

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 29, 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

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

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.

- MOVED SJR 17 OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 24 (FIN)

"An Act relating to mental health education; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 382

"An Act relating to education; relating to the rights of the parents of public school students; relating to the rights of public school teachers; relating to the records of public school students; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 17

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND DEADLINE FOR ARP-HCY FUNDS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) TOBIN

02/19/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 02/19/24 (S) EDC
 02/26/24 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/26/24 (S) Moved SJR 17 Out of Committee
 02/26/24 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 02/28/24 (S) EDC RPT 4DP
 02/28/24 (S) DP: TOBIN, BJORKMAN, GRAY-JACKSON,
 KIEHL
 03/07/24 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 03/11/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/11/24 (H) EDC
 04/17/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
 04/17/24 (H) Scheduled but Not Heard
 04/29/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: SB 24

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GRAY-JACKSON

01/18/23 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
 01/18/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 01/18/23 (S) EDC, HSS, FIN
 02/22/23 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/22/23 (S) Heard & Held
 02/22/23 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/06/23 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 03/06/23 (S) Moved SB 24 Out of Committee
 03/06/23 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/08/23 (S) EDC RPT 4DP 1NR
 03/08/23 (S) DP: TOBIN, GRAY-JACKSON, STEVENS, KIEHL
 03/08/23 (S) NR: BJORKMAN
 03/23/23 (S) HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 03/23/23 (S) Heard & Held
 03/23/23 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
 04/11/23 (S) HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 04/11/23 (S) Heard & Held
 04/11/23 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
 04/13/23 (S) HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 04/13/23 (S) Moved CSSB 24(HSS) Out of Committee
 04/13/23 (S) MINUTE(HSS)
 04/14/23 (S) HSS RPT CS 3DP 2NR SAME TITLE
 04/14/23 (S) NR: WILSON, KAUFMAN
 04/14/23 (S) DP: TOBIN, DUNBAR, GIESSEL
 02/07/24 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 02/07/24 (S) Heard & Held
 02/07/24 (S) MINUTE(FIN)

02/15/24 (S) FIN AT 1:30 PM SENATE FINANCE 532
 02/15/24 (S) Moved CSSB 24(FIN) Out of Committee
 02/15/24 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 02/19/24 (S) FIN RPT CS 4DP SAME TITLE
 02/19/24 (S) DP: HOFFMAN, OLSON, KIEHL, BISHOP
 03/06/24 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 03/06/24 (S) VERSION: CSSB 24(FIN)
 03/11/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/11/24 (H) HSS, EDC, FIN
 04/11/24 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
 04/11/24 (H) Heard & Held
 04/11/24 (H) MINUTE(HSS)
 04/16/24 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
 04/16/24 (H) Moved CSSB 24(FIN) Out of Committee
 04/16/24 (H) MINUTE(HSS)
 04/17/24 (H) HSS RPT 3DP 1DNP 1NR 1AM
 04/17/24 (H) DP: FIELDS, MCCORMICK, MINA
 04/17/24 (H) DNP: RUFFRIDGE
 04/17/24 (H) NR: PRAX
 04/17/24 (H) AM: SUMNER
 04/29/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 382

SHORT TITLE: EDUCATION; PARENT/TEACHER RIGHTS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CARPENTER

02/20/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 02/20/24 (H) EDC, JUD
 03/20/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
 03/20/24 (H) Heard & Held
 03/20/24 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/22/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
 03/22/24 (H) Heard & Held
 03/22/24 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
 04/29/24 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR LÖKI TOBIN

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented SJR 17.

BARBARA DUFFIELD, Executive Director

SchoolHouse Connection

Washington, DC

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of SJR 17.

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented CSSB 24.

VIOLA TAYLOR, Board Member
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of SB 24.

ANN RINGSTAD, Executive Director
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of SB 24.

BESSE ODOM, Staff
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on CSSB 24(FIN) on behalf of Senator Gray-Jackson, prime sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE BEN CARPENTER
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, answered questions during the hearing on HB 382.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 382 on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Prax, McCormick, McKay, Himschoot, Allard, and Ruffridge were present at the call to order. Representative Story arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SJR 17-EXTEND DEADLINE FOR ARP-HCY FUNDS

[8:03:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the first order of business would be 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.

[8:03:13 AM](#)

SENATOR LÖKI TOBIN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented SJR 17 and read from the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Alaska is experiencing an unprecedented rise in youth experiencing homelessness, with 14 percent more students identified as homeless in the 2022-23 school year, totaling approximately 3,000 students statewide. These numbers are most likely an undercount of the students needing housing support. Housing instability leads to dramatically higher dropout rates for these students, impacting their future success in our community - dropping out of high school can lead to not only higher unemployment and lower earnings, but also worse health outcomes and higher rates of criminal activity.

In 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law and \$2.3 million additional dollars were provided to Alaska school districts to support students experiencing homelessness. School districts in Alaska can apply for grants to use these funds for a wide variety of activities to support students experiencing homelessness and improve their outcomes in our schools. These activities range from direct student tutoring to medical referrals to staff training on how to identify and support students.

Under the current timeline, funds need to be obligated by September 2024 and 40 percent of the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds remain available. An extension will allow a

measured and thoughtful dedication of these funds, instead of requiring schools to obligate them rapidly.

We urge your support in asking our congressional delegation to allow school districts this necessary additional time to obligate the remaining ARP-HCY funds.

SENTATOR TOBIN added that a reading of the resolution could be provided at the will of the committee.

[8:06:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether other states were writing similar resolutions, as she opined that [homelessness of youth] was a national problem.

SENTATOR TOBIN replied that Ms. Duffield could talk about her work with other states to submit resolutions to congressional delegations as they navigate through the budget process to provide for an extension of the fund usage.

[8:07:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY sought understanding about where homeless kids are living, what they are doing, and how the state would spend the money and "implement all this."

SENTATOR TOBIN replied that the funds would be spent within the school to provide support within the school context but were not meant to help stabilize the children. Schools have used the funds to provide various support services so students' education is not disrupted, she said. She referred to page 2, lines 5 through 7, of the proposed legislation, which related what the schools would specifically do with the funds.

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY asked whether the districts could use the money for something other than for homeless students if they do not have any.

SENTATOR TOBIN reiterated that invited testifier, Ms. Duffield, could talk more about the stipulations tied to the particular resources.

[8:10:37 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:10 a.m. to 8:14 a.m.

[8:14:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE welcomed invited testifiers.

[8:14:29 AM](#)

BARBARA DUFFIELD, Executive Director, SchoolHouse Connection, gave invited testimony and stated that she and her organization strongly support SJR 17. She said that the funds were needed now more than ever due to child homelessness being worse than it was during the COVID-19 pandemic and it continuing to grow. Delays in federal guidance, administrative restrictions and processes, and lack of staff have created barriers, she explained. She pointed out that the one additional year to use the funds costs nothing and would allow the local school districts to be the steward, and rather than spending to meet a deadline, districts could use the funds as needs arise. In closing, she urged the passage of SJR 17 to help ensure federal dollars are maximized so that today's homeless children do not become tomorrow's homeless adults.

[8:17:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Ms. Duffield whether she could send the most updated version of the regulation stipulating where funds can be directed.

MS. DUFFIELD confirmed that she could.

[8:17:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted that there was confusion regarding how the American Rescue Plan funds were being spent.

MS. DUFFIELD clarified that there are two types of American Rescue Plan funds, but the fund under discussion now is specifically dedicated to students experiencing homelessness. There are no concerns or investigations into how the funds are being used, she stated. In response to a follow-up comment, she assured Representative Prax that the requirements were clear and well-understood.

[8:20:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether other states are in the same situation and are also writing resolutions asking for the extension.

MS. DUFFIELD replied that she was not aware of other state legislatures writing resolutions along the same lines but added that there had been effort in the U.S. Senate with 32 Senators signing on.

[8:21:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked what would happen if the funds were not spent by September. He further inquired what the funds would be spent on.

MS. DUFFIELD responded that the funds need to be obligated by September 30, 2024, and funds that are not spent or obligated go back to the treasury. She illustrated the various ways districts are allowed to spend the funds, all being locally determined, and she added that schools have discretion and flexibility on how funds are used.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked Senator Tobin for an example of how funds are used locally.

SENATOR TOBIN replied that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) received \$2.35 million in homeless children and youth funds from the American Rescue Plan and has directed those funds to state level and district level activities.

[8:25:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Senator Tobin whether she was aware of any other extension in the country or whether Alaska was the only state putting forth an extension.

SENATOR TOBIN explained that she worked with the congressional delegation that requested she sponsor a resolution, and the funds would be extended for every state. Other states are requesting, but maybe not in the same form, she said.

[8:25:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether efforts are coordinated with other state agencies.

SENTATOR TOBIN confirmed that there was interagency activity, which is why DEED put money towards the district homelessness liaison.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX inquired about the plan for an ongoing program.

SENTATOR TOBIN spoke to annual funds from a program associated with homeless children and that there was a recent increase in the funds; the nation receives approximately \$800 million per year. In response to a follow-up question, she reiterated that DEED administers the funds.

[8:29:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE opened public testimony on SJR 17. After ascertaining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:30:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that she appreciated the resolution coming forward.

[8:30:55 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:30 a.m. to 8:31 a.m.

[8:31:46 AM](#)

SENTATOR TOBIN, in response to Representative Prax, said that in regard to the program, the funds are not used for prevention but for students to get access to education.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX sought to ensure that an added burden would not be directed towards teachers.

SENTATOR TOBIN confirmed it would not.

[8:34:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD moved to report SJR 17 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, SJR 17 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:34:52 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:34 a.m. to 8:37 a.m.

SB 24-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

[8:37:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the next order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 24(FIN), "An Act relating to mental health education; and providing for an effective date."

[8:38:14 AM](#)

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented CSSB 24(FIN). She read from the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet] which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

CSSB 24 amends the existing health education curriculum statute to include mental health in all K-12 health classrooms to adequately educate students on vital information pertaining to mental health symptoms, resources, and treatment.

The Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) will develop guidelines for instruction in mental health in consultation with numerous stakeholders. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, the National Council for Behavioral Health, Providence Health and Services Alaska, Southcentral Foundation, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, Inc., North Star Behavioral Health System, and the National Alliance on Mental Health Illness Alaska. The standards will be developed in consultation with counselors, educators, students, administrators, and other mental health organizations to form effective guidelines for school boards, teachers, and students.

After standards have been developed, the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development and DEED will be responsible for implementation throughout the Alaska school system. As with existing health education curriculum, the DEED, the Department of Health, and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault will provide technical assistance to

school districts in the development of personal safety curricula. An existing school health education specialist position will assist in coordinating the program statewide.

CSSB 24 aims to decrease the stigma surrounding mental illnesses and increase students' knowledge of mental health, encouraging conversation around and understanding of the issue.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON related that she had had conversations with students who spoke of losing friends and being "desperate" to have mental health education in their school.

[8:41:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE welcomed invited testifiers.

[8:42:30 AM](#)

VIOLA TAYLOR, Board Member, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), gave invited testimony in support of SB 24 and provided her background. She said she lived her life in the mental health system since she was 19. Looking back, she said, she remembered her mental health struggles and she wished she had recognized them earlier. She added that she is doing better now, and she works with her peers and clients but stated that she missed many milestones due to her disability. She asked the committee to support what she referred to as a very important piece of legislation to support mental health for public schools and to help kids with mental issues.

[8:46:26 AM](#)

ANN RINGSTAD, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness, gave invited testimony in support of SB 24. She stated that mental health affects every aspect of people's lives and is a special part of overall health. She gave examples of youths in the U.S. who experience mental health struggles. Knowing how to talk about mental health issues at age-appropriate levels with students is of utmost importance, and youths need to be guided through the formative years, she said. Open discussions about mental health so students are not afraid to come forward if they are struggling and having statewide guidelines available to address the challenges are also important goals. She spoke on behalf of NAMI standing ready to assist in the statewide effort to end the stigma of mental illness by working with the

stakeholders over the next two years to create developmentally appropriate mental health guidelines for public schools to help support youths in their formative years. She thanked the committee for consideration of the legislation.

[8:49:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked Ms. Ringstad about the proposed direction and whether it is trying to develop curricula as part of classwork, trying to inform teachers of the signs, or both.

MS. RINGSTAD said the bill would establish the overall guidelines so that the best curricula could be developed in the different schools to address the issues. In response to a follow-up question, she said it would be a two-year process, and there would be a number of meetings with stakeholders to examine the guidelines. After the two-year process, the issue would come back to the legislature for review, she stated.

[8:52:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited questions and comments from committee members.

[8:52:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY expressed curiosity about the two-year [timeline] versus one-year.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied that she could not answer the question at this time.

[8:53:42 AM](#)

BESSE ODOM, Staff, Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Alaska State Legislature, answered questions during the hearing on CSSB 24 on behalf of Senator Gray-Jackson, prime sponsor. She explained that two years as a timeline was so that stakeholders had ample time to discuss the guidelines, and it was also a recommendation from DEED.

[8:54:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked for examples how the proposed bill could mesh with all the other things that schools are required to teach or accomplish.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON pointed out that CSSB 24(FIN) contained the word "encourage" and that she was hopeful that school districts will be encouraged to do right on behalf of the children of Alaska.

MS. ODOM added that some concerns from local districts were that there would be another mandate or requirement for schools that are already stretched thin, and she stressed that the bill is an encouragement, not a mandate. It would give schools local control of whether or not they have the capacity to implement the mental health curriculum into their schools, she explained. The curriculum would be taught by health teachers, or "regular" teachers, and would add on to already existing materials in regard to health classes, she said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked for examples of other places where the curriculum has been implemented.

MS. ODOM stated there are examples across the U.S. and she drew attention to a significant example in Washington. She said she could distribute the information to the committee at a later date.

[8:57:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted that he would appreciate hearing from DEED and that it would be helpful to have them join in person.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE pointed out that representatives from the department are online.

[8:58:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK conveyed that the bill should be moved and to not "drag our feet." He opined that the mental health crisis is something the committee should deal with expediently.

[8:59:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced an amendment deadline and that CSSB 24(FIN) was held over.

[8:59:51 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:59 a.m. to 9:05 a.m.

HB 382-EDUCATION; PARENT/TEACHER RIGHTS

[9:05:32 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 382, "An Act relating to education; relating to the rights of the parents of public school students; relating to the rights of public school teachers; relating to the records of public school students; and providing for an effective date."

[9:05:56 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:05 a.m. to 9:11 a.m.

[9:11:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE announced that the amendment process would begin.

[9:11:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 382, labeled 33-LS1056\U.7, Bergerud, 3/22/24, which read as follows:

Page 1, lines 2 - 3:

Delete "**relating to the records of public school students;**"

Page 6, line 6, through page 12, line 9:

Delete all material.

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

Page 14, line 2:

Delete "sec. 4"

Insert "sec. 3"

Page 14, line 3:

Delete "sec. 5"

Insert "sec. 4"

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT explained that the amendment would delete Section 3 because the content is modeled on the federal Privacy Act and is already addressed in federal law. The intent is to not add more statute than is needed, she said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE invited the bill sponsor to answer questions.

[9:13:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BEN CARPENTER, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of HB 382, said that he would support the will of the committee on the amendment, and noted that the intent of the bill is to get better local control for schools. He said he recognized that the section the amendment dealt with was student records, and the rights of parents are as spelled out in federal statute, which can change. He stated that he appreciated the concept of keeping statutes necessary and essential, and that he believed it was important that the state speaks about what Alaska's state policies are and not just rely on the federal government.

[9:15:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD agreed with Representative Carpenter and noted that federal law is consistently changing. She added that "if it is not in state statute, it could be open to lawsuits," which is not fair to people; in state statute, it is more locally controlled, she said. She stated that she would not support Amendment 1.

[9:15:39 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:15 a.m. to 9:16 a.m.

[9:16:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER noted that if the state's version of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is in state statute and the federal statute changes, there could be some questioning within the districts and lead to confusion.

[9:18:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said she understood Representative Carpenter's thoughts and wished to add to the conversation that changing federal law as far as FERPA would be a difficult thing to do, and highly unlikely. She stated that she supported the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT offered her belief that FERPA is an incredibly important law, but stated she did not like having the law in two places, which was the point of the amendment.

[9:19:43 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken but subsequently voided.

[9:20:17 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:20 a.m.

[9:20:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE noted that the previous roll was voided and called for another vote on Amendment 1 to HB 382.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Himschoot, Story, and McCormick voted in favor of Amendment 1 to HB 382. Representatives McKay, Prax, Allard, and Ruffridge voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 1 to HB 382 failed by a vote of 3-4.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HB 382, labeled 33-LS1056\U.8, Bergerud, 3/22/24, which read as follows:

Page 13, lines 29 - 30:

Delete "requiring a student to use only facilities designated for members of the student's biological sex"

Insert "providing access to unisex, single-occupant bathrooms and locker room facilities; the state shall reimburse a school district for costs incurred to comply with this paragraph"

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that she strongly agreed with the bill sponsor on the importance of privacy for students but had concerns about the section in the bill. She restated the verbiage in Amendment 2 and summarized that the amendment would support the schools, the students, and the right to privacy that children should have.

[9:23:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER said he was opposed to Amendment 2 due to the cost it may be to "retrofit" all the schools in the

state. It seemed cost-prohibitive, he said, and he added that he was sensitive to teachers and administrators "policing" students' bodies.

[9:24:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY shared an opinion she received from Legislative Legal Services that it would be a violation of students' privacy rights. She stated she supported Amendment 2 but stressed the importance of hearing from some of the school districts. She offered her belief that there may not be as large a fiscal note as was thought.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER questioned which students and privacy rights were being addressed. He said if privacy is the issue, then there needs to be a different solution because all students should have the same privacy rights.

[9:27:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK expressed curiosity as to how it would apply to schools that have to take bathroom buses via four-wheeler due to not having bathrooms in the school.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that depending on how remote facilities are set up, they may already be providing privacy for everyone; therefore, everyone would be safe.

[9:29:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD related an incident of a student using restroom facilities for the opposite sex which traumatized another student; therefore, she stated she did not support Amendment 2.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE highlighted the term "governing body" [in subsection (a) of Section 6 of HB 382, on page 12, line 28] and asked whether it referred to each school district.

[9:30:52 AM](#)

KENDRA BROUSSARD, Staff, Representative Ben Carpenter, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Carpenter, prime sponsor, pointed out to Co-Chair Ruffridge that he was reading from current law that each governing body, which is the school district, shall adopt a written school disciplinary and safety program. She further explained that it is a written requirement which is different from a construction requirement.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE referred to charter schools and questioned whether a parent may be a governing body, or the school district where the language would reside.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER offered his belief that would be specified in the charter agreement and may not be the same for each charter school.

[9:32:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY commented that she agreed with Representative Carpenter in that it would be an overall school district policy, and that all student rights should be protected. She offered her strong support for the Amendment 2.

[9:33:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK articulated his support of Amendment 2, and he related that there were statistics supporting that when individuals are forced to use restrooms that do not coincide with their gender as opposed to their biological sex, there is an increase likelihood they would be subjected to violence within those situations. He opined that the amendment is a compromise on the bill as it was already written leading to safer situations for students.

[9:35:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX spoke against Amendment 2 and opined that it would not solve the underlying problem and would cost too much money.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2 to insert the word "by" and delete "by requiring" and insert a period after "sex".

CO-CHAIR ALLARD objected.

[9:37:42 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:37 a.m. to 9:41 a.m.

[9:41:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX moved to withdraw Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 2. [There being no objection, it was so ordered.]

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that Amendment 2, even though it is a written policy, puts the state behind resolving the issue of every student having the privacy they deserve and to do this, the state must support districts in their written policy and make lockers and restrooms unisex.

[9:42:27 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives McCormick, Himschoot, and Story voted in favor of Amendment 2 to HB 382. Representatives McKay, Prax, Allard, and Ruffridge voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 2 failed by a vote of 3-4.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to adopt Amendment 3 to HB 382, labeled 33-LS1056\U.9, Bergerud, 3/27/24, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 11:

Delete "and make copies of, at no cost,"

CO-CHAIR ALLARD objected.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT explained the verbiage that would be removed and added that the issue with the section of the bill is that curriculum and teaching materials can get very expensive. The words "at no cost" are misleading because someone has to pay, she stated. She reiterated the amendment related to the copying only.

[9:44:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER noted that Amendment 3 is similar to Amendment 19, and he would support the amendment if the "at no cost" piece were dropped.

[9:45:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD said her issue was taxpayers whose money goes to education, and she did not believe parents should be "picking up the bill" for copies. She said she does not support the amendment.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE disagreed and stated that not all parents are taxpayers.

[9:46:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that she supported Amendment 3. She noted that budgets are very tight currently and she shared a story of going to a basketball game and that programs are normally printed out but there were none due to the school budget being tight; therefore, no copies or printouts were being produced.

[9:48:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX offered his belief that the labor making the copies could be a considerable cost and not just the cost of the paper. He noted that in his borough one must pay for copies, and that could end up costing a significant amount. He concluded that the body must think carefully about this.

[9:49:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated he did not support Amendment 3 in hopes to support Amendment 19 when it is time.

[9:49:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER commented that the paper is expensive but the toner is more so.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT pointed out that school curriculum, when bought from a publisher, has very strict guidelines around how it can be used. The cost remained a major concern for her, she said, and copyright issues were an additional concern.

[9:51:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE suggested that the word "make" should say "provide a copy of" surrounding copyright issues.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded regarding curriculum and the various textbooks included in it, and an extra set of the teacher's guide could be made available to families by request. Each additional set is an extra expense but "that could be a compromised solution here," she said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE said that as a parent he did not want to see the teacher's guide, but would, for example, inspect a math book. He added that there is a vested interest in looking at what the plan for the semester year is as well.

[9:54:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER offered his belief that there is nothing the school does with the intention of keeping secrets from parents, but through policies, that is the effect that ends up happening.

[9:55:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said that if parents felt they were obstructed from seeing curriculum and "turned away," then the principal should be addressed.

[9:56:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT pointed out curriculum not being defined in statute and provided a definition she read from the Oxford English Dictionary. She acknowledged it was a very broad description; therefore, her amendment did not specifically address the definition of curriculum but further added that making copies is problematic for copyright reasons.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE maintained his objection to Amendment 3.

[9:57:06 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives McCormick, Himschoot, and Story voted in favor of Amendment 3 to HB 382. Representatives Prax, McKay, Allard, and Ruffridge voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 3 failed by a vote of 3-4.

[9:57:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT moved to adopt Amendment 4 to HB 382, labeled 33-LS1056\U.10, Bergerud, 3/27/24, which read as follows:

Page 2, lines 1 - 2:
Delete all material.

Renumber the following paragraphs accordingly.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE objected.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT explained that the deletion addressed parents meeting with teachers in person or by video conference. She said it is common practice and twice a year is far too little, and the parent has a right to meet with the teacher any

time they want. She offered her belief it was unnecessary to put into law that it would happen only twice a year.

[9:59:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER addressed the addition in the underlying bill on page 2, lines 1 through 2, and pointed out that the amendment addressed is not currently in state law.

[10:00:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD referred to her experience with Eagle River High School and shared that that school does not have parent teacher conferences anymore. She expressed her shock that schools want parents to be more involved yet do not "open the door for that." She added that she would not support Amendment 4.

[10:01:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked Representative Carpenter whether there would be consequences for parents if they do not meet with the school district at least twice a year.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER offered his belief that using "allow" - not "require" - would not be interpreted by a judge or any other law to say that the parents must meet. Parents could exercise their right to participate in conferences at least twice a year with the teacher, he said.

[10:03:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY shared her belief that parent teacher conferences are required in Alaska, and she questioned which districts are not participating.

REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER responded that he could request the information from DEED.

[10:04:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT reiterated her concern regarding "in person or video conference" but not involving telephonic.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE maintained his objection.

[10:05:16 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives McCormick, Himschoot, and Story voted in favor of Amendment 4 to HB 382. Representatives Prax, McKay, Allard, and Ruffridge voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 4 failed by a vote of 3-4.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE reopened an amendment deadline and announced that HB 382 was held over.

[10:06:41 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:07 a.m.