

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 18, 2023
1:37 p.m.

[1:37:20 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Kelly Merrick
Senator David Wilson (via teleconference)

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Jasmine Martin, Staff, Senator David Wilson; Senator Loki Tobin, Sponsor; Bill Hill, Superintendent, Bristol Bay Borough School District, Juneau; Rebecca Hamon, Bristol Bay Borough School District, Juneau; Carole Triem, Self, Juneau; Amy Brower, Superintendent, Dillingham City School District, Juneau; Paul R. Kelly, Self, Juneau; Bridget Weiss, Superintendent, Juneau School District, Juneau; Shannon Johnson, Member, Lake and Peninsula School Board; Laura Norton-Cruz, Growing Alaskan Leaders, Juneau; Kasie Luke, Superintendent, Lake and Peninsula School District.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Bert Houghtaling, Self, Big Lake; Brandy Harty, Self, Fairbanks; Megan Redmond, Self, Homer; Scott Ballard, Yupiit School District, Akiachak; Jenna Fabian, Administrator, Kenai Peninsula School District, Nikiski; Melissa Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Ketchikan School District, Ketchikan; Pete Hoepfner, Self, Cordova; Marcus

Geissler, Self, Atmautluak; Crystal Howard, Self, Wasilla; Beth Short-Rhoads, Self, Sitka; Heather Swanson, Self, Koyuk; Santiago Hubahbib, Self, Diomedes; Sebastian Santos, Self, Sivugaq; Tom Klaameyer, President, NEA-AK, Anchorage; Alex Russin, Superintendent, Cordova School District, Cordova; Louise Donhauser, Self, Anchorage; Clayton Holland, Superintendent, Kenai School District, Soldotna; Scott Macmanus, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok; Margo Bellamy, President, Anchorage School Board, Anchorage; David Schass, Self, Anchorage; Jennifer Boyle, Self, Moose Pass; Joseph Boyle, Self, Moose Pass; Leslie Jacoby, Seward Tsunami Swim Club, Seward LIO; Will Muldoon, Self, Juneau; Carl Jacobs, Vice President, Anchorage School Board, Anchorage; Lynae Benjamin, Self, Anchorage; Amber O'brien, Self, Wasilla; Dr. Susan Hunter-Joernes, Self, Juneau; Herman Morgan, Self, Aniak; Denmer Wells, Self, Anchorage; Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League, Juneau; Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Self, Juneau.

SUMMARY

SB 52 INCREASE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

SB 52 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 74 PHYSICAL THERAPY LICENSURE COMPACT

CSSB 74 (FIN) REPORTED OUT of committee with four "no recommendations", one "do pass" recommendation, and one previously published fiscal note: FN 1 (CED)

SB 75 AUD. and SPEECH-LANG INTERSTATE COMPACT

CSSB 75 (FIN) REPORTED OUT of committee with four "no recommendations", one "do pass" recommendation, and one previously published fiscal note: FN 1 (CED)

#sb74

SENATE BILL NO. 74

"An Act relating to an interstate physical therapy licensure compact; relating to the licensure of physical therapists, physical therapist assistants,

occupational therapists, and occupational therapy assistants; and providing for an effective date."

[1:37:38 PM](#)

Senator Kiehl MOVED to ADOPT the committee substitute for SB 74, Work Draft 33-LS0138\U (Bergerud, 4/11/23).

Co-Chair Olson OBJECTED for discussion.

JASMINE MARTIN, STAFF, SENATOR DAVID WILSON, explained the legislation.

[1:38:37 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:40:09 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Olson REMOVED his OBJECTION. There being NO further OBJECTION, the proposed committee substitute was adopted.

Senator Kiehl surmised that the bill addressed the people that worked for the commission, and not the providers. He remarked that the language was written to work in multiple states. He recalled that his concern was about the several strict liabilities in Alaska. He wondered how the commission would be held accountable for harm. He assumed that the commission would be held accountable, but the indemnification provision would require that the commission or insurance would pay the damages.

Ms. Martin agreed.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to REPORT CSSB 74(FIN) from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 74(FIN) REPORTED OUT of committee with four "no recommendations", one "do pass" recommendation, and one previously published fiscal note: FN 1(CED).

[1:44:06 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:44:22 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb75

SENATE BILL NO. 75

"An Act relating to an audiology and speech-language interstate compact; relating to the practice of audiology and the practice of speech-language pathology; and providing for an effective date."

1:44:47 PM

Senator Kiehl MOVED to ADOPT the committee substitute for SB 74, Work Draft 33-LS0138\S (Bergerud, 4/11/23).

Co-Chair Olson OBJECTED for discussion.

1:45:20 PM

JASMINE MARTIN, STAFF, SENATOR DAVID WILSON, stated that the bill exempted audiologists and speech pathologists from the criminal license check, and was not a requirement of the commission.

Co-Chair Olson REMOVED his OBJECTION. There being NO further OBJECTION, the proposed committee substitute was adopted.

Senator Wilson thanked the committee for hearing the bill.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to REPORT CSSB 75(FIN) from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 75(FIN) REPORTED OUT of committee with four "no recommendations", one "do pass" recommendation, and one previously published fiscal note: FN 1(CED).

1:47:08 PM

AT EASE

1:49:07 PM

RECONVENED

#sb52

SENATE BILL NO. 52

"An Act relating to education; increasing the base student allocation; and providing for an effective date."

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY

[1:49:55 PM](#)

SENATOR LOKI TOBIN, SPONSOR, explained that the bill sought to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by \$1000, \$348 the following year, and inflation proofing for FY 26.

Co-Chair Stedman requested an evaluation of the fund balances in all the districts to provide advice on the findings.

Senator Tobin agreed to provide that information.

[1:53:34 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson OPENED public testimony.

[1:53:49 PM](#)

BERT HOUGHTALING, SELF, BIG LAKE (via teleconference), spoke in opposition to the bill.

[1:56:12 PM](#)

BRANDY HARTY, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support.

[1:58:53 PM](#)

MEGAN REDMOND, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[2:01:35 PM](#)

SCOTT BALLARD, YUPIIT SCHOOL DISTRICT, AKIACHAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[2:03:08 PM](#)

JENNA FABIAN, ADMINISTRATOR, KENAI PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT, NIKISKI (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[2:05:14 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:05:20 PM](#)

RECONVENED

[2:05:54 PM](#)

BILL HILL, SUPERINTENDENT, BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the bill.

Senator Kiehl wondered whether the fund balance in the general fund had "strings attached."

Mr. Hill replied that there were different funds that had specific requirements.

Co-Chair Stedman asked about the remaining COVID relief fund balance.

Mr. Hill replied that most of those funds were incumbered, and there was approximately \$23,000 remaining.

Co-Chair Stedman wondered whether those funds could be redirected to supplant the BSA shortfall.

Mr. Hill responded that the COVID funding was to make up for learning loss and COVID-related expenditures.

Co-Chair Olson wondered whether those funds could be used to make up the shortfalls in the school's budget.

Mr. Hill replied that \$23,000 would not be enough to cover the shortfall.

[2:10:25 PM](#)

REBECCA HAMON, BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the legislation .

[2:13:23 PM](#)

CAROLE TRIEM, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the bill.

[2:15:40 PM](#)

AMY BROWER, SUPERINTENDENT, DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the bill.

[2:17:54 PM](#)

PAUL R. KELLY, SELF, JUNEAU, testified in support of the legislation.

[2:19:29 PM](#)

BRIDGET WEISS, SUPERINTENDENT, JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Stedman wondered how much of the remaining COVID relief funding was incumbered had how much could be used to redirect to supplement a BSA increase.

Dr. Weiss replied that the district will have expended all but \$1.6 million of those funds by the end of the school year, and was incumbered for learning programs and reading specialists.

[2:26:11 PM](#)

SHANNON JOHNSON, MEMBER, LAKE AND PENINSULA SCHOOL BOARD, spoke in support of the bill.

[2:29:34 PM](#)

LAURA NORTON-CRUZ, GROWING ALASKAN LEADERS, JUNEAU, testified in support of the legislation.

[2:31:39 PM](#)

MELISSA JOHNSON, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, KETCHIKAN SCHOOL DISTRICT, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), testified in support.

Co-Chair Stedman queried the budget number that made the district function.

Ms. Johnson responded that currently they would desire a \$200 BSA increase.

Co-Chair Stedman recalled that the previous year had \$56.8 million outside the formula. He wondered whether the request was in addition to that amount.

Ms. Johnson replied that the request used the base number.

[2:35:09 PM](#)

KASIE LUKE, SUPERINTENDENT, LAKE AND PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT, spoke in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Stedman asked about the use of the COVID funding.

Ms. Luke responded that the money would be spent.

Co-Chair Olson asked how much the school board funded for BSA.

Ms. Luke replied that the budget had a \$30 increase to the BSA.

Co-Chair Stedman surmised that \$500 would be required to function.

Ms. Luke agreed.

[2:40:32 PM](#)

PETE HOEPFNER, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[2:42:24 PM](#)

MARCUS GEISSLER, SELF, ATMAUTLUAK (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Stedman asked about the COVID relief funding.

Mr. Geissler replied that the COVID funds were no longer available.

[2:45:51 PM](#)

CRYSTAL HOWARD, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[2:46:47 PM](#)

BETH SHORT-RHOADS, SELF, SITKA (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[2:48:17 PM](#)

HEATHER SWANSON, SELF, KOYUK (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

Senator Merrick wondered about the international hiring agency.

Ms. Swanson stated that she did not know about the agency, but noted that teachers were being recruited from the Philippines.

Senator Merrick wondered whether the hire of a teacher from abroad was more, less, or equal to a local hire.

Ms. Swanson stated that she did not know.

[2:52:11 PM](#)

SANTIAGO HUBAHBIB, SELF, DIOMEDE (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation.

[2:53:42 PM](#)

SEBASTIAN SANTOS, SELF, SIVUQAQ (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[2:55:28 PM](#)

TOM KLAAMEYER, PRESIDENT, NEA-AK, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

Co-Chair Stedman recalled that the department had stated that the COVID relief funds could not be used for transportation, but could be used otherwise. He queried the BSA number required to make the schools function.

Mr. Klaameyer replied that there were few guardrails about the COVID money, but was discouraged to use for permanent expenditures. He stressed that it was a supplement.

[3:01:14 PM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman hoped to get a range of the needs of all schools.

Mr. Klaameyer agreed to provide that information.

[3:03:04 PM](#)

ALEX RUSSIN, SUPERINTENDENT, CORDOVA SCHOOL DISTRICT, CORDOVA (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[3:06:16 PM](#)

LOUISE DONHAUSER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[3:08:04 PM](#)

CLAYTON HOLLAND, SUPERINTENDENT, KENAI SCHOOL DISTRICT, SOLDOTNA (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation.

[3:11:13 PM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT, TOK (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[3:13:37 PM](#)

MARGO BELLAMY, PRESIDENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[3:16:03 PM](#)

DAVID SCHASS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation.

[3:17:57 PM](#)

JENNIFER BOYLE, SELF, MOOSE PASS (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[3:20:42 PM](#)

JOSEPH BOYLE, SELF, MOOSE PASS (via teleconference), hoped to be a parent voice in support of an increase in the BSA. He discussed the economic benefits to attracting families to Alaska.

[3:22:28 PM](#)

LESLIE JACOBY, SEWARD TSUNAMI SWIM CLUB, SEWARD LIO (via teleconference), testified in support of SB 52. She listed the myriad of ways that long-term stability in education funding would be helpful, particularly funding of the school public pool. She discussed the various benefits of introducing swimming to students.

[3:24:53 PM](#)

WILL MULDOON, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), testified in support of SB 52. She echoed the testimony of Sr. Weiss and Carol Triem. He listed his various titles. He spoke briefly about the education he received as a legislative intern under Senator Kiehl.

[3:26:50 PM](#)

CARL JACOBS, VICE PRESIDENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of SB 52. He spoke of the urgent need to an increase in the BSA. He lamented that static funding had left school districts in a position of being uncompetitive in the national market.

[3:29:41 PM](#)

LYNAE BENJAMIN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of SB 52. She noted that she had witnessed a decline in her children's education over the last 5 years, which she attributed to the lack of increased BSA funding.

[3:32:10 PM](#)

AMBER O'BRIEN, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[3:33:12 PM](#)

DR. SUSAN HUNTER-JOERNES, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[3:34:52 PM](#)

HERMAN MORGAN, SELF, ANIAK (via teleconference), spoke against the legislation.

[3:37:44 PM](#)

DENMER WELLS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[3:40:07 PM](#)

NILS ANDREASSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE, JUNEAU (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation.

[3:42:51 PM](#)

ALICIA HUGHES-SKANDIJS, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

Senator Merrick CLOSED public testimony. She discussed committee business.

SB 52 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[3:45:32 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.