

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 13, 2024

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 158

"An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; relating to school bond debt reimbursement; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 221

"An Act relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation education in public schools; relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 158

SHORT TITLE: SCHOOL GRANTS AND BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MYERS

01/16/24	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/24
01/16/24	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/28/24	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/28/24	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/13/24	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 221

SHORT TITLE: CPR CURRICULUM

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GRAY-JACKSON

02/08/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/08/24 (S) EDC, FIN
03/13/24 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, District Q
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 158.

DAWSON MANN, Staff
Senator Robert Myers
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Offered the sectional analysis for SB 158.

LORI WEED, Manager
School Finance and Facilities
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 158.

KAREN MORRISON, Director
School Finance and Facilities
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of fiscal notes for SB 158.

LUMA DIAZ, Staff
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Offered a presentation and the sectional analysis for SB 221.

DOUGLAS SCHRAGE, Chief
Anchorage Fire Department
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Invited testimony for SB 221.

JAMIE MORGAN, Senior Region Lead
State Government Relations
American Heart Association
Dallas, Texas

POSITION STATEMENT: Invited testimony for SB 221.

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director
Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of the fiscal note for SB 221.

JAMES WHITE, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

SCOTT WELLMAN, M.D., representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

LINDA IRELAND, D.O., representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

BRIAN WEBB, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

TYLER BELK, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

FORREST KUIPER, representing self
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

GERALD VOSS, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 221.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:06 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 Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, and Chair Tobin. Senator Bjorkman arrived shortly thereafter.

SB 158-SCHOOL GRANTS AND BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

[3:32:10 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 158 "An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; relating to school bond debt reimbursement; and providing for an effective date."

[3:32:29 PM](#)

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, District Q, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 158 paraphrased the following statement:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 158 - Sponsor Statement

SCHOOL GRANTS AND BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

" An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; relating to school bond debt reimbursement; and providing for an effective date."

For years, communities across Alaska have faced significant challenges in maintaining and upgrading educational facilities to meet the evolving needs of our students and educators. The health and safety of our children, as well as the quality of their educational environment, are foundational to their success and, by extension, to the future prosperity of our state. One avenue the state has established to help with the aforementioned maintenance challenges is the allowance of school bond debt reimbursement. Unfortunately, due to serious revenue shortfalls the legislature placed a moratorium on the issuance of new school bond debt in 2015 and extended the moratorium again in 2020.

School bonds are an important tool for districts to help build new schools and keep older facilities running. Bonds pay for a variety of construction and maintenance projects, such as new boilers, roof replacements, security improvements, and more. School districts spend a substantial amount on regular

maintenance out of their operating budgets to keep their buildings in good repair and their students and staff in safe and healthy schools. In the past there have also been cases where bonding was used for purposes that could be described as luxuries and not critical infrastructure. The goal of this legislation is to establish trust that the program is only being used for vetted and critically needed programs and not new playground equipment or school concession stands as has been used in the past.

SB 158 amends existing statutes to enhance the eligibility criteria for grants and bond debt reimbursement. This includes a more structured approach to planning ensuring that projects are not only necessary but are also executed with foresight and fiscal responsibility. Furthermore, the modifications proposed in SB 158 to the criteria for bond debt reimbursement are designed to prioritize the most critical projects while encouraging municipalities to engage in thorough planning and maintenance practices. This ensures that the support provided by the state is both effective and equitable, maximizing the impact of public funds on our educational environment.

SENATOR MYERS added that SB 158 limits school bond debt eligibility to a district's number one priority on Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) school construction list and or the top two projects on DEED's major maintenance list for each district. If a district has a major maintenance project that is among the top twenty major maintenance projects statewide, it is also eligible for school bond debt reimbursement. The hope is that these changes will maximize returns on investments and makes the reimbursement program more sustainable over the long-term.

[3:35:11 PM](#)

DAWSON MANN, Staff, Senator Robert Myers, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, offered the sectional analysis for SB 158:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 158 v. B - Sectional Analysis

SCHOOL GRANTS AND BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

" An Act relating to funding for school construction and major maintenance; relating to school bond debt reimbursement; and providing for an effective date."

Section 1: Page 1, Lines 4-14, Page 2, Lines 1-21

This section moves the deadline for districts to submit their six-year capital improvement plan from September 1 to July 1 to align with the start of the fiscal year and allow the department more time to review applications.

Section 2: Page 2, Lines 22-31, Page 3, Lines 1-7

This section directs the bond reimbursement and grant review committee to only review and approve one project on DEED's school construction list and/or the top two projects on DEED's major maintenance list for each district. If a district has a major maintenance project that is among the top 20 major maintenance projects statewide it is also eligible for school bond debt reimbursement.

Section 3: Page 3, Lines 7-21

This section outlines that the commissioner may not approve a school bond debt reimbursement project unless they meet the same standards outlined in section 2.

Section 4: Page 3, Lines 22-31, Page 4, Lines 1-6

This section outlines that the commissioner may not allocate funds to a municipality for a school bond debt reimbursement project unless they meet the same standards outlined in section 2.

Section 5: Page 4, Line 7

Repeals the school bond debt reimbursement moratorium in alignment with implementation of this bill.

Section 6: Page 4, Lines 8-15

Amends the uncodified law outlining the applicability of the amended sections of this act after the conclusion of the school bond debt reimbursement moratorium.

Section 7: Page 4, Line 16

Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2025.

[3:37:08 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that the moratorium had shifted the state's responsibility to maintain public schools significantly onto local taxpayers. He said one of the communities he represents spends over a million dollars annually, or more, in local taxes on large-scale major maintenance projects with no bond debt reimbursement. He mentioned another community in a similar situation with no bond debt reimbursement. He requested clarification on how the proposed structure would impact districts unable to issue bonds compared to those where municipalities could bond.

[3:38:25 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS replied that SB 158 would not affect districts outside municipalities, Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAAs), as those districts are not able to bond. He stated that SB 158 aims to help districts that can bond by encouraging them to prioritize projects. He noted that if the state offered unlimited school bond debt reimbursement, it could lead to districts delaying maintenance in favor of waiting for reimbursement. SB 158 would especially support smaller districts outside major metropolitan areas by assisting them with projects they cannot afford immediately.

SENATOR MYERS explained that the goal is for the state to prioritize items at the top of the major maintenance and construction lists, while bonding would still be available for less critical projects. SB 158 also incentivizes districts to maintain facilities using their budgets. SB 158 aims to balance proactive planning and support for unexpected costs, particularly for projects in the top twenty, which are often from smaller districts needing additional state support. SB 158 is designed to shift the state's focus toward assisting these high-priority projects.

[3:41:28 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said that although the sponsor views SB 158 as an incentive to address rural projects at the top of the list, an opposing argument is that every dollar allocated to bond debt reimbursement from state funds directs only 23 cents to the rural major maintenance fund. This could mean that bond debt reimbursement might limit the funds available for rural projects. He asked for the sponsor's thoughts on this perspective.

[3:42:21 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS deferred to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to explain the specific fund and its mechanics. However, he argued that the situation could also be viewed differently: every dollar used for bond debt is a dollar that cannot be used for grants, which also come from the same project lists. He noted that if bonding is not directed towards the best projects, particularly in larger areas that can afford it, funds could be better allocated. He cited Fairbanks, which held bond elections in 2009, 2011, and 2013, resulting in multiple projects each year rather than the limited number suggested in SB 158. He added that this was money the state could have potentially saved and redirected as grants through major maintenance or school construction lists.

[3:43:33 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON questioned how SB 158, Section 2 would function, as Anchorage typically seeks bond debt reimbursement for all projects in a bond package, not just for the top one or two projects.

[3:44:19 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS outlined the process in a timeline format. He explained that currently, the deadline to submit plans to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to get on the major maintenance or construction list is September 1. Under SB 158, they propose moving this deadline back to July 1. For example, if a project is submitted by July 1, 2024, DEED would create preliminary lists, which should be ready by approximately November 1 and finalized by February 2025.

SENATOR MYERS acknowledged that the timing might be more challenging for Anchorage, given that elections are in April, while in Fairbanks they are in October. He explained that, based on those finalized lists, the district would choose projects—such as project number 26 or 37—and include them in a bond package. For Fairbanks, this bond package would be finalized by July 2025 and then placed on the October 2025 ballot. He noted that for Anchorage, the timeline would be more compressed because of the April election date, but the same general process would apply.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON said she would like a more in-depth conversation later.

[3:46:09 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS added that if a district or municipality wants to bond for more than just the top projects, they are still allowed

to do so, such as including six projects in a bond. However, only the top couple of projects would be eligible for bond reimbursement. He explained that on the ballot or in the voter pamphlet, the cost breakdown would indicate that while there is a total cost, only part of it would be reduced by bond reimbursement, and that reduction would apply only to the top projects, not the entire list.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON replied the additional explanation answered her question.

[3:46:51 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN questioned whether limiting bonding to only one or two projects per school district would reduce the resources going to rural schools, noting that for every dollar put into school bond debt relief, additional resources are allocated to a fund for Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) schools.

SENATOR MYERS said he would defer the question about the mechanics of additional funds to the department. He noted that there are still the major maintenance fund and the school construction fund, which are where these project lists originate. He explained that the funds could either go directly to the REAA fund or be distributed as grants. He added that if major municipalities are removing their projects from the top portion of the list through bonding, then more REAA projects would move up on the list, making it more likely for them to receive funding through the major maintenance funding process conducted each year. Regarding the specific REAA grant list, he deferred that to the department for further clarification.

[3:48:23 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL clarified that he did not intend to suggest that anything would eliminate the need for the legislature to appropriate funds for the major maintenance list for rural Alaska; the legislature still needs to determine the amount. He raised an equity issue, noting that he represents a single-site school district, which will always have a top project whenever a need arises, meaning SB 158 would not be much of a barrier for such districts. He pointed out that colleagues represent districts with multiple facilities and asked if the sponsor was open to a proportional approach, rather than allocating one project for a single-site district and one for a multi-site district.

[3:49:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN commented that Anchorage is 40 percent of public-school children in Alaska.

SENATOR KIEHL clarified that he was referring to the number of school buildings.

CHAIR TOBIN quipped that Anchorage would probably still represent 40 percent.

[3:49:22 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS acknowledged the point that a single-site school district would always succeed in getting a top project approved. However, he suggested that these districts also typically have much smaller capacity to manage their needs independently, meaning that equity considerations could apply both ways. He questioned whether it was right for the state to favor smaller districts simply because they automatically qualify and suggested that it might indeed be justified because these districts have a harder time managing larger projects on their own.

SENATOR MYERS addressed the concern that some districts might take advantage of this by proposing less urgent projects, like replacing a cafeteria oven annually. He emphasized that it is important for districts to be able to address legitimate needs, such as replacing a leaking roof. He stated his belief that DEED's process of evaluating and ranking projects would ensure that the most deserving projects rise to the top, while less critical ones might not even make it onto the list.

[3:51:02 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN said this might be a two-part question. She noted that due to the years of the school bond debt moratorium and shifts in staffing capacity, the major maintenance and school construction lists have become quite lean. She explained that districts are having difficulty inputting all necessary information and are prioritizing their time differently. She requested clarification on the applicability language in SB 158, asking if it would require every school district to reapply and how it would affect school districts that have not been applying.

[3:51:37 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS deferred to the department but mentioned that he was informed there was a possibility smaller districts might receive additional support. He noted that currently, districts do not receive assistance with creating bond packages, but they

do get some help from the department for preparing school construction and major maintenance packages. Therefore, his understanding was that SB 158 might benefit smaller districts more. Regarding the question of reapplying, he asked if Chair Tobin could elaborate further on her question.

[3:52:17 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN clarified her question, asking if the existing list would be used under SB 158 or if districts would need to apply under a new process as part of the regulation writing.

SENATOR MYERS responded that DEED creates a new list every year and that process is not changing.

[3:52:39 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN noted that the average age of school buildings in Alaska is 60 years and said that nearly every school building roof likely needs replacement at this point. She pointed out that, as districts address their major maintenance needs, SB 158 is intended to incentivize them, but the current situation is challenging, with numerous projects needing funding. She mentioned that Anchorage alone has a bond list of about 20 schools, most of which involve roof replacements. She asked if there were any concerns with creating and implementing a new system within the next year and could SB 158 really impact the ability for districts to potentially get a bunch of reimbursements and additional dollars they have already put into the system without relief.

[3:53:36 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS said that this was the goal of SB 158. He explained that while SB 158 may limit the number of projects a district can undertake, it aims to ensure that the projects funded are those most urgently needed. He emphasized that essential projects, like roof replacements, would naturally rise to the top of the list, whereas less critical items—such as new playground equipment in his district—should be lower in priority. He acknowledged that while playgrounds are important, roof repairs are more critical. The process established by SB 158 is intended to ensure that the most necessary projects receive funding first.

[3:54:24 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN paraphrased his understanding, asking for confirmation. He said that currently there is no availability for districts to receive school bond debt reimbursement, and the goal of SB 158 is to introduce some level of reimbursement. He

gave an example of having about 400 projects across the state with none receiving reimbursement. The intention, he stated, is to reduce that number so that each district has an opportunity to receive some school bond debt reimbursement.

[3:55:12 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS stated his belief that was a fair assessment. He explained that the goal of SB 158 is to ensure that everyone has an opportunity for bond debt reimbursement and to prevent future moratoriums from impacting reimbursement. He noted that there have been at least two moratoriums, including one in the late 1990s, with the current one ending next year. He added that it was a significant burden on taxpayers in his district when the state stopped bond debt reimbursement for approximately six years, and SB 158 is an effort to prevent similar situations in the future.

[3:55:59 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if a total cap mechanism had been considered for the annual statewide projects eligible for school bond debt reimbursement.

[3:56:14 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS stated that he had not considered a total cap mechanism but was open to discussing it. He expressed concern that funding needs vary greatly year to year, making a fixed cap potentially problematic. He explained that a strict limit, like \$100 million, could result in denying necessary projects from smaller districts while less critical projects might receive leftover funds. He acknowledged the value of the concept but questioned whether a hard cap was the best solution.

[3:57:30 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN invited the department to speak to fiscal notes.

[3:58:10 PM](#)

LORI WEED, Manager, School Finance and Facilities, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, introduced herself.

[3:58:17 PM](#)

KAREN MORRISON, Director, School Finance and Facilities, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, Provided the following overviews of SB 158 fiscal note OMB components 153 and 2737:

Fiscal Note OMB 153

Affected Department: Debt Service
Appropriation: School Debt Reimbursement
Allocation: School Debt Reimbursement

This bill changes the date a school district applies for a major maintenance or school construction grant from September 1 to July 1.

The effective date for this legislation is July 1, 2025 (FY2026).

The fiscal impact of this legislation cannot be determined because of the uncertainty of how many debt reimbursement applications will be received after July 1, 2025, and the total requested project principal and bond costs. State repayment of school bond debt reimbursement projects that are voter-approved after July 1, 2025, will be requested starting in FY2026.

Fiscal Note OMB 2737

Affected Department: Department of Education and Early
Development
Appropriation: Education Support and Admin Services
Allocation: School Finance and Facilities

This fiscal note includes a one-time cost of \$6.0 for legal fees associated with implementation of the necessary regulation changes.

The effective date for this legislation is July 1, 2025 (FY2026).

[4:00:17 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked about DEED assisting districts with applications for the potential grant program. She noted that the bill sponsor mentioned this support, but she did not see a related component in the fiscal analysis, unless it is provided for under "existing capacity."

[4:00:37 PM](#)

MS. WEED replied that the School Finance Division and Facilities section of DEED does assist districts with questions regarding the grant application and debt programs when there is an active allocation. She clarified that this support falls under existing

capacities. She added that DEED does not help write grant or debt applications but provides guidance.

[4:01:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked why the department's major maintenance and construction lists have seen attrition recent years.

[4:01:24 PM](#)

MS. WEED responded that it is difficult to determine the exact reasons for the attrition. She noted that some projects have come off the list in recent years, and districts might be redirecting their limited resources elsewhere due to low funding levels. She suggested that districts may be waiting for an improvement in the state's fiscal climate but stated that the department could not provide further insight into the lack of participation.

[4:01:56 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that he was considering the issue of districts with different numbers of schools receiving one or possibly two projects. He asked if there could be opportunities to game the system. He observed that the major maintenance list often includes specific projects like "school X stripped to the studs and rebuilt" or "school Y roof replacement," while sometimes projects are bundled, such as improvements at multiple schools or replacing several roofs. He inquired about the rules for bundling projects and whether any district can combine multiple projects.

MS. WEED replied that there is a long history of bundling or grouping district-wide projects into a single project. She explained that the department requires districts to demonstrate cost-effectiveness when grouping projects and sets limitations, such as ensuring procurement is managed within one contract. If there are multiple contracts, it would indicate a need for multiple applications for distinct projects.

[4:03:55 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said that a district-wide electrical code compliance project seems straightforward, with one contract being efficient to handle all tasks, at least theoretically. He asked if there is any reason why the same contractor couldn't handle replacing three roofs and a playground as part of one project.

[4:04:16 PM](#)

MS. WEED replied that the department's review would question such a request and might split the project or, in the case of a debt project, engage in dialogue with the district to submit two separate applications, as was done under the old program. She added that without a current application process for debt projects, it is difficult to determine exactly how the department would handle bundling, especially since limiting the bundling of unrelated projects is a relatively new stipulation in the application process.

[4:05:08 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated that she was considering a multi-site school project, such as in the Bering Strait School District. Instead of electrical upgrades, she suggested energy retrofits like updating boiler systems or replacing windows and doors. She questioned whether a single contract for multiple sites within one district would be permitted under the current application process.

MS. WEED replied that it is difficult to address such a hypothetical situation, as it would depend on the specifics of the project. She stated that the department would review the proposal and evaluate the justification for cost-effectiveness. She noted that in some school districts, the justification is less clear compared to others.

[4:06:19 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on SB 158; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[4:06:40 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN held SB 158 in committee.

[4:07:02 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN expressed support for the concept of a "fleet reduction" approach to school bond debt reimbursement, calling it a good idea. However, he raised concerns about the lack of guidelines regarding the total cost of bond debt reimbursement from year to year, given its variability and the constraints on revenue. He noted the difficulty in committing to fund new projects when current obligations are already a struggle. He suggested considering a cap, setting aside a specific budget amount for school bond debt reimbursement tied to a percentage of the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for each district. This, he explained, would provide consistency for both the state and districts to plan around available funds, while the restrictions in the bill could still apply within this model.

[4:09:16 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS stated that he was open to considering ideas like Senator Bjorkman's suggestion, finding it interesting. He mentioned trying to visualize how such a plan would function over the 20-year life of a bond and how it would adapt from year to year. He acknowledged the challenge that state revenue and needs fluctuate independently and often do not align. He expressed interest in hearing more about how this concept could be developed further and how it might work in conjunction with the current framework under SB 158.

[4:10:21 PM](#)

At ease

SB 221-CPR CURRICULUM

[4:11:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 221 "An Act relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation education in public schools; relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; and providing for an effective date."

[4:11:33 PM](#)

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, District G, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, speaking as sponsor of SB 221 provided the following sponsor statement:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 221

CPR CURRICULUM

Sudden Cardiac Arrest is a leading cause of death in the US—but bystander CPR can double or triple the survival rate.

Senate Bill 221 seeks to enhance the quality of health education within our state's public school system. This focuses on equipping our students with the knowledge and skills necessary to increase the number of CPR-trained bystanders.

By enacting this legislation, we prioritize the health and well-being of our youth, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions and respond effectively in emergency situations, potentially saving lives within their communities.

By integrating CPR education into the school curriculum, we are promoting a culture of preparedness and responsiveness to emergencies.

Requiring schools to teach CPR ensures that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, have access to this vital life-saving skill.

[4:13:19 PM](#)

LUMA DIAZ, Staff, Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, gave a presentation on SB 221 to discuss what the bill does. She moved to slide 2 and discussed the following:

What is CPR? Importance of Early CPR

- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation is a first aid technique to help people who suffer a cardiac arrest (their heart stops beating).
- It involves doing chest compressions.
- Aids in the circulation of oxygenated blood around the body to maintain the brain and vital organs until advance medical help arrives.
- If performed immediately, CPR can double or triple a victim's chances of survival.

[4:14:08 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ moved to slide 3 and provided background on other states that have passed bills similar to SB 221:

[Original punctuation provided.]

A little background

- Currently 40 states have a bill that requires students to have CPR training before graduating high school.

- Alabama passed a similar bill in 1984.
- Florida was the last state to adopt a similar bill in 2021.

[4:14:28 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ moved to slide 4:

[Original punctuation provided.]

TRAINED STUDENTS SAVE LIVES

- Sudden Cardiac Arrest is a leading cause of death in the US—but bystander CPR can double or triple the survival rate.
- Training students in CPR requires minimal investment in time and cost. According to the latest science, trainees can achieve acceptable levels of CPR skills proficiency in 30 minutes or less.
- Pierson High School in Sag Harbor, NY began its CPR program in 1994. Amazingly, at least 16 lives have been saved so far because these students used their CPR skills in the real world!

[4:15:09 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ moved to slide 5:

[Original punctuation provided.]

What does SB 221 do?

- It will require schools to develop and implement curricula to instruct public school students on hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- The curricula must :
- Be based on current national, evidence-based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines for cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- Incorporate hands-on practice in addition to cognitive learning.

- Include instruction in the appropriate use of an AED (automated external defibrillator), which may be taught using video or other means if in-person instruction is not available.

[4:16:00 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ provided the following sectional analysis for SB 221:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sectional Analysis for SB 221

CPR Curriculum

Section 1: Amends AS 14.30.360(a) by deleting Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) from the program curricula in this section.

Section 2: Amends AS 14.30 by adding a new section, Sec. 14.30.363 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Education to establish the curricula details and responsibilities of the Department of Education and Early Development.

Section 3: Sets an effective date of August 25, 2025.

[4:16:51 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked how many districts already offer CPR training and whether they follow the proposed legislation. She also inquired if there is any data on how many districts currently provide this training in their schools.

[4:17:16 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON stated that while current statute encourages CPR training, SB 221 would make it a requirement. She added that she would provide the committee with information on how many districts teach CPR training to students.

[4:17:29 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ stated that many schools already encourage CPR and similar trainings. She mentioned meeting a teacher in Juneau who included CPR in a life skills program. However, she emphasized the importance of having this requirement in statute to ensure that every school can provide CPR training to all students.

[4:18:05 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked about the structure of the CPR requirement in SB 221. He noted that while the numbered list [on slide 5] requires the curriculum to follow current national evidence-based guidelines, the paragraph specifies hands-only CPR. He questioned why hands-only CPR is specified, given that the guidelines changed only 10 to 15 years ago. He suggested it might be better to align strictly with the best evidence-based practices, allowing flexibility as guidelines evolve.

[4:18:52 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON deferred the question, asking that Chief Schrage answer it.

[4:19:10 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN referred to SB 221, page 2, line 5, which mentions a person holding a current pulmonary resuscitation instructor certificate. She asked if this section of the bill allows for individuals with outside expertise to volunteer their time in schools.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON deferred the question.

[4:19:49 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ clarified that the SB 221 allows anyone with a certified qualification to train students in CPR, which could include teachers, administrative staff, or certified volunteers. She mentioned being in contact with fire department personnel, paramedics, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), who have previously volunteered their time to teach hands-only CPR in schools. She emphasized that the intent of SB 221 is to ensure that anyone trained in CPR can provide this training to students.

[4:20:55 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced invited testimony for SB 221.

[4:21:15 PM](#)

DOUGLAS SCHRAGE, Chief, Anchorage Fire Department, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he was present to provide information and express strong support for SB 221, emphasizing the goal of improving the survivability of sudden cardiac arrest. He highlighted that sudden cardiac arrest is often a survivable condition and noted that approximately 1,100 Alaskans die each year from heart disease, with many deaths preventable through early Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). He explained that hands-only CPR maintains oxygen flow to vital organs until

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrives and is most effective when initiated immediately by a bystander.

[4:22:11 PM](#)

MR. SCHRAGE addressed questions about hands-only CPR, stating that it is supported by scientific evidence, particularly in situations where EMS response is within 15 minutes. He noted that hands-only CPR is often more effective because people are more willing to perform it and it better circulates oxygen without the interruptions caused by mouth-to-mouth. He acknowledged that for longer periods, additional oxygen would eventually be needed but emphasized the effectiveness of hands-only CPR in the critical early minutes.

MR. SCHRAGE stressed that improving survival from cardiac arrest is a community-wide effort, not just the responsibility of emergency services. He pointed out that the best emergency systems still require time to arrive, while permanent brain damage can occur within four minutes of a cardiac event. He called for more community members to be trained in CPR and for more automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to be available in public spaces.

[4:24:15 PM](#)

MR. SCHRAGE argued that SB 221 could significantly improve survival rates in Alaskan communities by equipping youth with life-saving skills. He noted that current public education efforts are insufficient, while hands-only CPR training is straightforward, cost-effective, and can be implemented with minimal resources. He provided an example of successfully teaching CPR to a group of 40 people in 20 minutes. He added that while certification through the American Heart Association or American Red Cross is desirable, it is not required under SB 221. He concluded by urging support for SB 221, citing its profound potential impact relative to its modest investment.

[4:25:44 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN noted that many young students might babysit or care for younger siblings. She asked whether the 20-minute CPR training given to Rotary members included infant CPR and whether

this type of training might also be available to students in schools.

[4:26:06 PM](#)

MR. SCHRAGE responded that he did not include infant Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) in the training. He explained that infant CPR requires a different, more specialized skill set, which is very valuable for people in environments with infants and children, and he recommended certification for those scenarios. However, he emphasized that the main focus is on addressing sudden cardiac arrest in adults, where the greatest number of lives can be saved. He noted that while cardiac arrest in infants does occur, it is relatively rare, and the strategy is to train as many people as possible to perform CPR on adults.

[4:27:43 PM](#)

JAMIE MORGAN, Senior Region Lead, State Government Relations, American Heart Association, Dallas, Texas, stated that each year more than 350,000 people experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital, with only one in ten surviving due to receiving timely Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). She noted that in 2008, the American Heart Association released a scientific advisory promoting hands-only CPR as the standard response for adult sudden cardiac arrest. She explained that cardiac arrest is caused by an electrical malfunction in the heart, unlike a heart attack, and nearly 90 percent of those who experience it outside of a hospital do not survive.

MS. MORGAN emphasized the importance of training students in hands-only CPR to improve survival rates, noting that 70 percent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen at home. Early training could foster a culture of action and improve survival rates. She explained that hands-only CPR instruction can be delivered within a single class period, using resources such as sample curricula, first aid e-books, streaming videos, and mannequins for practice.

[4:29:56 PM](#)

MS. MORGAN shared a story highlighting the importance of bystander CPR, involving J.R. Lewis of KTVF in Fairbanks, whose

15-year-old son suffered a cardiac arrest but survived because bystanders knew CPR. This experience led Lewis to raise awareness about CPR, which he promotes in his newscasts. She also noted that since 2018, more than 40 states have passed laws requiring CPR training before high school graduation, while Alaska remains among the few without such a requirement.

MS. MORGAN urged support for SB 221, stating that teaching students hands-only CPR could save thousands of lives by equipping communities with lifesavers who can provide immediate assistance until first responders arrive. She emphasized that now is the time to act, with the American Heart Association encouraging support for SB 221.

[4:31:16 PM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, paraphrased DEED's fiscal note for SB 221, OMB component 2796, dated February 29, 2024:

[Original punctuation provided.]

This bill removes cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) from AS 14.30.360(a) as recommended content for physical health and personal safety instruction and adds a new section AS 14.30.363 that requires CPR be provided in public schools using curricula developed by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) at grade levels determined by DEED. This fiscal note assumes that DEED will create the CPR curriculum and identify which grade levels are appropriate for instruction.

This fiscal note contains the following one-time expenses: 1) \$400.0 for a facilitator to convene 20 qualified medical providers with educational expertise for their participation in the development of a K-12 CPR curriculum, including stipends, travel, and facilitation fees; 2) \$100.0 First Year certification training for certified trainers (includes cost for a facilitator and travel for certified trainers); and 3) \$6.0 for legal fees to implement the necessary regulation changes.

This fiscal note contains the following annual expenses: 1) \$30.0 for printed materials; 2) \$10.0 for supplies (cleaning supplies, gloves, etc. as identified by the curriculum); 3) \$35.0 CPR/AED kits (\$55.50 (whole dollars) per kit - which supports 15 students, approximately 635 kits are needed); 4) \$375.0 Annual Curriculum training (2-3 staff per district, depending on district size, up to 165 per year this includes stipends, travel, materials and supplies); 5) \$75.0 annual certified trainer certification training (facilitator, travel for trainers, materials, and supplies.).

[4:34:50 PM](#)

MS. MANNING continued her overview of fiscal note OMB component 2796:

It should be noted, after consultation with the Division of Risk Management, there is concern regarding the high liability exposure for DEED developing the CPR curriculum for Alaskan School districts. CPR curriculum should be developed and taught by CPR certified instructors. If CPR is taught to school students by non-certified parties and something goes terribly wrong during the course of one of those students' providing CPR, the school district, or DEED, may be held liable for negligent and improper instruction.

This fiscal note contains the following bi-annual expenses: 1) \$150.00 for a facilitator to convene 15 qualified medical providers with educational expertise for their participation in a review of curriculum against CDC guidelines every two years, including stipends and facilitation fees.
(Can be conducted virtually)

[4:35:59 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that he understood Ms. Manning was not part of Risk Management but asked if she could clarify their perspective on the potential liability. He noted that this situation seems to align with the definition of discretionary function immunity for a sovereign and inquired what possible liabilities might be involved.

[4:36:17 PM](#)

MS. MANNING explained that Risk Management highlighted concerns related to the department developing medical instruction. As noted in the fiscal note, the potential liability stems not from the inherent nature of CPR instruction itself, but from the department developing a unique curriculum. The concern is that if any issues arose with the department-developed curriculum, liability could be a factor. She noted that existing curricula, which have already undergone extensive vetting processes, might mitigate such concerns better than a newly developed one. She added that this was not her area of expertise.

[4:37:03 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL expressed skepticism about the liability concern, noting that the State of Alaska regularly develops curricula and standards across various domains. He pointed out that the department also establishes standards for building safety, despite the existence of codes, and could provide numerous similar examples. He argued that this situation falls under discretionary function immunity as defined by the Federal Tort Claims Act and Alaska Supreme Court [Tort Claims Act]

[4:37:37 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked Senator Kiehl for his knowledge and stated her staff would share who will develop the curriculum.

[4:38:11 PM](#)

MS. DIAZ stated Senator Gray-Jackson's office was in contact with DEED regarding the fiscal note. She said there are many fire departments, EMS, and paramedics, ready to volunteer and eager to collaborate in developing the curriculum. This means that the responsibility for creating the curriculum would not fall entirely on the department. She emphasized that there are already numerous resources available for building the curriculum, which should be straightforward since SB 221 focuses only on hands-only CPR. She mentioned a meeting with DEED and expressed hope in finding ways to adjust the fiscal note to reflect potential cost savings.

[4:39:09 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN inquired how educators or school personnel would put SB 221 into practice and what it would look like in a school environment.

[4:39:41 PM](#)

MS. MANNING replied that SB 221, as structured, leaves the implementation largely at the discretion of each district. The department is tasked with identifying the grades where CPR training will occur and setting standards. If the curriculum development changes, the department would adjust accordingly, but districts would retain autonomy in deciding how to implement it. She noted that districts have various options for employing CPR training, and some already do so. The department would provide support and technical assistance to help districts explore different approaches, recognizing that there are multiple ways to incorporate CPR training effectively.

[4:41:02 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN expressed appreciation for the potential range and variety in implementation approaches. He referenced Chief Schrage's comment that it took only 30 minutes to teach CPR to the Rotary Club. However, he noted that the fiscal note, which involves convening large groups, implies that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has a more expansive vision for this program. He asked specifically what DEED envisions teachers will be instructing students regarding CPR.

[4:41:44 PM](#)

MS. MANNING explained that the fiscal note is based on the language in SB 221, Section 2, which states that the department shall develop the curriculum. If the language changes, as Senator Gray-Jackson suggested, the department would reconsider its approach to the curriculum. The fiscal note reflects the requirement for DEED to develop the curriculum, which accounts for much of the projected cost. If DEED is not responsible for developing it, a different approach could be adopted.

She stated that if DEED develops the curriculum, it will need to be created effectively according to national standards for CPR instruction, which drives the majority of the expenses. Additionally, DEED would need to train individuals on how to use the new curriculum, which is what the fiscal note is focused on.

Once districts are trained, DEED would prepare a certified facilitator who could then meet district needs according to the curriculum developed by the group of experts.

[4:42:54 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON commented that she would have SB 221 amended once it is determined who will be responsible for developing the curriculum if it is not the department.

[4:43:23 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN opened public testimony on SB 221.

[4:43:39 PM](#)

JAMES WHITE, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221. He shared his experiences teaching Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to students and emphasized the importance of having an educated population ready to respond to cardiac emergencies. He spoke about losing his father-in-law to an asthma-induced cardiac arrest in 2018, which taught him that every second is crucial in such situations. He noted that 70 percent of Americans are still hesitant to perform CPR due to lack of training and pointed out that for every minute without chest compressions, a person can lose up to 10 percent of brain function. Immediate CPR more than doubles survival odds and greatly reduces the risk of brain damage or lasting harm.

MR. WHITE incorporated the American Heart Association's hands-only CPR curriculum into the life skills course he was teaching, and for the past five years, he has used this curriculum to teach students how to respond to cardiac arrest by performing CPR and using an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) when available. He described his experiences as both engaging and rewarding.

[4:45:06 PM](#)

MR. WHITE shared specific success stories, including one in December 2021 where a student saved his father's life by performing hands-only CPR after a cardiac arrest. The student credited his quick and effective response to the training he received in class just weeks prior. Another similar incident occurred in February 2023, when a student saved her mother's

life after a cardiac arrest at their Juneau home, again attributing her successful response to the CPR lessons learned in class.

[4:45:55 PM](#)

MR. WHITE highlighted the value of empowering students with practical, life-saving skills like CPR, which benefit both the students and the broader community. He expressed regret that in December 2023, the life skills course was cut due to lack of funding, eliminating CPR training opportunities for students in his district. He urged support for increased Base Student Allocation (BSA) funding to ensure teachers can continue providing CPR education in schools, emphasizing that the decision to empower students to save lives is now in the hands of the policymakers.

[4:46:42 PM](#)

SCOTT WELLMAN, M.D., representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221 and is the medical director at Providence Alaska Children's Hospital. He shared a story about a patient he met last August, a generally healthy and active 15-year-old from western Alaska. While playing basketball, the teenager suddenly felt strange and collapsed. A bystander provided Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) until medics arrived five minutes later and found an unstable heart rhythm. A defibrillator was used to restore the normal rhythm. The teenager took some time to recover but ultimately had an excellent outcome, thanks to the bystander who knew CPR. He noted that the patient's mother wanted this story shared, and he emphasized its importance. Although remarkable, he said the story was not unique, as he has seen other patients with similar experiences.

[4:47:57 PM](#)

DR. WELLMAN noted that while students can potentially save peers, CPR is more often used to save adults in their homes or communities, where 70 to 75 percent of cardiac arrests occur. He highlighted that having someone at home capable of responding to an emergency can make all the difference. He also mentioned that CPR has financial benefits, as survivors who receive CPR early tend to recover faster, leave the hospital sooner, and return to

the workforce. He acknowledged that he did not have the exact figures but believed this factor was crucial for consideration. DR. WELLMAN emphasized that CPR is an essential life skill, expressing happiness at hearing that it was taught in middle schools earlier. He noted that the benefits extend beyond saving lives, including building self-confidence among students. Given that over 40 other states have already implemented CPR training in schools, he urged that Alaska make CPR training a part of school curricula across the state.

[4:49:23 PM](#)

LINDA IRELAND, D.O., representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221. She said she is a practicing cardiologist and president of the Alaska Heart and Vascular Institute in Anchorage, as well as the current governor of the Alaska Chapter of the American College of Cardiology. She emphasized that requiring the Department of Education to implement CPR education statewide is crucial for student and community safety. She noted that cardiac arrest can happen anywhere, with 70 percent of cases occurring at home, and stressed that knowing CPR can mean the difference between life and death. Drawing from her 20 years of cardiology experience in Alaska, she shared that she has seen many instances where delayed CPR led to severe incapacity or death, cases that could have been prevented if CPR had been administered immediately. She argued that educating students is a powerful way to save lives, as empowering youth with CPR skills will have long-lasting benefits for individuals and communities. She added that the resources and training for hands-only CPR are widely available and cost-effective.

[4:50:38 PM](#)

DR. IRELAND also shared her recent partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, where she has begun teaching hands-only CPR, with plans to continue these efforts in remote areas of Alaska this summer, funded by a grant from the American College of Cardiology. She urged that with the support of SB 221, every student could graduate with the ability to respond effectively in an emergency. In conclusion, she encouraged the committee to pass SB 221, highlighting that over 40 states have already integrated CPR training into school curricula. She stressed that

advancing this legislation will allow Alaska to join those states in equipping students to act decisively in emergencies, thereby saving lives and strengthening communities.

[4:51:40 PM](#)

BRIAN WEBB, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221. He said he has been an Alaskan EMS professional since 1978 and educator since 1984. He stressed that delayed EMS response times and lack of bystander CPR are major challenges, with each minute of cardiac arrest reducing survival chances by 10 percent. He noted Alaska remains among the few states without mandatory school CPR training, despite past attempts since 2005.

[4:52:25 PM](#)

MR. WEBB emphasized that CPR certification isn't required—gaining skills is key, and effective training can be done in 30 minutes or less using low-cost programs and available mannequins. He highlighted community support efforts from Ketchikan, Kodiak, and Prince of Wales Island, and shared a success story from Juneau where a student saved his father's life using school CPR training and noted over 15 instances in the lower forty-eight states where students saved lives. He urged support for SB 221 to save lives across Alaska.

[4:53:51 PM](#)

TYLER BELK, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221. He said he is a firefighter paramedic with the Anchorage Fire Department and Executive Board member of the International Association of Firefighters Local 1264. He stated that CPR is a life-saving skill anyone can learn and has witnessed its impact firsthand through community members performing CPR before paramedics arrive. He emphasized that SB 221 provides a valuable opportunity to educate young people in the community in this critical skill. He shared personal stories, including finding a seven-year-old performing CPR on their father, underscoring the importance of this training. He expressed his full support for SB 221 and opined that his union members also support SB 221.

[4:55:41 PM](#)

FORREST KUIPER, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221 and is the President of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association. He said he is the president of the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association and emphasized the importance of incorporating CPR training into high school curricula statewide. He noted that Alaska's vast landscape creates unique emergency response challenges, where seconds can determine life or death, particularly in remote areas. He highlighted that CPR empowers individuals to provide life-saving interventions until professional help arrives. He cited three incidents in the last 60 days in the University Fire Service area where bystander CPR, combined with early advanced interventions, led to successful resuscitations. He credited these outcomes to quick bystander actions. He urged support for SB 221, stressing that integrating CPR training in schools would empower youth, improve emergency response across Alaska, and ensure a safer future.

[4:58:11 PM](#)

GERALD VOSS, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SB 221. He expressed strong support for teaching CPR at a young age, noting that he has used CPR to save lives while working in the airlines. He questioned why the resources and expertise of fire departments couldn't be leveraged to train both teachers and students, potentially reducing costs. He also asked if defibrillators are available in high schools and whether teachers would be trained to use them if needed. He reiterated his support for teaching CPR to children.

[4:59:08 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN closed public testimony on SB 221.

[4:59:18 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN held SB 221 in committee.

[4:59:49 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:59 p.m.