitution to provide, and conversations should be had on what the minimum requirements for recordkeeping are and to "level the playing field."

MS. AUDUIN noted to also provide the information to DEED, as it was not a current requirement, she said.

[10:03:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD said she was alarmed in reference to the lack of the "intensifier" for correspondence children. She asked whether it was an application that had to be put in, or simply not available. She said some children may be home schooled due to a disability and considered they are not getting the extra help. She requested to hear from DEED to elaborate.

MS. AUDUIN clarified that there was no intensive needs factor for correspondence programs.

[10:05:53 AM](#)

DEBORAH RIDDLE, Director, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, affirmed that intensive categorization for correspondence students is not available currently.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD expressed her shock and offered her belief that that could be a vehicle for its own piece of legislation. She thanked Representative Carpenter for bringing the subject to light.

[10:07:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether parents thought their available school was not providing the best service for their child.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER replied that one could argue it is discrimination, but he said the funding formula does not apply to special needs children that participate in correspondence programs. He suggested that perhaps the list of special needs definitions needed to be addressed because of the large number of parents choosing distance education.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX said he brought it up because limiting choice is inherently discriminatory, and it should be minimized by maximizing the choices available to individuals.

[10:09:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered her belief that it would be important to have someone in the department walk through the levels of special education funding, with level 3 being intensive students, and that further explanation is needed.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER commented that special education funding is not just for children who are struggling, but for children who excel above standards and who may need special attention due to surpassing standards.

[10:11:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE extended his agreement to Representatives Story and Carpenter and stated that he would like further discussions in future hearings.

[HB 165 was held over.]

[10:13:02 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:13 a.m.