

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

March 13, 2023

3:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative CJ McCormick, Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Josiah Patkotak
Representative Jamie Allard
Representative Maxine Dibert
Representative Jennie Armstrong

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 26

"An Act renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 26

SHORT TITLE: COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

01/19/23	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/23
01/19/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/23	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/10/23	(H)	TRB REPLACES EDC REFERRAL
02/10/23	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
03/08/23	(H)	TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/08/23	(H)	Heard & Held
03/08/23	(H)	MINUTE (TRB)
03/13/23	(H)	TRB AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As the prime sponsor, presented HB 26.

MIRANDA WORL, Staff
Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an explanation for a possible amendment to HB 26, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor.

WALKIE CHARLES, PhD, Director
Alaska Native Language Center
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 26.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:05:45 PM](#)

CHAIR CJ MCCORMICK called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Representatives Vance, Patkotak, Allard, Armstrong, and McCormick were present at the call to order. Representatives Carpenter and Dibert arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 26-COUNCIL FOR ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES

[3:06:36 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 26, "An Act renaming the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council as the Council for Alaska Native Languages; and relating to the Council for Alaska Native Languages."

[3:06:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, stated HB 26 would do two things: change the name of the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to the Council for Alaska Native Language; and add two non-voting members to expand council membership from five to seven to represent more languages within Alaska. She commented on a question from a previous committee meeting about the fiscal note for HB 26, stating that the addition of \$10,000 for the

Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) would cover travel costs for the council, as required in statute. She added that the staff for the council is employed under DCCED, and there is only a single state employee, Roy Mitchell, who is the research analyst.

[3:09:11 PM](#)

MIRANDA WORL, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Story, prime sponsor of HB 26, said the proposed amendment from X'unei Lance Twitchell, PhD in the previous committee meeting would revise the official list of languages under AS 44.12.310(a) from 20 to 23 officially recognized languages. She stated the revision would add Wetalk and Cup'ig to the list of languages and would divide Tanana into Lower Tanana and Middle Tanana.

[3:10:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD stated she would bring forward the amendment on Wednesday.

[3:10:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY said Dr. Twitchell had also suggested to increase the number of state positions from one to two. She emphasized the council is concerned with the state of emergency, as Alaska Native languages are going dormant. She added that the lack of funding is making it difficult for the council to initiate and maintain contact with Alaska Native language stakeholders, and that the single research analyst was managing travel arrangements. She recommended to the committee to read the executive summary of the council's report and suggested it could be appropriate to invite the council to discuss the state of Alaska Native languages.

[3:13:41 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK expressed interest in inviting the council to speak to the committee.

[3:13:58 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:13 p.m. to 3:14 p.m.

[3:14:57 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK opened public testimony on HB 26.

[3:15:46 PM](#)

WALKIE CHARLES, PhD, Director, Alaska Native Language Center, stated he is the first Alaska Native director of the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC), which was established in 1972 to revitalize, promote, research, and document Alaska Native languages. He said he is in support of HB 26 on behalf of ANLC and the Indigenous people of Alaska, to change the name from Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to the Council for Alaska Native Language to make a clear and understandable title for the council.

[3:18:44 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK, after ascertaining that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 26.

[3:19:04 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:19 p.m.

[3:19:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY emphasized as the liaison from the council that the issue was important to the lives of all people, Native and non-Native.

[3:20:24 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCORMICK set the amendment deadline for HB 26 as March 16 at 5:00 p.m. and [announced HB 26 was held over.]

[3:21:03 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.