

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 28, 2023

3:04 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Prax, Chair  
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Jesse Sumner  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Genevieve Mina

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative CJ McCormick

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW(S): GROWING THE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE PIPELINE FROM SCHOOL TO CAREER

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 57

"An Act relating to review organizations and permitting an emergency medical services provider to establish a review organization; and relating to patient records."

- MOVED HB 57 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 112

"An Act relating to the Board of Pharmacy; relating to the practice of pharmacy; relating to pharmacies; relating to prescription drug manufacturers; relating to prescriptions for epinephrine; relating to the administration of epinephrine; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 112 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 57

SHORT TITLE: EMERGENCY MED. SVCS: REVIEW ORGANIZATIONS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WRIGHT

02/03/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
02/03/23 (H) L&C, HSS  
02/17/23 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124  
02/17/23 (H) Heard & Held  
02/17/23 (H) MINUTE(L&C)  
03/03/23 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124  
03/03/23 (H) Moved HB 57 Out of Committee  
03/03/23 (H) MINUTE(L&C)  
03/06/23 (H) L&C RPT 4DP 1NR  
03/06/23 (H) DP: SADDLER, PRAX, RUFFRIDGE, SUMNER  
03/06/23 (H) NR: CARRICK  
03/21/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
03/21/23 (H) Heard & Held  
03/21/23 (H) MINUTE(HSS)  
03/28/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 112

SHORT TITLE: PROFESSION OF PHARMACY  
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) RUFFRIDGE

03/13/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/13/23 (H) HSS, L&C  
03/23/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106  
03/23/23 (H) Heard & Held  
03/23/23 (H) MINUTE(HSS)  
03/28/23 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MISSY FRAZE, Director  
Career and Technical Education  
King Tech Highschool  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning" during the overview on growing the health care workforce.

ANDREA ANDRASCHKO, Assistant Professor  
Business Administration, Health Occupations, and Health Sciences  
Alaska Pacific University  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented during the overview on growing the health care workforce.

TRISH ZUGG, Administrator  
Career and Technical Education Program

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented during the overview on growing the health care workforce.

GLORIA BURNETT, Director  
Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce  
Nome, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented during the overview on growing the health care workforce.

REPRESENTATIVE STANLEY WRIGHT  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As the prime sponsor, presented HB 57.

PI GIORDAN-RANDAL, Staff  
Representative Stanley Wright  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** On behalf of Representative Wright, prime sponsor, presented the sectional analysis for HB 57.

MARK JOHNSON, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 57.

ASHLEY SCHABER, Pharm D, MBA, BCPS, NCPS  
Board of Pharmacy  
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing  
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 112.

DUANE WOOD, representing self  
Prince of Wales Island, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 112.

AMITY WINBORG, representing self  
Chugiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 112.

BARRY CHRISTENSEN, RPh, Co-Chair  
Legislative Committee  
Alaska Pharmacist Association  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 112.

SCOTT WATTS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 112.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:04:59 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIKE PRAX** called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. Representatives Ruffridge, Sumner, Fields, Mina, and Prax were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**OVERVIEW(S): Growing the Healthcare Workforce Pipeline from School to Career**

[3:06:01 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the first order of business would be the overview on growing the healthcare workforce pipeline from school to career.

[3:07:06 PM](#)

MISSY FRAZE, Career and Technical Education Director, King Tech Highschool, Anchorage School District (ASD), gave a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning" [hardcopy included in the committee packet]. She reviewed the career pathways offered by ASD, as seen on slide 2. This includes health care career options provided in five high schools and the options for industry certification and dual enrollment. On slide 3, she pointed to a future program for pharmacy technicians; however, she added that for this there would need to be regulation changes. She discussed the age requirement that companies have for some jobs in the health care sector, and in order to expand the health care workforce, she suggested the possibility of companies changing this internal policy. She pointed out that youth who begin a career earlier in life in Alaska are more likely to stay in Alaska.

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MS. FRAZE discussed the need for a "state vision" concerning work-based learning and workforce development. She discussed the challenges to this, as seen on slide 4. This includes the

lack of a coordinated cross-agency vision, the lack of data to measure effective work-based learning, and the need for policy changes.

MS. FRAZE moved to slide 5, which addressed how the legislature could help. The slide listed: work with governor to create a statewide coalition; use examples from proven agencies like the National Governors Association or Jobs for the Future to create a system; increase cross-agency participation to support business and education; and fund education and workforce development.

[3:18:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA questioned the top three careers that students are interested in pursuing through apprenticeships.

MS. FRAZE answered that there are 22 students in King Tech's pharmacy technician program, and according to the teacher, 30 percent of the students are interested in having a career as a pharmacy technician. She pointed out that, while the field may not be a long-term career choice, it is an entry into a career pathway. She said students have been asked about internships, but students are not interested because there would be no pay.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA offered her understanding that apprenticeships in the health care industry would focus on entry level positions. She pointed out the nurse shortages and asked how the school-based apprenticeships would work with this need.

MS. FRAZE explained that attaining a certified nursing assistant (CNA) certification would be required to get a nursing degree; therefore, having students in this program would help address the problem. She said that any of the career pathways and apprenticeships could provide the certification, and this would allow the student to work while studying. In response to whether health care jobs would hire minors, she stated that this would be community dependent. She relayed that care centers in Valdez and Kodiak are looking to hire CNAs, while in Anchorage food service attendants are needed. She said that these jobs would be the starting point for employing minors. She noted that there are not many health care employers who are interested in hiring minors.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned the jobs that would require entities to change internal policies.

MS. FRAZE answered that this would include CNAs and room attendants.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER, in relation to the lack of data to measure progress, questioned the data used to set up the five vocational programs for high school students in ASD. He questioned how it was decided that pharmacy technicians, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), CNAs, and biomedical innovations would be the appropriate initial programs.

MS. FRAZE responded that general workforce data was used to determine demand. She said that pharmacy technician jobs in Anchorage are in demand. In response to a follow up question, she explained that the data was pulled from the Department of Labor, as well as data from the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation.

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CHAIR PRAX, referencing the need to change regulations, questioned whether there has been any action on this.

MS. FRAZE answered that the changes needed are specific for pharmacy technicians, as the regulation requires technicians to be 18 years old and have a high school diploma. She explained that the change would allow high school students to do apprenticeships while in school. In response to a follow-up question, she stated that the age requirement is set by the state, and almost all states do this.

CHAIR PRAX questioned the meaning of "cross-agency," as used in the presentation.

MS. FRAZE explained that "cross-agency" coordination would include the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development to collaboratively work together statewide.

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ANDREA ANDRASCHKO, Assistant Professor, Business Administration, Health Occupations, and Health Sciences, Alaska Pacific University (APU), presented during the overview on growing the

health care workforce. She explained that APU partners with the Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) to provide college credits for students doing apprenticeships. She said the program aligns with the associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees, allowing students to start careers straight out of high school. She stated that students can come back to take classes to get an associate or bachelor's degree. She stated that APU is interested in working with as many organizations as possible to encourage the program.

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REPRESENTATIVE MINA shared that in her district there are a good amount of immigrants and refugees who struggle getting registered for college, as their high school diplomas are from a different country.

MS. ANDRASCHKO responded that there are processes in place to verify international diplomas. In response to a follow-up question regarding the registration process, she explained that there is an online registration system and hands-on assistance options. She expressed uncertainty whether APU provides language assistance.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned whether the class work would be the same for a student in a two-year associate degree program as it would be for a student who moves from a two-year to a four-year degree program.

MS. ANDRASCHKO answered that it is configured so students who are in an associate degree program would also be working towards a bachelor's degree.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned the transferability of credits, as in the example of an associate level student's ability to transfer credits from APU to the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA).

MS. ANDRASCHKO expressed the understanding that credits would be compatible in both directions; however, she acknowledged that this is not a full answer. She offered to report back to the committee.

[3:40:28 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked if APU programs are open to high school-age students.

MS. ANDRASCHKO responded that APU has the Early Honors Program, which works with high school-age students, and this is similar to UAA's Middle College School. She continued that for apprenticeship programs, a high school diploma would be required, but APU does have college courses that high school students can take. In response to a follow-up question, she stated that APU only has a partnership with APCA; however, she offered that APU is open to working with any organization that aligns with the program.

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REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS offered the understanding that the Alliance for Physician Certification and Advancement and the American Heart Association are involved with the Good Jobs Challenge grant program. He suggested that this would create more apprenticeship opportunities for hospitals and long-term care facilities because hospitals could leverage this infrastructure, with APU and UAA providing the training.

[3:44:23 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:44 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. [due to technical difficulties].

[3:45:31 PM](#)

TRISH ZUGG, Administrator, Career and Technical Education Program, Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough School District, presented during the overview on growing the health care workforce. She disclosed that she serves on the governor's Alaska Workforce Investment Board, as well as on the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. She stated that at the school district she oversees the district's career and technical education (CTE) program, which has the Health Pathway program. She pointed out that within this program there has been a CNA program for 20 years, which is board certified. She added that at full capacity, the program can graduate 80 students a year. To have exposure to the health care environment, she explained that the CNA students perform clinicals at hospitals in the Anchorage and Mat-Su boroughs. She stated that this leads to students attaining internships and pre-apprenticeships at the facilities where they work. She listed some of the other

programs offered, such as for pharmacy technicians and dental assistants.

MS. ZUGG discussed the expansion of programs in the district and pointed out the opening of the Houston High School, which has a full-time healthcare instructor. She added that the district is a sub-recipient of the Good Jobs Challenge grant, which has enabled an expansion in instruction and the hiring of a work-based learning coordinator. Also, as part of the growth potential, she said there is work on developing programs for behavior health assistants, personal care assistants, physical care assistants, and surgical technicians. She pointed out that, since the program is board certified, high school students would come out of school with credentials.

MS. ZUGG gave examples of students who have succeeded in the program, as one student is now a doctor on Joint-Base Elmendorf Richardson and two students in the pharmacy technician program are becoming pharmacists. She noted that HB 31, which addresses the Alaska Performance Scholarship, would allow local students to use these funds in a more modernized fashion.

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REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether the Good Jobs Challenge funding is supporting the work-based learning coordinator for the Mat-Su school district.

MS. ZUGG explained that the districts are sub-recipients, so secondary partners would receive part of the grant. She continued that over 3 years the Mat-Su district would receive \$300,000 in funding, which is not enough for a full-time coordinator; therefore, the funding will be used towards a part-time position.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS suggested that the \$3 million in funding the legislature added for CTE could help in providing a full-time work-based coordinator.

[3:55:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA inquired as to whether there are any student vacancies in the program.

MS. ZUGG answered that there has been a marketing campaign to get federal funds through the Perkins Act for CTE. She stated that to qualify for the funding, a comprehensive local needs

assessment is required, and from this assessment it was found that stakeholders in the community need to be better informed about the CTE options available. She said there has been outreach with high schools about CTE offerings. She discussed efforts at engaging students better. She expressed the hope that one day the problem would be that too many students want to participate. She added that some of the areas of career tech are at capacity.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA commended the school district for its investment and outreach on these programs. She questioned whether students are helped with class scheduling with apprenticeships.

MS. ZUGG responded that the district has the Four C's Program: college, career, community, and credit, which is held at the end of the day, Tuesdays through Fridays. She stated that this is when all the stakeholders and teachers are engaged in transition planning with students to help them map out high school. In response to a follow-up question concerning scheduling with apprenticeship programs, she opined that scheduling is always a challenge with students. She said ASD has a goal that all students graduate college, career, and life ready. She explained that less than 50 percent of all students choose a CTE pathway.

[4:02:46 PM](#)

GLORIA BURNETT, Director, Alaska Center for Rural Health and Health Workforce, presented during the overview on growing the health care workforce. She shared that she operates the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) program, which is federally funded through the Health Resources and Services Administration. She stated that these funds are dedicated to statewide workforce development, with a focus on rural and underserved communities. She explained that most healthcare providers are trained in urban settings; therefore, more likely to work in an urban setting. She suggested that this leaves a workforce distribution problem. She pointed out that local individuals who train locally are more likely to stay in the community. She noted that it is hard to run distance programs because of [poor internet connectivity] in rural communities, so there is a lack of health science education there; however, AHEC provides support to fill in the gaps. She said that the Good Jobs Challenge provides an opportunity to expand pre-apprenticeship academy work. She suggested that the health care community has come a long way in accepting apprenticeships, and the Good Jobs

Challenge will further help in making the health care program an embedded pathway. She maintained that if there were triple the graduates in the state, there still would be an insufficient amount of health care providers. She stated that the center is capitalizing on what is being built in the urban centers and bringing this to rural sites. She added that the COVID-19 funding that came to AHEC was used for middle school programing, which helped expose these children to careers early.

[4:09:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked how many students are not reached by AHEC.

MS. BURNETT explained that there are six regional centers across the state, with only two centers having more than one staff. She surmised that if centers had more staffing, the number of students who could be reached would increase. She offered to follow up and provide members with her annual report and information regarding capacity. She stated that if there were more staffing in the regional centers, students who could be reached would go from 1,500 a year to 3,000 a year. She said that the current demand cannot be met, and the program has had to turn away from sending instructors to some communities.

[4:12:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked what percentage of applicants get approved in an apprenticeship program.

MS. BURNETT responded that every apprenticeship has its own individual host organization. She said that there are about 250 successful path-academy participants per quarter, with more pre-apprentices than apprenticeships set up; however, while some students may not be going into apprenticeships, they are getting hired. She shared that the program holds mock interviews with local providers and students, with students often getting multiple job offers at the end.

[4:15:35 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:15 p.m. to 4:17 p.m.

**HB 57-EMERGENCY MED. SVCS: REVIEW ORGANIZATIONS**

[4:17:27 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 57, "An Act relating to review organizations and permitting an emergency medical services provider to establish a review organization; and relating to patient records."

[4:18:31 PM](#)

PI GIORDAN-RANDAL, Staff, Representative Stanley Wright, on behalf of Representative Wright, prime sponsor, presented the sectional analysis for HB 57 [copy included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

**Section I:**

Amends AS 18.23.070(1) to Include EMT's, dispatchers, and paramedics in the definition of "health care provider" for the purpose of peer review protection.

**Section II:**

Amends the definition of "healthcare provider" in AS 18.23.070(3) to include EMS agencies and employees who are conducting peer review activities.

**Section III:**

AS 18.23.070(5) is amended to include emergency medical services agencies and employees under the definition of a "review organization"

[4:19:47 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on HB 57.

[4:20:12 PM](#)

MARK JOHNSON, representing self, shared that he is retired, and he had been the chief of emergency medical services (EMSs) in the state from 1979 to 2004. He advised that at that time, quality was promoted by testing, continuing education, and oversight by physicians. He expressed the opinion that HB 57 would take quality to the next level. He said that EMS response times are critical, with decisions being made quickly. He advised that it is valuable to review responses afterwards, which HB 57 would provide. He observed that it is fitting the hearing is in the Bettye Davis room because she had co-sponsored trauma system legislation, and this had improved trauma care in the state.

[4:23:32 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[4:23:48 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:23 p.m. to 4:24 p.m.

[4:24:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE moved to report HB 57 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 57 was reported out of the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

[4:25:39 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:25 p.m. to 4:27 p.m.

#### **HB 112-PROFESSION OF PHARMACY**

[4:27:51 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 112, "An Act relating to the Board of Pharmacy; relating to the practice of pharmacy; relating to pharmacies; relating to prescription drug manufacturers; relating to prescriptions for epinephrine; relating to the administration of epinephrine; and providing for an effective date."

[4:28:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE, as prime sponsor, explained that after a multiple-year process of examining regulatory updates, HB 112 would change the statute. At the request of the governor, he said that regulations had been reviewed, and areas that needed changes were found.

[4:29:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS reiterated that it would be helpful if work-based learning programs for pharmacy technicians allowed those under 18 years of age to work. He asked whether the Board of Pharmacy would need to update these regulations.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE answered that current regulations for pharmacy technicians require the person to be 18 years of age

and have a high school diploma. He continued that statute allows the Board of Pharmacy to control licensing regulations for pharmacy technicians. He said that other than having the board adjust the regulations, there would be no other barriers.

[4:30:48 PM](#)

ASHLEY SCHABER, Pharm D, MBA, BCPS, NCPS, Board of Pharmacy, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, said that the changes requested would be regulatory; therefore, this would not require a change in statute. In response to a question from Representative Ruffridge, she answered that the board is already discussing the regulatory changes, as this would optimize the workforce by increasing pharmacy technician training.

[4:32:18 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on HB 112.

[4:32:43 PM](#)

DUANE WOOD, representing self, shared that he is a lifelong Alaskan, and a third-year pharmacy student who is working as a volunteer in rural emergency medicine on Prince of Wales Island. He said that he plans to work as a pharmacist in the state after he graduates. He explained that changes in the proposed bill would improve the ability of patients and the community to be served. He shared a personal story about a fatal allergy a friend had and how an EpiPen had saved the person's life. He pointed out that HB 112 would improve access to EpiPens by allowing pharmacists to prescribe them. He urged members to approve HB 112.

[4:35:00 PM](#)

AMITY WINBORG, representing self, shared that she is a third-year pharmacy student in the joint doctorate pharmacy program at University of Alaska and Idaho State University. She said she has lived in Alaska for 20 years and has worked in both community and hospital pharmacies. She advised that HB 112 would positively impact patients. She explained that patient safety has been at the forefront of her pharmacy training, which has led to new health initiatives, like HB 112. She stated that creating a pharmacy technician seat on the Board of Pharmacy would ensure that multiple viewpoints are being represented.

She explained that HB 112 would increase patient safety by ensuring that the board could regulate qualifications and entities. She reiterated that it would also increase patient access to EpiPens by allowing pharmacies to prescribe and dispense them.

[4:37:29 PM](#)

BARRY CHRISTENSEN, RPh, Co-Chair, Legislative Committee, Alaska Pharmacist Association, shared that he has owned and operated Island Pharmacy for 49 years. He testified in support of HB 112 on behalf of the Alaska Pharmacist Association.

[4:38:36 PM](#)

SCOTT WATTS, representing self, stated that he is a pharmacist and supports HB 112. He explained that, as a pharmacist for 33 years in Juneau, he can attest to the changes the profession has seen. He highlighted that the bill would add a pharmacy technician to the board and increase access to EpiPens. He added that the bill would also provide the power to the board to support the Drug Supply Chain and Security Act.

[4:41:03 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[4:42:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE moved to report HB 112 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 112 was reported out of the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

[4:42:38 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:42 p.m. to 4:44 p.m.

[4:44:42 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:44 p.m.