

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 22, 2023  
5:03 p.m.

5:03:11 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Johnson called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Co-Chair  
Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative DeLena Johnson, Co-Chair  
Representative Julie Coulombe  
Representative Mike Cronk  
Representative Alyse Galvin  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Representative Andy Josephson  
Representative Dan Ortiz  
Representative Will Stapp  
Representative Frank Tomaszewski

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Vicki Hewitt, President, Mat-Su Education Association.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Kati Capozzi, President, Alaska Chamber, Anchorage; Alicia Amberg, Executive Director, Associated General Contractors of Alaska, Anchorage; Deantha Skibinski, Executive Director, Alaska Miners Association, Anchorage; Michele Girault, Hope Community Resources Key Coalition, Anchorage; Katherine Cronlund, Self, Anchorage; Dirk Shumaker, Executive Director, Alaska Head Start Association, Anchorage; Tiffany Hall, Executive Director, Recover Alaska, Anchorage; Steve Fleifchman, Self, Anchorage; Steve Rollins, Dean, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Anchorage; Trevor Storrs, President and CEO,

Alaska Children's Trust, Anchorage; Cathy Hernandez, Board Member, Alzheimer's Association Alaska Chapter, Anchorage; Mark Lackey, Executive Director, CCS Early Learning, Wasilla; Susan DeLoach, Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center, Palmer; Patricia Fisher, Self, Meadow Lakes; Suzi Pearson, Abused Women's Aid in Crisis, Anchorage; Tommy Hiratsuka, Chief Financial Officer, Hope Community Resources, Anchorage; Ron Meehan, Policy and Advocacy Manager, Food Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Wendy Lesenan, Self, Arizona; Bert Houghtaling, Self, Big Lake; Marge Stoneking, Advocacy Director, American Association of Retired Persons Alaska, Anchorage; Marie Wilson, Self, Houston, Alaska; Gerald Dewhurst, Self, Big Lake; Roslyn Goodman, Self, Pedro Bay; Susie Silook, Self, Anchorage; Melanie Hooper, Camp Fire Alaska, Anchorage; Stephanie Berglund, CEO, Thread, Anchorage; Paul Swaling, Associated General Contractors of Alaska, Anchorage.

#### SUMMARY

HB 39            APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUND; SUPP

HB 39 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 41            APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 41 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Johnson reviewed the meeting agenda. The committee would hear public testimony on the operating and mental health budgets. She reviewed public testimony protocol and call-in information.

#hb39

#hb41

HOUSE BILL NO. 39

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making reappropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

HOUSE BILL NO. 41

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

5:04:50 PM

AT-EASE

5:06:24 PM

RECONVENED

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: ANCHORAGE, MAT-SU, AND OFFNETS

5:07:36 PM

KATI CAPOZZI, PRESIDENT, ALASKA CHAMBER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the 404 State Primacy Program (SPP) provision of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The Alaska Chamber was founded in 1953 and its mission was to promote a healthy business environment in Alaska. The chamber represented over 58,000 Alaska workers and \$4.6 billion in wages. The chamber had long supported increasing responsible resource development by improving the efficiency of the permitting process and gaining access to the state's resources. State primacy of the 404 program would result in a timelier and better coordinated permitting process without compromising current regulatory standards and requirements. It would also allow for a greater ability to tailor policies and procedures to the state's unique conditions. The chamber was pleased that the legislature had approved the statutory authority to implement the 404 program and it encouraged legislators to take subsequent steps to provide additional funding needed to apply and implement the program. There had previously been significant administrative and legislative action that had negatively impacted businesses in Alaska, but the legislature could provide some much needed stability to Alaskans by funding the program.

Representative Coulombe thanked Ms. Capozzi for her testimony.

Co-Chair Johnson noted that Representative Cronk had joined the meeting.

5:10:15 PM

ALICIA AMBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) pursuit of permit primacy over section 404 of CWA. She believed that the economy would benefit from Alaskans being entrusted with the responsibility of permitting projects in the state as it would ensure that the state's unique landscape and limited construction season would be considered by regulators without compromising environmental standards. The largest users of the 404 program in the state were the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) and the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Alaska. A state-wide primacy program would ensure a stable and timely permitting process for construction projects. It would also encourage regular conversation and accountability between the permittees and regulators. Similarly, the program would be held accountable by Alaskans and the legislature. The funds coming to the state through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) would create opportunities for the state, but also had the potential to create a significant backlog in permits. Virtually all construction projects funded by IIJA funds would require a 404 permit, such as building roads, bridges, airports, and schools.

Representative Galvin commented that she was grateful for Ms. Amberg's work. She thought the projects helmed by AGC were critical.

5:13:18 PM

DEANTHA SKIBINSKI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA MINERS ASSOCIATION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the 404 SPP. She explained that the members of the Alaska Miners Association (AMA) ranged from small and family-run projects to large-scale mines. She thought the implementation of the 404 SPP would show the state's willingness to participate in the adoption of a fee structure to recover state costs. The state would be required to comply with CWA and the standards would be as stringent as the federal regulations, if not more stringent. The predictability that the program would bring about would also be a significant improvement in the permitting process. Alaskan regulators better understood

the nuances of the state than regulators that were not familiar with the intricacies of the environment. The state had an excellent track record in managing similar programs, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The state was well equipped to manage CWA as well. Alaska's miners had a long history of paying their way and contributing to the state economy. Miners were open to an appropriate increase in fees to cover the costs required to administer the program and were in support of DEC's efforts to pursue and secure federal funding for the program.

[5:15:51 PM](#)

MICHELE GIRAULT, HOPE COMMUNITY RESOURCES KEY COALITION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding the 404 SPP. She had worked in the state's community service delivery system for people with disabilities for nearly 40 years and was intimately familiar with systemic challenges in the workforce. Some challenges included limited and unpaid workers populations, insufficient reimbursement rates, families in distress, and Alaskans waiting for services. She had also witnessed wonderful progress as communities grew and Alaskans with disabilities were valued and able to contribute their unique gifts and talents. The current rates of reimbursement were insufficient for continued operations across the state. The Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) was increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and the governor's budget maintained the increase, for which she was grateful; however, it would not be enough to keep the system intact without an additional increment. She urged an additional investment of \$15 million to ensure that Alaskans with disabilities could be supported in community rather than experiencing a higher cost of care. She thanked the committee on behalf of those who were unable to voice their concerns.

[5:18:28 PM](#)

KATHERINE CRONLUND, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of HB 41. She was the parent of two children with special needs. Over the last five years, she had gone through seven support providers and three agencies as they were not able to accommodate her children's schedules. She was allowed to become the primary caregiver to provider the services her children needed and was able to alter her work schedule and become more available to her

children. Her home was set up to ensure that the best possible support was in place to allow her children to learn fundamental skills to survive independently in the community. Home and community-based waiver services provided the skills for children to maintain autonomy. The program would not only benefit children with special needs, but it would benefit the state in the long-term. If family members were not able to continue to provide services, she was unsure if her children would receive the services they needed.

Representative Galvin commented that it was helpful when parents called in and offered firsthand experience on the ways in which the services made a difference.

[5:21:04 PM](#)

DIRK SHUMAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA HEAD START ASSOCIATION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified on behalf of the Alaska Head Start Association (AHSA) which provided services to about 3,000 children annually. Some of AHSA's services included pre-school, developmental health and dental screenings, and behavioral health support for parents and the entire family. The quality of the program was ensured by intensive federal monitoring reviews that did not incur any costs to the state. He expressed that AHSA grantees were facing a workforce crisis and programs were understaffed. In addition, high inflation had impacted the program's ability to pay for basic operational costs such as utilities. He was requesting a \$5 million increase in order to ensure the continuation of the program. State funding for AHSA had been flat since 2010 but inflation had continued increasing. Additional funding would ensure the continuation of the program and would afford the program the ability to provide essential services in addition to keeping the lights on.

Representative Coulombe thanked Mr. Shumaker for his work.

Co-Chair Johnson noted that Co-Chair Edgmon had joined the meeting.

[5:24:00 PM](#)

VICKI HEWITT, PRESIDENT, MAT-SU EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, shared that the flat funding in schools for the past seven years had a tremendous impact on education. For example,

class sizes had grown substantially and teachers were unable to sustain the number of students in the classroom. She was aware of one middle school teacher trying to teach upper-level math to 40 students. There were also elementary school classes with a student count of almost 30. The high student counts meant that students were left behind because teachers could not fine-tune learning experiences for each student. Flat funding had also impacted the ability to recruit and retain quality educators. She heard regularly from educators that they were ready to leave Alaska due to the lack of competitive pay and benefits. Without investing in schools, students would continue to suffer and educational outcomes would not improve. The students of today were the population of the future. She urged that the legislature support the increase of the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

[5:26:24 PM](#)

TIFFANY HALL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RECOVER ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), explained that Recover Alaska aimed to help Alaskans live free from the harms of alcohol misuse. She was specifically calling in support of maintained and increased funding for recovery services, including increasing the Crisis Now Continuum of Care Grant. In addition, she supported maintaining treatment and recovery grants and an increase for peer support funding. She noted that peer support was a critical piece of recovery framework. Before the pandemic, roughly 44,000 Alaskans experienced an alcohol use disorder and only 15 percent of individuals who qualified for treatment actually received treatment. During the pandemic, many Alaskans increased their use of alcohol to cope with stress and the rate for alcohol related deaths increased by 31 percent. She emphasized that the services were critical and urged support.

[5:29:36 PM](#)

STEVE FLEIFCHMAN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that his daughter had down syndrome and heavily relied on mental health services. He explained that his daughter's life had improved tremendously due to the availability of services. The most important issue to him was to ensure that his daughter had a happy life regardless of the health of himself or his wife. Without the availability of services, his daughter would have been home

alone while he and his wife were at work. He and his family were grateful for the services and hoped that the funding for the services would continue.

[5:31:24 PM](#)

STEVE ROLLINS, DEAN, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE CONSORTIUM LIBRARY, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) and state libraries. In the prior year, \$635,900 was added to the University of Alaska's (UA) budget and passed the House and Senate, but the funding was vetoed by the governor. Due to budget cuts, the university libraries were in jeopardy. The libraries served about 92 percent of the populated areas of Alaska. The Alaska library catalogue had more than 259,000 registered borrowers and had an annual circulation of 2.3 million books in the prior year, which represented a value of more than \$49 million in library materials. He added that SLED also provided access to the online library catalogue and supported the governor's reading and literacy initiatives. Due to the budget cuts, funding was needed to keep SLED and the library catalogue sustainable. He was concerned about the recent budget cuts and thought it would have a negative impact on the state's libraries. He urged the support of increased funding for the libraries.

[5:34:42 PM](#)

AT-EASE

[5:35:19 PM](#)

RECONVENED

TREVOR STORRS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that there were more than 3,000 cases of child maltreatment in the state in 2021 alone. It was a complex issue and the organization believed that parents loved their children and did not intend to hurt them; however, issues could compound to bring about child abuse and neglect. Evidence showed that when children and families had the knowledge, skills, support and research in order to thrive, child abuse and neglect greatly reduced. There were many items that the organization supported in the budget, such as: pre-kindergarten grants, after-school programs, technology upgrades, and continued funding for the tribal child welfare compacting. There were several areas in which added

investment was still needed, such as: funds to stabilize the child-care sector, \$5 million in addition funds for the Head Start program, and added funds for the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Not only did the program support child development but it had also proven highly successful in the area of preventing child abuse and neglect. Alaska could not afford to abstain from investing in the program.

Representative Galvin thanked Mr. Storrs and the Alaska Children's Trust for its hard work.

[5:38:43 PM](#)

CATHY HERNANDEZ, BOARD MEMBER, ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION ALASKA CHAPTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of additional funding to support the 63,000 Alaskans experiencing subjective cognitive decline. She hoped to incorporate \$50,000 into the Dementia Awareness Program within the Department of Health (DOH). She was an Anchorage resident, but represented all Alaskans impacted by Alzheimer's. Alaska had the fourth highest rate of diagnosed dementia across the nation, which was incredible because there was limited access to diagnosis and high cost of travel to medical providers. Treatment could slow the progression of the disease. She urged the appropriation of \$50,000 for the program.

[5:40:40 PM](#)

MARK LACKEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CCS EARLY LEARNING, WASILLA (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its work. He shared that he had worked for CCS for 24 years and the program served over 100 communities across the state. He had never encountered the kind of challenges that the state was currently experiencing. The organization was only serving 60 percent of the children that it should because it could not recruit and retain the staff necessary to operate at full capacity. The organization was reliant on federal and state grants which were not keeping up with inflationary costs as the funding had been flat since 2010. The federal Head Start grant required a 20 percent non-federal match and the state had been committed to providing the match; however due to flat funding, it was only contributing at 12 percent. The low enrollment in the program due to insufficient staffing meant that the organization was not able to serve approximately 150 families. Of the children who were currently enrolled,

about 50 percent were homeless or in foster care. At no fault of the children, the work in the classrooms was incredibly challenging. The state needed to match the grants at 20 percent in order to maintain the program.

[5:43:58 PM](#)

SUSAN DELOACH, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS EARLY LEARNING CENTER, PALMER (via teleconference), shared that she had never seen such difficult operating conditions in her time working in early learning. Since the pandemic, operating costs were higher and enrollment had dropped to below 50 percent. It was more difficult to hire qualified staff which limited the number of children who could be enrolled in the program. The Alaska Chamber of Commerce recently found that insufficient child-care had a significant impact on the health of the economy. Quality child-care was paramount to the economic recovery of the state. The pandemic support funds were vital in the continuation of the program; however, the funding would soon cease. Additional funding was needed in order to continue the operation of the program. The cost of providing child-care was greater than most families could afford to pay. She expressed that a broken child-care system set everyone up for failure. She requested that the legislature support child-care programs by adding \$15 million to the budget to increase worker wages.

[5:46:36 PM](#)

PATRICIA FISHER, SELF, MEADOW LAKES (via teleconference), testified in support of the proposal for the participant directed care. She was the caregiver of a young person with a disability waiver and had a direct connection to the issue. Her family had not received a workable referable from an agency in over six months and the situation needed to improve. With participant directed care, her family would be enabled to seek out the necessary health care without having to navigate a slow and complicated process. If home care was not available, her grandchild could be put in an in-patient facility with higher costs. She understood that participant directed care was projected to be less expensive than the current system. She encouraged the committee's support for the proposal.

[5:48:20 PM](#)

SUZI PEARSON, ABUSED WOMEN'S AID IN CRISIS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), explained that the Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC) was the only domestic violence crisis center for women in Anchorage. The largest funder of the program was the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). In the prior year, AWAIC served 519 adults and children in total. In the current year, AWAIC had already served 580 adults and children. The demand for the organization's services was increasing while recruitment and retention levels were low. One of the main issues was that worker wages were not competitive with other organizations that could take an equal or higher number of clients without the added stress of working in a shelter. The program had been flat funded for the past five years and there had been no increases to address the rising costs of operating costs such as utilities. The center needed an additional \$150,000 to attract qualified candidates. Without the increment increase, services for victims would fall short. The center was requesting that one-time general funds be put in the base in order to create a sustainable income source and additional funding to address the flat funding issues. She was grateful for the committee's time.

Representative Galvin was grateful for Ms. Pearson's testimony and the information she provided.

Co-Chair Foster offered a reminder that testifiers were also able to submit testimony via email.

[5:51:44 PM](#)

TOMMY HIRATSUKA, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, HOPE COMMUNITY RESOURCES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), explained that Hope Community Resources (HCR) was an organization that provided services and support to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Alaska. He was advocating for an additional \$16 million added to the Medicaid budget for the individuals supported by HCR. Without the funding, HCR and similar organizations would be out of business in the near future. The closures would cause added financial burden to the state as individuals who were receiving help from in-state organizations would have to be sent out of state to continue to receive care. Out of state care was much more expensive than what could be provided in Alaska. He was requesting the funding in order to keep people employed in Alaska. He thought it was

not only the right thing to do morally, but it also made sense financially.

[5:53:33 PM](#)

RON MEEHAN, POLICY AND ADVOCACY MANAGER, FOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the governor's FY 24 amended budget proposal. He particularly supported of technology upgrades at DOH. The upgrades were important because it would help alleviate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) backlog which had a devastating impact on those who relied upon it. When Alaskans were unable to get SNAP benefits, they turned to food banks and food pantries for assistance, which were already strained. One of the greatest problems in getting applications processed was that the technology system had not been updated in decades. It was a manual system and it had posed significant challenges over the years in getting applications processed in a timely and efficient manner. Hiring more workers for the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) would reduce strain on the system and allow the applications to be processed faster. He hoped there would be additional upgrades to SNAP alongside the hiring of additional workers and he was grateful to the House for the time it had spent working on the supplemental budget.

Representative Coulombe asked how the backlog had impacted the services provided by food banks and whether the banks were able to provide the amount of food needed.

Mr. Meehan responded that it had been a tremendous task. There had been historically low levels of food donated to the banks in addition to the federal commodity programs. There was just under \$1.7 million that was appropriated for immediate relief was being used for pass-through funding and bulk food purchased that had helped to alleviate some of the need. The banks had received orders from 47 different partner agencies around the state and the orders were continuing to stream in.

[5:56:58 PM](#)

WENDY LESEMAN, SELF, ARIZONA (via teleconference), testified in support of HB 41. She was an Anchorage resident but was calling from Arizona. Her daughter had down syndrome and was also a direct service provider for one of the agencies that provided services to her daughter.

She worked for the agency partly because it was short staffed, but also because she enjoyed working with the population. There were many individuals who contributed to her daughter's wellbeing and helped her navigate all of the various services that were available. She expressed her joy in seeing her daughter thriving and having access to many valuable services and helpful people. She urged the continuation of the services for her daughter and her peers at a reasonable rate. One of the biggest challenges was staffing as many of the current employees were nearing retirement age and the agencies needed to attract younger and newer staff.

Representative Galvin thanked Ms. Lesenan for her testimony. She appreciated hearing the perspective of a care provider who experienced joy in her job.

[5:59:56 PM](#)

BERT HOUGHTALING, SELF, BIG LAKE (via teleconference), wondered why the mental health budget had received a "rubber stamp" once it was put up for a vote. He thought that although the testimony had been heartbreaking, there was no one available to work the critical jobs. He asked where the money allocated to the agencies went if it was not being spent on hiring new employees. He did not think there was accountability in how the money was being distributed. He hoped that money could be spent more wisely in the future.

[6:02:11 PM](#)

MARGE STONEKING, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS (AARP) ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of mental health funding. She emphasized the importance of infrastructure in the DPA in order to assist the employees in handling the volume of Medicaid redeterminations. She was calling to ask for an increment in home and community based services to be able to stand up a participant-directed care option for waiver participants. She noted that she had also submitted written testimony.

[6:04:17 PM](#)

MARIE WILSON, SELF, HOUSTON, ALASKA (via teleconference), noted that Access Alaska had been helping her since 2014

after she experienced a traumatic brain injury. She would not have the same quality of life without the help she had received from Access Alaska. For example, the organization recently helped coordinate a heating oil delivery to her residence after she had been without heat for three days. She appreciated the program and thanked the committee for its hard work.

[6:06:12 PM](#)

GERALD DEWHURST, SELF, BIG LAKE (via teleconference), noted that he had close relationships with many disabled individuals. He had a niece who resided in a care home and she thrived in the environment; however, one of the largest challenges was staffing because the wages were low and the workload was heavy and the employees were not able to stay as long as needed. He spoke about the importance of the funding in order to allow individuals with disabilities to stay within the community. He asked the committee to pass the budget.

Co-Chair Foster offered a reminder that interested testifiers could submit public testimony via email. He announced that there would be an at-ease until 7:00 p.m.

[6:10:06 PM](#)

AT EASE

[7:01:47 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson announced that there were two more testifiers.

[7:02:18 PM](#)

ROSLYN GOODMAN, SELF, PEDRO BAY, ALASKA (via teleconference), testified in support of reinstating the \$402,700 in public library funding that was reduced from the governor's budget. The public libraries presently used the funds to provide public library assistance grants to 86 villages and communities and if the funds were not reinstated, the \$7,000 annual grant would be reduced to \$2,300. There was no longer a school in Pedro Bay which meant that the library had become the main resource for community members to access books, DVDs, and other materials. Many community members could not afford internet

access and were reliant upon the library to access the internet. The library also provided other resources such as summer reading programs and culture programs. She hoped that the committee would consider reinstating the funds.

Representative Josephson asked for the name of the testifier.

Co-Chair Johnson responded with the testifier's name.

[7:04:48 PM](#)

SUSIE SILOOK, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), experienced a violent arrest and assault in Anchorage. She was taken to prison with no cause and spoke to many other individuals who had suffered a similar experience. She was able to be released from the prison because the staff agreed with the assessment that there was no cause for her imprisonment. She expressed her dissatisfaction with the work of the legislature.

[7:07:06 PM](#)

MELANIE HOOPER, CAMP FIRE ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its support of the inclusion of early childhood resources and services in the proposed budget. The federal relief funding that allowed for the child-care centers to remain open would be ending soon. She urged the state to invest in child-care to soften the impact of the termination of the funds. Prior to the pandemic, Camp Fire Alaska operated over 30 child-care programs. Presently, Camp Fire had only 17 locations and served only 50 percent of the youth it served prior to the pandemic. Without the funding, the child-care programs would not have been able to operate or remain open. The funds were used responsibly and strategically but the programs were still far from being fully recovered. She urged the committee to consider the impact of the funds on working families.

[7:09:33 PM](#)

STEPHANIE BERGLUND, CEO, THREAD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for supporting the budget inclusive of funds for child-care and early childhood learning. She was pleased to see that the funds would include increased investments in the Best Beginnings

program. She relayed that Thread encouraged other increased investments in programs related to child-care, Head Start, and Alaska Inclusive Child-care Program (Alaska IN!). There was a statewide workforce shortage which had impacted child-care as well as working families and businesses. In order for the economy to grow, there needed to be increased access to early learning for children.

Co-Chair Johnson announced that there was one more testifier and then the committee would recess until 7:30 p.m.

7:12:38 PM

PAUL SWALING, ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the primacy of 404 of CWA. He supported the state taking responsibility for the program. The state had a long history of successfully taking over the responsibility of programs that had previously been headed by the federal government. There would be significant improvements in accessibility, the permitting process, and specifically in the speed at which permits were approved. He reiterated that the change would streamline the process significantly. He thanked the committee.

7:14:36 PM

Co-Chair Johnson thanked the testifiers.

Co-Chair Johnson announced the committee would recess until 7:30 p.m.

7:15:04 PM

AT EASE

7:31:07 PM

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson noted there were no additional testifiers.

Co-Chair Johnson reviewed the agenda for the following day's meeting.

HB 39 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 41 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#  
ADJOURNMENT

7:32:22 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.