

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2023

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Mary Carlson - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

University Of Alaska Board of Regents
Bethany Marcum - Anchorage
Dennis Michel - Fairbanks
Paula Harrison - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 97

"An Act authorizing lump sum payments for certain teachers as retention and recruitment incentives; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

DENNIS MICHEL, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MARY CARLSON, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Department of Education and Early Development
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

BETHANY MARCUM, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

YARROW SILVERS, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum

MAE PITKA, Teacher
Russian Mission School
Russian Mission, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on SB 97. The hearing for SB 97 was scheduled but not heard.

JOAN FRANZ, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

JOELLE HALL, President
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

KIM HAYS, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

MIKE GRUNST, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

ALEX JORGENSEN, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

HERMAN MORGAN, representing self
Aniak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

ALEX BAKER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

LAURA BONNER, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

PAULA HARRISON, Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:49 PM](#)

CHAIR LÖKI TOBIN called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Stevens, and Chair Tobin.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)
PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA BOARD OF REGENTS

[3:33:06 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Mary Carlson to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[3:33:45 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:34:33 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting. She stated that the connection with Ms. Carlson was lost, and the committee would consider the next item on the agenda.

[3:34:49 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Mr. Michel to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[3:34:59 PM](#)

DENNIS MICHEL, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Fairbanks, Alaska, provided a brief educational and work history. He is interested in being a regent because Alaska has been very good to his family. He would like to afford younger Alaskans the opportunities he had. He said he would like to influence Alaska's youth to receive training to work in the trades through the university to work in the trades.

[3:39:22 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated he was concerned about university maintenance and asked if Mr. Michel could elaborate.

MR. MICHEL replied that he has only been in the position six weeks and would like to know more before commenting. His understanding is that maintenance issues at the university need addressing. He opined that addressing maintenance issues is cheaper than new buildings.

SENATOR STEVENS said having someone on the Board of Regents who understands maintenance issues would be good. He clarified that the Board of Regents has asked for money to perform maintenance, but the legislature did not fund it.

MR. MICHEL assured the committee that the university would spend maintenance appropriations wisely.

[3:41:40 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked the appointees for their willingness to serve. She said the Board of Regents' mission statement emphasizes the North and honors Alaska's indigenous and diverse people. She asked Mr. Michel whether he supports the mission and to give his thoughts about the role of diversity at

the university. She also asked Mr. Michel to explain how he would uphold the mission.

[3:42:44 PM](#)

MR. MICHEL replied that he is part Native. He said hard work and effort paid off in overcoming struggles and achieving success. He is extremely open to helping indigenous people. He opined that his visits with indigenous students and staff at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) were top-notch because students felt comfortable speaking with him. He stated his belief that everyone should have an equal opportunity to succeed. Sometimes certain individuals need an edge to succeed. and he supports giving that assistance when needed.

[3:44:06 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said the University of Alaska has three separately accredited universities and 13 community campuses. He asked Mr. Michel what his vision is for the University of Alaska (UA) in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast.

MR. MICHEL said he realizes that universities are educationally, economically, and socially important to communities. The University of Alaska must continue to be a quality institution globally. However, it cannot move forward without money. There must be prudence when looking at the facilities and determining what works best. He stated he was too new to know how much might be needed.

[3:45:50 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked whether he thought the university was adequately funded.

MR. MICHEL replied that he has only been in the position six weeks and attended one meeting, so he cannot answer the question. He guaranteed he would be able to answer it in a year.

[3:46:22 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN said students who have visited the Capitol have expressed concerns about the quality of the university due to four years of funding cuts. Students starting college this year are identifying UA as undesirable. He asked if this type of student evidence is informative regarding whether funding is appropriate.

[3:47:21 PM](#)

MR. MICHEL replied absolutely. He said it is the type of base information the university should gather. He opined that

considering current world events, the UA system is uniquely positioned to attract contracts from various agencies, which will help fix problems UA is experiencing.

[3:48:33 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked whether he recognizes the tension between funding and the ability of the university to move forward.

MR. MICHEL said that as a businessman of 47 years, he understands business. Investing in the business of education is necessary to move it forward. The university can accomplish little without identified sources of funding. The university will need funding to push forward. He stated he would love for the university to move in a positive direction. He expressed his belief that President Pitney and the Board of Regents are heading in the right direction. He opined that the concerns students mentioned will disappear as the university moves forward.

[3:50:18 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said the Board of Regents is a governance board. She asked Mr. Michel about service and protecting the public trust as a regent.

[3:50:39 PM](#)

MR. MICHEL said he believes strongly in public service and offers service outside of the Board of Regents. Universities are an integral part of communities which is something that deserves consideration when planning activities or instituting policies. He opined that setting the university up to do good works now will carry into the future.

[3:51:21 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the appointment of Mr. Michel; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[3:52:01 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Mary Carlson to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[3:52:16 PM](#)

MARY CARLSON, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Department of Education and Early Development, Fairbanks, Alaska, provided a brief personal and work history. She stated she was the first to graduate college in her family, which influenced other family members to obtain college degrees

and broke a generational cycle of not attending college. She has been a teacher, principal, and university school of education instructor.

CHAIR TOBIN asked which position on the commission she would fill.

MS. CARLSON replied higher education.

[3:55:09 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said he could see from Ms. Carlson's resume that she was an administrator and professor. He asked if she had ever taught for a school district.

[3:55:29 PM](#)

MS. CARLSON replied that she taught for four years in Virginia. She also taught in Alaska at the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in an alternative program for expelled students.

[3:55:58 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said one of the unfortunate goals of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission is to address teachers' misdeeds. He asked if she was prepared to take away a teacher's certification.

MS. CARLSON replied that the process of removing a teacher's certification is rigorous. She would follow the process, and if a teacher were in violation, she would revoke the certification.

[3:57:22 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the appointment of Ms. Carlson; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[3:57:53 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Mary Carlson - Fairbanks

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[3:58:21 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:59:46 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Ms. Marcum to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[4:00:42 PM](#)

BETHANY MARCUM, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Anchorage, Alaska, gave a brief personal and work history. She said she has worked in the private sector and government. She received scholarships and has a bachelor's and a master's degree. She stated that education has afforded her many opportunities, so she wants to serve the university.

[4:01:49 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON said the Board of Regents' mission statement emphasizes the North and honors Alaska's indigenous and diverse people. She asked Ms. Marcum whether she supports the mission and to give her thoughts about the role of diversity at the university. She also asked Ms. Marcum to explain how she would uphold the mission.

[4:02:29 PM](#)

MS. MARCUM replied that she supports the mission statement. She learned about the Alaska Native Success Initiative at a board meeting and fully supports outreach to ensure the university has indigenous students, staff, and tenure-track faculty. She stated her desire to make the University of Alaska the premier northern latitude university. She said the university's mission tracks very closely with her vision.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON said Ms. Marcum mentioned in an education committee hearing that the Alaska Reads Act was an example that the Alaska Policy Forum is bipartisan. She asked Ms. Marcum to provide two more examples of the forum's bipartisan work.

MS. MARCUM replied that occupational licensing is a policy that the Democratic Party in other states leads in supporting. The Democratic Party knows that some of the communities most affected by onerous occupational licensing requirements are lower-income immigrants who have trouble entering the workforce because of fees and training requirements. Occupational licensing is a bipartisan reform that the Alaska Policy Forum has always supported. She said the forum also supported last year's state checkbook bill by Senator Wielechowski. The forum

also supports a bill by Representative Story to extend the Alaska Performance Scholarship to career and technical education students.

[4:05:26 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON opined that Ms. Marcum's fiscal policy stance generally leans towards reduced government spending and increased private investment. She asked whether the university needed more funding or less funding to succeed.

MS. MARCUM replied that she had only been in the position for six weeks. She has seen the proposed budget and was pleased that the governor put forward a good portion of the funding. She said she is concerned about deferred maintenance not being funded. The capital budget is a lot different than what the university proposed. She said she did not know enough to say whether funding could be found or whether the university had enough. However, she stated her belief that there are initiatives that would require more funding. President Pitney prioritized spending well, but the university cannot pay for everything without funds. Funding needs to be looked at to determine how to fill gaps.

[4:07:02 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Marcum how she perceives her role as a regent, and her vision for the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). He opined that regents generally offer no attention or malign attention to UAS. Being happy to be neglected is a bad place to be.

MS. MARCUM replied that she does not know enough about the entirety of the UA system to say that her vision is different from the missions of the regional universities. She said Fairbanks focuses on academic research, Anchorage on open enrollment, and Southeast is a regional campus. Some fields of study are unique to an area and are most appropriately handled by that region's campus, such as UAS handling mariculture. She said if there is an opportunity to expand UAS beyond a regional campus she is open to the discussion.

SENATOR STEVENS said he was a history professor at the university for 25 years. Two studies concluded that the university has too many administrators and should focus on hiring more faculty. He requested that she investigate the issue if the legislature confirms her appointment. He asked if she had any comments.

MS. MARCUM said Senator Steven's staff provided her with links to the studies. She plans to review the studies and ask the board if there are new studies. It is incumbent upon the regents to look at all the information available and determine whether change is needed.

[4:10:34 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON said that as a senator, she represents all people, but as a woman of color, she wants to ensure that the Board of Regents fairly represents people of color. She asked what Ms. Marcum would do as a regent to ensure the voices of people of color are heard and represented by the board.

MS. MARCUM agreed that it is important for regents to hear the voices of everyone. She worked with people from diverse backgrounds while in the military. One of her jobs in the military was unit engagement. It required her to visit with troops and airmen regarding their well-being. Part of a regent's job should be outreach to all students and faculty because it is important to hear directly from individuals.

[4:12:35 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked a question specific to public comments Ms. Marcum made at a redistricting meeting. The comments were regarding the over-representation of Eagle River at the expense of North Muldoon. She opined that Ms. Marcum does not prioritize geographic representation and fair voice when serving the public. She asked Ms. Marcum for her thoughts.

MS. MARCUM replied that her comments at that meeting were out of context and incomplete. She wanted Muldoon to have the opportunity to have three senators because there were distinct groups with distinct voices. She wanted them to have as much voice as possible. She opined that the Eagle River issue was about the military. She said she stated her belief to the redistricting board several times; the military should be districted in the communities they live. She said court rulings are continuing. In general terms, she was trying to ensure that people were heard and represented. She was not trying to represent any particular body or people unfairly.

CHAIR TOBIN stated that she is concerned about the lack of diversity among the regent appointees. Western and rural Alaska are not represented. She stated that having a board concentrated in one view and voice concerns her. She asked Ms. Marcum how she would address the issue.

MS. MARCUM replied that she wants to reach out and talk with people because there is no reason not to communicate directly. She also favors meeting with groups of people. Meeting with students, faculty, and staff takes effort. Being a regent is a time-consuming job. Meeting with people is part of a regent's job. She is committed to doing the job of a regent. She is willing to go wherever is needed and answer difficult questions.

[4:15:49 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN said Ms. Marcum told him in conversation that she was comfortable with the level of funding the governor provided to the university. However, during the hearing, Ms. Marcum stated she had concerns about the level of funding. He asked what changed her opinion.

[4:16:14 PM](#)

MS. MARCUM replied that when she spoke to Senator Bjorkman, she primarily had been looking at the operating budget. She was aware there were deferred maintenance issues, but looking at the budget closely, she recognized that a fair amount of the capital budget was unfunded.

SENATOR KIEHL said he is passionate about and proud of the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). UAS has a college of education. He said K-12 teachers and students supply the university with most of its students. He asked Ms. Marcum for her view on public education and if she considers the university part of the K-12 school system.

MS. MARCUM replied there is no doubt that the university is part of Alaska's education system. It is part of the Department of Education and Early Child Development (DEED).

SENATOR KIEHL recalled Ms. Marcum saying she was "distraught for Alaska children who are trapped in public schools." He asked for an explanation of the statement because the board oversees one of Alaska's public education institutions.

MS. MARCUM replied that some children are trapped, not because it is a public school, but because the school assigned by zip code does not necessarily meet the child's needs. Meanwhile, another nearby school might be a better fit. She stated that her concern is for students to be in learning environments that suit their learning styles and needs. Families have different capacities to place children in schools. She provided an anecdotal story to illustrate her point. Parents must have

options when their children are trapped in schools that adversely affect them.

[4:21:08 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL responded that he appreciates her comments and is proud to represent schools with open enrollment. However, Senate Joint Resolution 9 was about vouchers for private and religious schools, not charter or neighborhood schools. Current and future teachers in Alaska are concerned about the university's governing approach to public schools because it is where most of them work or will work in the future.

MS. MARCUM answered that teachers should not be concerned because public schools will always exist. Eighty percent of students attend public schools in Alaska. She stated her belief that less than two percent of students in Alaska attend private schools. She opined that public schools will always be Alaska's primary education mode. Data shows that private schools create competition, which creates better public schools. There is a nationwide movement to establish school choice, also known as education choice. She said states that utilize school choice are producing better public schools. She wants better public schools for Alaska. She said she does not see a conflict in letting parents have an option between private and good public schools.

CHAIR TOBIN mentioned a supreme court decision that included the words "secretive procedures and misinformation" that Ms. Marcum used. She said the Board of Regents is a governance board, and Ms. Marcum's track record shows she does not value it. She asked Ms. Marcum for her philosophy about public service, support of public schools, and protecting public trust.

MS. MARCUM replied that her philosophy has been the same throughout her life. She has a life of public service and chooses to put herself forward for the position because families and students should have opportunities through the public university system. Laws for open meetings are extremely important. She abided by them in the previous board and will continue to abide by them, regardless of what others may think.

[4:24:32 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the appointment of Ms. Marcum to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[4:24:52 PM](#)

YARROW SILVERS, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that as the CEO of the Alaska Policy Forum, Ms. Marcum

continually advocated for slashing university funding, which has created problems for the state. She provided an example of the type of policies the forum advocates and said the forum pushes policy agendas without presenting all the facts. Since the budget cuts, tuition has increased, programs have been cut or reduced, and enrollment has declined from 26,000 students in 2019 to about 20,000 in 2023. That is 6,000 fewer people contributing to the state's economy and potentially making Alaska their home. She said the University of Alaska is nonpartisan, and Ms. Marcum was on the redistricting board, which is also nonpartisan. While serving on the redistricting board, Ms. Marcum pushed through a highly partisan, community-damaging, and ultimately illegal political gerrymander. It cost the state over \$1 million in legal fees and would have muffled the voices of diverse and economically disadvantaged people in East Anchorage. Appointees should be willing to act in the best interest of the university in an honest manner. She opined that Ms. Marcum is not fit for the board.

[4:27:31 PM](#)

MAE PITKA, representing self, Russian Mission, Alaska, said she was raised and teaches in Russian Mission. She has witnessed high teacher turnover for 29 years. She hopes some students will become teachers and work in Russian Mission. She supports SB 97 because longevity incentives with lump sum payments can attract teachers. Teacher retention requires financial incentives. She thanked the committee for supporting teachers in Alaska.

CHAIR TOBIN apologized for the error. She encouraged Ms. Pitka to call back when SB 97 opens for public testimony. SB 97 was scheduled but removed from the agenda.

[4:29:39 PM](#)

JOAN FRANZ, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated that quality education and healthcare are essential needs for communities. She said Ms. Marcum's position as the CEO of the Alaska Policy Forum indicates that she does not support Alaska's court or understand the importance of quality education at all levels. Cutting public education funding does not improve education, yet she cheered the Arduin-Dunleavy education budget cuts. She consistently has not shown support for the financial funding of education. Budget cuts to education have also had an impact on the Fairbanks economy. Alaska needs teachers, healthcare professionals, and engineers. She encouraged the committee not to support Ms. Marcum.

[4:32:35 PM](#)

JOELLE HALL, President, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that Ms. Marcum has employment that makes it inappropriate for her to serve as a regent. Ms. Marcum's job as the CEO of the Alaska Policy Forum is to influence public policy, even if it is contrary to the Board of Regents' position. In 2019, the Alaska Policy Forum supported cuts that would have devastated Alaska's university system. The forum routinely supports cuts to government and is currently opposing a bill that would give public employees and university faculty and staff the option to have a defined benefit pension. She stated that it is unreasonable to think Ms. Marcum can act autonomously because she answers to the board of directors and the state policy network that provides the bulk of her funding.

MS. HALL said her job as the president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is to advocate for faculty and staff and encourage the legislature to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions. She opined that if the committee was comfortable with Ms. Marcum serving on the Board of Regents, then they would need to be comfortable with her serving on the board. As a leader of an organization, Ms. Marcum cannot represent the needs of the university above the needs of the organization without the risk of being fired. It is an irreconcilable conflict of interest. She said she would like to be a volunteer board member if the legislature confirms Ms. Marcum.

[4:35:12 PM](#)

KIM HAYS, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said she received two degrees from the University of Alaska Anchorage. She is proud of the university and stated her belief that the Board of Regents should advocate for robust funding for all campuses. Workforce development is essential for the university and all of Alaska's employers and programs. Now is the time to have a board that understands it is paramount to retain faculty and staff and encourage recruitment. Governor Dunleavy's \$130 million budget cut shocked the university system in 2019. She said most Alaskans were against the cuts and asked representatives to oppose them. Ms. Marcum and the Alaska Policy Forum supported the draconian cuts as a way for Alaska to "get back on track." This is as logical as the saying "the beatings will continue until morale improves." She questioned the ability of Ms. Marcum to advocate for the university when she supported the cuts. It is a fox in the hen house situation. As an alumnus she is not interested in gutting the university.

[4:37:40 PM](#)

MIKE GRUNST, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska said the Alaska Policy Forum is an organization funded by outside interests and affiliated with the Freedom Network. As CEO of the Alaska Policy Forum, Ms. Marcum advocated for university budget cuts in 2019. He quoted her as saying, "It's just not sustainable to continue to subsidize government with savings." He questioned how the state would fund the university without government subsidy. He opined that her goal is to siphon money from public schools and support school vouchers. The Alaska Policy Forum advocates for tuition freezes and innovative spending reductions. It opposed two-person crew railroads, which would be like advocating for dismantling the Puget Sound whale response teams. Schools need administrative positions to be productive and safe. He opined that Alaska should have taken a long view of education like Texas did 40 years ago. Today, the Texas school system ranks high nationally. Texas has created a system that is an education and economic benefit that attracts people to the state. He described how Alaska's education system should be structured to succeed. Alaska is the least taxed state in the nation; residents do not pay anything for state services. Alaska has the money to solve its problems but not with Ms. Marcum on the Board of Regents.

[4:42:32 PM](#)

ALEX JORGENSEN, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said he is a graduate student at UAA. He was at the student union when Governor Dunleavy proposed the \$130 million budget cut. He opined that the cut was reckless and would dismantle Alaska's only public university system. Ms. Marcum supported the cut. He said he could not square the fiduciary responsibility of a regent with Ms. Marcum's past actions.

[4:44:09 PM](#)

HERMAN MORGAN, representing self, Aniak, Alaska, said he is disappointed that the committee members do not represent education. Alaska has the lowest test scores in the nation but is the most expensive. He opined that Ms. Marcum was right to support the cut because the cost to the state could be \$8 billion without controlled spending.

[4:47:59 PM](#)

ALEX BAKER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said Ms. Marcum served on the redistricting board and violated Alaska law twice. She has not earned public trust. There are hundreds of pages of court documents outlining her actions. She has not

learned from her past actions. She is not fit to serve as a regent.

[4:49:50 PM](#)

LAURA BONNER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said Ms. Marcum publicly exploited the \$130 million budget cut to the university. The cuts resulted in the reduction of programs and resources. The cuts led to the outmigration of students and workers and crippled education, research grants, and deferred maintenance. Ms. Marcum's position with the Alaska Policy Forum cherry-picks studies and facts supporting its principles, resulting in biased findings. She opined that Ms. Marcum cannot serve in a nonpartisan manner, as demonstrated when serving on the redistricting board. The university provides economic opportunity to the state. She said Ms. Marcum is a poor choice for the Board of Regents.

[4:52:13 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN closed public testimony on the appointment of Ms. Marcum.

[4:52:23 PM](#)

MS. MARCUM stated that legal counsel assured her there was no conflict of interest serving on the Board of Regents and working as the CEO of the Alaska Policy Forum. She said that during the House Education Committee hearing, she addressed false claims that she championed the university budget cut. She noted that only Alaskans are on the Alaska Policy Forum's board. She asked the committee to read the letters of support that individuals submitted on her behalf.

[4:53:45 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of the governor's appointee Ms. Harrison to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[4:53:49 PM](#)

PAULA HARRISON, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated that her daughters graduated from the University of Alaska and are successful. She would like to serve on the Board of Regents to give back to the university.

[4:54:48 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON said the Board of Regents' mission statement emphasizes the North and honors Alaska's indigenous and diverse people. She asked if Ms. Harrison supports the mission and to share her thoughts about the role of diversity at

the university. She also asked Ms. Harrison to explain how she would uphold the university's mission.

[4:55:22 PM](#)

MS. HARRISON replied that she supports the mission statement. She worked in human resources, where diversity, equity, and inclusion are a priority. She would broaden the mission statement to include more people because Alaska is diverse, and many people consider it their home.

[4:56:19 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Harrison what she would do for UAS if she had a magic wand.

[4:56:34 PM](#)

MS. HARRISON said she worked for the University of Alaska for seven years. She served the Anchorage and Southeast campuses. The UAS campus is beautiful, and she is supportive of it. Each campus serves the needs of the local community.

[4:57:38 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL recognized that Ms. Harrison has extensive experience in labor relations, which is different from university leadership. He asked what her concept of shared governance is and if the university handles governance correctly.

MS. HARRISON replied that the university is doing it right. Each campus has a faculty governance and senate. The university also has a statewide faculty and staff alliance. She said the organizations she has worked with have administrative input.

[4:59:06 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked if the UA system is adequately funded.

MS. HARRISON replied that the word adequate would need to be defined. The Board of Regents makes various determinations, including adequate funding. She opined that deferred maintenance is not adequately funded. She rhetorically asked how the state could provide communities with a university without infrastructure. She said that deferred maintenance is her passion, and the legislature must fund according to a schedule, so the university does not fall further behind.

[5:00:28 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said the Board of Regents is a governance board. She asked Ms. Harrison to explain her philosophy regarding service and upholding public trust.

MS. HARRISON said she has served on many boards. She was chair of the Alaska Labor Relations Agency for four years. Public trust is paramount. When others perceive a person as untrustworthy, their decisions go nowhere.

[5:01:25 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the appointment of Ms. Harrison; finding none, she closed public testimony.

MS. HARRISON thanked the committee for the opportunity to meet.

[5:01:52 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated the confirmation hearing for Mr. Crum would take place April 5.

[5:02:13 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Dennis Michel - Fairbanks
Bethany Marcum - Anchorage
Paula Harrison - Fairbanks

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[5:03:10 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 5:03 p.m.