

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
February 15, 2024
1:38 p.m.

[1:38:42 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Donny Olson, Co-Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Kelly Merrick [via teleconference]
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair

ALSO PRESENT

Senator Forrest Dunbar, Sponsor; James Holzenberg, Staff for Senator Dunbar; Sana Efird, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education; Sam Greely, Staff to Senator Hoffman; Ken Alper, Staff to Senator Olson; Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Sponsor; Besse Odom, Staff to Senator Gray-Jackson.

SUMMARY

SB 24 PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

CSSB 24(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one forthcoming fiscal impact note from the Department of Education and Early Development.

SB 56 AK PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP; ELIGIBILITY

CSSB 56(EDC) was REPORTED out of committee with three "do pass" recommendations and with one "no recommendation" recommendation, and with four new

fiscal impact notes from the Department of Education and Early Development.

SB 141 NAMING RAYMOND & ESTHER CONQUEST BRIDGE

CSSB 141(TRA) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, and with one previously published fiscal impact note: FN 1(DOT).

Co-Chair Olson discussed the agenda.

#sb56

SENATE BILL NO. 56

"An Act relating to the Alaska performance scholarship program."

[1:39:24 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson relayed that the committee had heard the bill on January 30, 2024, and had taken public testimony. There had been no amendments submitted. He invited the sponsor to comment.

[1:39:45 PM](#)

SENATOR FORREST DUNBAR, SPONSOR, relayed that the bill would do three primary things, including changing some of the qualifications to receive the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) including expanding for more career and technical education. The bill would move forward the notification deadline in order to let students know of the award earlier. The bill would increase the scholarship to account for inflation. He recounted hearing testimony that indicated that 43 percent of UA students were food insecure. He thought the bill would help promote food security for some students.

[1:41:13 PM](#)

JAMES HOLZENBERG, STAFF FOR SENATOR DUNBAR, introduced himself and noted that he was not a recipient of APS. He had peers that had received the scholarship, and he thought the award had affected his peers' ability to stay in the state.

[1:42:24 PM](#)

SANA EFIRD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, introduced herself and relayed that she was available to answer any questions posed by the committee. She recounted that the commission had passed a resolution in support of the bill the previous year.

Co-Chair Olson asked if the bill was tailored to help students that were disinclined to go on to higher education.

Ms. Efird affirmed that the intention of the bill was to encourage students to go on to higher education. She noted that the original purpose of the APS program was to encourage and promote Alaska students into a postsecondary pathway from high school. She asserted that ACPE felt very strongly that the changes in the bill would be an improvement in the program and would remove some of the barriers. She cited the ultimate goal of having students retained in the state and living productive lives.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to report CSSB 56(EDC) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 56(EDC) was REPORTED out of committee with three "do pass" recommendations and with one "no recommendation" recommendation, and with four new fiscal impact notes from the Department of Education and Early Development.

[1:45:03 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:47:10 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb141

SENATE BILL NO. 141

"An Act naming the Raymond and Esther Conquest Bridge."

[1:47:14 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson recounted that the committee first heard SB 141 on February 7, at which time it had taken public testimony. No amendments had been submitted.

[1:47:40 PM](#)

SAM GREELY, STAFF TO SENATOR HOFFMAN, thanked the committee for hearing the bill.

Co-Chair Hoffman MOVED to report CSSB 141(TRA) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note. There being no There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 141(TRA) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations, and with one previously published fiscal impact note: FN 1(DOT).

[1:48:35 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:49:55 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb24

SENATE BILL NO. 24

"An Act relating to mental health education; and providing for an effective date."

[1:49:58 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson relayed that the committee first heard SB 24 on February 7, and had taken public testimony. There was a Committee Substitute (CS) to consider.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to ADOPT proposed committee substitute for SB 24, Work Draft 33-LS0232\S (Marx/Bergerud, 2/14/24).

Co-Chair Olson OBJECTED for discussion.

[1:50:37 PM](#)

KEN ALPER, STAFF TO SENATOR OLSON, commented that the only change in the CS was to the effective date, which was modified from July 1, 2023, to July 1, 2024. He noted that there was a forthcoming change to the fiscal note to

reflect the modified effective date, and also to clarify that the funding source for the costs in curriculum development would be general fund-mental health rather than unrestricted general funds. He anticipated that the updated fiscal note would be available in approximately one hour.

Co-Chair Olson WITHDREW his objection. There being NO further OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

[1:51:42 PM](#)

SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON, SPONSOR, expressed thanks to the committee. She was pleased at receiving a letter of support from the Anchorage School District board members and superintendent. She mentioned a group of students from Sitka, who had offered testimony related to mental health in the Senate Education Committee.

Co-Chair Olson mentioned the Golovin School District and agreed that there needed to be additional support for mental health.

[1:53:49 PM](#)

BESSE ODOM, STAFF TO SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON, did not have additional comments to offer.

Co-Chair Olson asked if Ms. Odom was in favor of the bill.

Ms. Odom emphasized her support for the bill.

Senator Kiehl MOVED to report CSSB 24(FIN) out of Committee with individual recommendations and the forthcoming fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

CSSB 24(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one forthcoming fiscal impact note from the Department of Education and Early Development.

[1:54:46 PM](#)

AT EASE

[1:56:09 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Olson discussed the agenda for the next meeting.

#

ADJOURNMENT

1:56:35 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 1:56 p.m.