

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 28, 2024

3:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Mike Prax, Chair
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Genevieve Mina

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Jesse Sumner

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 309

"An Act relating to the practice of optometry; and relating to the delegation of routine services of optometry."

- MOVED HB 309 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 283

"An Act extending the termination date of the Alaska Commission on Aging; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 283 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 309

SHORT TITLE: DELEGATION OF ROUTINE OPTOMETRY SERVICES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) RUFFRIDGE

02/07/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/07/24	(H)	HSS, L&C
03/21/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/21/24	(H)	Heard & Held
03/21/24	(H)	MINUTE (HSS)
03/28/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 283

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

SPONSOR (s) : REPRESENTATIVE (s) DIBERT

01/22/24 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/24 (H) HSS
03/28/24 (H) HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

BUD SEXTON, Staff

Representative Justin Ruffridge
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Ruffridge,
prime sponsor, presented HB 309.

REPRESENTATIVE JUSTIN RUFFRIDGE

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, answered committee
questions on HB 309.

SYLVAN ROBB, Director

Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on HB 309.

BRADLEY CROSS, Chair

Alaska Board of Optometry
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 309.

REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE DIBERT

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 283 to the
committee.

BOB SILVERTSEN, Chair

Alaska Commission on Aging
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 283.

KRIS CURTIS, Legislative Auditor

Legislative Audit Division
Legislative Agencies and Offices
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 283.

JON HAGHAYEGHI, Executive Director
Alaska Commission on Aging
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 283.

MARGE STONEKING, Representative
AARP of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 283.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:05:39 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Representatives Ruffridge, McCormick, Fields, Mina, and Prax were present at the call to order.

HB 309-DELEGATION OF ROUTINE OPTOMETRY SERVICES

[3:07:28 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 309, "An Act relating to the practice of optometry; and relating to the delegation of routine services of optometry."

[3:08:10 PM](#)

JAMES "BUD" SEXTON, Staff, Representative Justin Ruffridge, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Ruffridge, prime sponsor, presented HB 309. He began his testimony by giving a quick overview of the proposed legislation and its policies. He explained that it would allow optometrists in Alaska to delegate routine tasks to staff in optometrists' offices and detailed how the bill would further "clean up" Alaska statute to be clearer in its intent.

[3:09:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA cited a letter of opposition and concern from the American Academy of Ophthalmologists and asked the bill sponsor if he had a response to it.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE, as prime sponsor, responded that the letter seemed to be in opposition to HB 309, though the issues it covered as inadequate are already addressed in the bill. He provided specific examples and explained that HB 309 was a framework bill that would give the Alaska Board of Optometry the framework to draft any given provisions related to the delegation of services.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA noted that Sylvan Robb had penned the aforementioned letter and said she would like to hear from Ms. Robb regarding her thoughts related to HB 309.

[3:13:09 PM](#)

MR. SEXTON suggested that a better comparison of statutory language would be Alaska's existing ophthalmology statutes, of which he cited Alaska Statute (AS) 8.64.106.

[3:14:59 PM](#)

SYLVAN ROBB, Director, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing (DCBPL), Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), explained that she would need to read the statutory language regarding dentistry referred to by Representative Mina and said that the type of delegation language proposed under HB 309 is quite common and generally preferable, because it would allow the statutory entity to set its own regulations and not have to refer to the Alaska State Legislature each time an entity would like to change a regulation.

[3:16:09 PM](#)

BRADLEY CROSS, Chair, Alaska Board of Optometry, explained that establishing the guardrails that would be set up under HB 309 via proposed regulation process is the typical way to accomplish the goals that the proposed legislation aims to achieve.

[3:17:15 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX inquired whether individuals who are delegated the authority to do routine tasks have to be licensed specifically.

MS. ROBB responded that the licensee is responsible for the practices performed by that person to whom they are delegating.

[3:19:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE moved to report HB 309 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 309 was reported out of the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

[3:20:05 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:20 p.m. to 3:22 p.m.

HB 283-EXTEND ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

[3:22:01 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 283, "An Act extending the termination date of the Alaska Commission on Aging; and providing for an effective date."

[3:22:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE DIBERT, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 283. She began by giving the committee a background on the Alaska Commission on Aging and emphasized its importance to Alaskans. She explained that the proposed legislation would extend the Alaska Commission on Aging until June 30, 2032, based on the recommendations of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee. She said that the commission has existed since 1981 and has been extended every eight years since then. She highlighted that the Alaska Commission on Aging plays a vital role in coordinating state initiatives to assist and uplift Alaska's senior population. She explained that the Alaska Commission on Aging is vital in the assurance that Alaska carries out its federal mandate to take care of its senior population under the Older Americans Act of 1965. She highlighted that the commission helps to collect snapshot data of the health and well-being of Alaska residents who are aged 60 years and older, as well as basic demographic and economic statistics of that age group. Representative Dibert advised that the summary of data that the commission collects is important to help the state understand the underlying dynamics at play in senior communities and tailor programs toward those who need them most. She emphasized that the Alaska Commission on Aging is a commission that advocates for Alaska's senior population and underlined the importance of its existence.

[3:27:30 PM](#)

BOB SILVERTSEN, Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging, gave invited testimony on HB 283. He explained his history in Alaska and his role as chair of the Alaska Commission on Aging. He explained the importance of the commission and its relevance to all Alaskans. He shared some of the data collected from the previously mentioned studies of the commission and explained how those studies have positively impacted Alaska's senior population.

[3:30:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked why the Alaska Commission on Aging has a sunset clause in the first place.

MR. SILVERTSEN answered that it gives the legislature an opportunity to audit the commission's performance.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE recommended that the audit be performed year to year and asked Mr. Sivertsen what his plans and ideas were for the future of the commission.

MR. SILVERTSEN acknowledged the recommendation and replied that he wanted to see term limits on the commission, as well as more thorough administration.

[3:33:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT introduced Kris Curtis of the Legislative Audit Division to the committee.

KRIS CURTIS, Legislative Auditor, Legislative Audit Division, Legislative Agencies and Offices, gave invited testimony on HB 283. She briefly summarized the federal requirements that the State of Alaska must follow with regard to its senior relations and explained that current federal regulations require yearly reports and summarized audit findings.

[3:35:53 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked whether the Alaska Commission on Aging is working to coordinate its services with other state agencies.

MR. SILVERTSEN answered that the commission tries to make the most efficient decisions for seniors and said that he works hard to ensure that a relationship between the commission and Alaska's senior citizens is established and maintained.

[3:39:06 PM](#)

JON HAGHAYEGHI, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Aging, gave invited testimony on HB 283. He emphasized that the Alaska Commission on Aging is instrumental in ensuring that meals, transportation, and service needs are met for Alaska's senior population.

[3:41:54 PM](#)

MARGE STONEKING, Representative, AARP of Alaska, gave invited testimony on HB 283. She highlighted the importance of the annual senior snapshot studies that the Alaska Commission on Aging performs and explained that the data in those studies are invaluable to AARP.

[3:44:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS inquired whether the committee would hear a motion on the proposed legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE moved to report HB 283 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 283 was reported from the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

[3:46:22 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:46 p.m.