

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

April 22, 2024

1:36 p.m.

[1:36:16 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Olson called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:36 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

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Sponsor; Paige Brown, Staff, Senator Cathy Giessel; Erin Walker-Tolles, Executive Director, Catholic Community Services; Deb Etheridge, Director, Division of Public Assistance, Department of Health; Jamie Morgan, American Heart Association, Juneau; Cathy Munoz, Commissioner, Department of Labor and Workforce Development; Raymie Matiashowski, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman; Sylvan Robb, Director, Division of Corporations, Professional, and Business Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Ken Alper, Staff, Senator Donny Olson; Kris Curtis, Auditor, Legislative Audit.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Ron Meehan, Director of Government Affairs, Food Bank of Alaska, Anchorage; Rachel Lord, Advocacy and Policy Director, Alaska Food Policy Council, Homer; Hannah Hill, Executive Director, Bread Line, Fairbanks; Duane Patterson,

Director, Catholic Social Services Food Pantry, Anchorage; Ray Ward, Self, Anchorage; Scott Lingle, CEO, Beans Cafe, Anchorage; Scott Damerow, Chief of Mechanical Inspection, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Anchorage; Aaron Bloomquist, Chairman, Big Game Board, Palmer.

SUMMARY

SB 149 FOOD STAMP PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

SB 149 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 182 EXTEND BIG GAME COMM SERVICES BOARD

SB 182 REPORTED OUT of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one previously published fiscal note: FN 1(CED).

SB 204 CERT. OF FITNESS: PLUMBERS/ELECTRICIANS

SB 204 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 234 EXTEND MARIJUANA CONTROL BOARD

SB 234 was REPORTED OUT of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one new fiscal impact note from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

SB 248 BIG GAME COMMERCIAL SERVICES BOARD

SB 248 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb149

SENATE BILL NO. 149

"An Act relating to the supplemental nutrition assistance program; and providing for an effective date."

[1:37:23 PM](#)

SENATOR CATHY GIESSEL, SPONSOR, introduced the legislation.

[1:39:21 PM](#)

PAIGE BROWN, STAFF, SENATOR CATHY GIESSEL, discussed the Sectional Analysis (copy on file):

Section 1. Amends AS. 47.25.980(a)(3):

This section updates the reference to the chapter of United States code governing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This section also increases the household income limits for the SNAP program from 130% to 200% of the Alaska poverty standard and eliminates the household asset test.

Section 2. Amends uncodified law by adding a new section:

This section provides the authority for the Department of Health to adopt the necessary regulations to implement this Act.

Section 3. Provides for an effective date for Section 2:

Section 2 has an immediate effective date.

Section 4. Provides for an effective date.

Except as provided in sec. 3, the effective date of this Act is July 1, 2025

[1:40:31 PM](#)

RON MEEHAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, FOOD BANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support in of the bill.

[1:47:42 PM](#)

ERIN WALKER-TOLLES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES, spoke in support of the bill, and its impact on the services of the bill on the organization.

[1:53:15 PM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman remarked that for many seniors, the meal delivery service was the only contact with people.

Therefore, the meal delivery service allowed for a person to check on the senior's wellbeing. He wondered whether there should be less workload within the fiscal note.

Ms. Walker-Tolles replied that there would be time eliminated per case, but the processing of the overall case will see an increase.

[1:56:24 PM](#)

DEB ETHERIDGE, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, spoke to the fiscal notes.

[1:58:17 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson OPENED public testimony.

[1:58:51 PM](#)

JAMIE MORGAN, AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the legislation.

[2:00:50 PM](#)

RACHEL LORD, ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIRECTOR, ALASKA FOOD POLICY COUNCIL, HOMER (via teleconference), testified in support of the bill.

[2:02:25 PM](#)

HANNAH HILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BREAD LINE, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation.

[2:05:28 PM](#)

DUANE PATTERSON, DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES FOOD PANTRY, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[2:07:07 PM](#)

RAY WARD, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation.

[2:10:07 PM](#)

SCOTT LINGLE, CEO, BEANS CAFE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

[2:11:58 PM](#)

Co-Chair Olson CLOSED public testimony.

[2:12:12 PM](#)

Ms. Brown thanked the committee.

SB 149 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb204

SENATE BILL NO. 204

"An Act relating to the issuance of certificates of fitness for plumbers and electricians; relating to fees for certificates of fitness for plumbers and electricians; and providing for an effective date."

[2:13:02 PM](#)

CATHY MUNOZ, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, introduced SB 204.

[2:15:30 PM](#)

SCOTT DAMEROW, CHIEF OF MECHANICAL INSPECTION, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), discussed the presentation, "SB 204 - Certificate of Fitness: Plumbers/Electricians Senate Finance Committee" (copy on file).

Mr. Damerow addressed slide 2, "Proposal":

This legislation would:

- Change trainee certificate of fitness durations from two-to six-years
 - No change to the \$200 fee for this license
- Increase the fees for journey-level licenses from \$200 biennially to \$300 biennially

Mr. Damerow highlighted slide 3, "Why the Change":

Trainee certificate of fitness holders (enrolled in the federal apprenticeship program) often lapse their license during their apprenticeship. This results in:

- Time worked that cannot be counted towards the journeyman license
- Administrative delays in processing licenses
- Delays in becoming a journeyman

Mr. Damerow pointed to slide 4, "Mechanical Inspection Active Licenses":

Active licenses on 1/1/2024:

- AA Asbestos Abatement
- B1-4Boiler Operator Class 1-4
- EJ Electrician Journeyman
- ER Electrician Residential
- ET Electrician Trainee
- HP Hazardous Paint
- LJ Lineman Journeyman
- LT Lineman Trainee
- PG Plumber Gas
- PJ Plumber Journeyman
- PR Plumber Residential
- PT Plumber Trainee
- PU Plumber Utility
- XH Explosive Handler

Mr. Damerow looked at slide 5, "New Licenses Issued by Type and Year 2019-2023."

Mr. Damerow highlighted slide 6, "Plumbing Licenses Issued by year: 2019-2023."

Mr. Damerow pointed to slide 7, "Electrical Licenses Issued by year: 2019-2023."

Mr. Damerow looked at slide 8, "Other Licenses Issued by year: 2019-2023."

Mr. Damerow discussed slide 9, "Trainee Requirements":

Requirements for a journeyman plumber or electrician license are similar:

- Completion of 8,000 legally obtained on-the-job hours
 - May include 1,000 classroom hours
 - Hours are submitted on one or more 'Experience Verification Forms'

- Passing score of 70% or better on the exam
- Payment of \$200 fee

Mr. Damerow addressed slide 10, "Trainee Barriers":

Barriers that can make it difficult to obtain a journeyman license:

- Employers do not complete the 'Experience Verification Form' correctly
- Employers are not available to complete the 'Experience Verification Form'
- Some of the hours worked were not legally obtained
 - o Maintenance hours may not be counted
 - o Trainee certificate of fitness was lapsed when the hours were worked

Mr. Damerow displayed slide 11, "Lapsed Trainee Card Hours":

In the period from 2019

-2023:

- Electrical trainee license days lapsed:21,142(57.9 years)
 - o Average number of licensees affected per year: 51.6
 - o Average days lapsed for each affected licensee:81.9
- Plumbing trainee license days lapsed:15,513(42.5 years)
 - o Average number of licensees affected per year: 28.8
 - o Average days lapsed for each affected licensee:107.7

[2:20:52 PM](#)

Mr. Damerow looked at slide 12, "Trainee Card Renewal Requirements":

Renewal of a two-year trainee certificate of fitness:

- Pay \$200 renewal fee

Mr. Damerow discussed slide 13, "Impact":

The proposed change to duration and fees would:

- Lower the cost of apprenticeship programs for plumbers and electricians
 - Reduce administrative requirement to renew a trainee certificate of fitness in the middle of an apprenticeship
 - Result in much less time lost due to lapsed licenses
- Results:
- Incentivize more workers to enter the trade apprenticeship programs
 - Shift the financial burden to the higher-paid journey-level workers
 - Allow apprentices to "journey out" faster by removing lapsed periods

Mr. Damerow pointed to slide 14, "Proposed Fee Changes":

Fee change results:

- \$164.5 average increase in annual fees based on 2019-2023 data
- \$58.75 average annual savings for trainees
- Trainee licenses will cost \$200 for the entire apprenticeship rather than the current \$400

Mr. Damerow looked at slide 15, "Reasoning for Proposed Fee Increase":

The primary purpose of the proposed fee increase is to offset the proposed lack of renewals for trainee licenses

This number was selected to compensate for the lack of fee increases since 2006
\$200

- \$300 fee change matches the Consumer Price Index from 2006-2023
- Mechanical Inspection is self-funded from program receipts

Co-Chair Olson OPENED and CLOSED public testimony.

SB 204 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb248

SENATE BILL NO. 248

"An Act relating to an executive administrator for the Big Game Commercial Services Board."

2:24:56 PM

RAYMIE MATIASHOWSKI, STAFF, SENATOR JESSE BJORKMAN, read from the Sponsor Statement (copy on file):

Senate Bill 248 adds an executive administrator to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. The addition of such a position would support the Board as they look at the licenses they oversee, including registered guide-outfitters, master guide-outfitters, and transporters. An Executive Administrator assigned to this Board would be a complex job that requires the employee to work with multiple departments, generate reports, and assist Investigative Services and the Department of Public Safety in investigations.

The lack of this position is felt whenever a new individual comes in to fulfill these responsibilities as a licensing examiner. Being a licensing examiner has become a bit of a steppingstone position, and each turnover requires training from the ground up. This has led to some administrative errors that were highlighted in the recent audit of the Board. While the Board has been sharing an executive administrator with the Board of Marine Pilots, it has not fully resolved the issues, as both boards need much more than half of that persons time. This bill seeks to address those issues by providing a position that would encourage consistency in support of the Board and its functions.

The Big Game Commercial Services Board plays an important role in the management of commercial game hunters in the interest of the State's wildlife resources. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

2:26:26 PM

AARON BLOOMQUIST, CHAIRMAN, BIG GAME BOARD, PALMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill.

2:30:35 PM

SYLVAN ROBB, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, PROFESSIONAL, AND BUSINESS LICENSING, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, explained the fiscal note.

Co-Chair Olson OPENED and CLOSED public testimony.

SB 248 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb182

SENATE BILL NO. 182

"An Act extending the termination date of the Big Game Commercial Services Board; and providing for an effective date."

[2:32:23 PM](#)

KEN ALPER, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, explained the bill.

Senator Wilson MOVED to REPORT SB 182 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note. There being NO OBJECTION it was so ordered.

SB 182 REPORTED OUT of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one previously published fiscal note: FN 1(CED).

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[2:34:35 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb234

SENATE BILL NO. 234

"An Act relating to the Marijuana Control Board; and providing for an effective date."

[2:34:41 PM](#)

KEN ALPER, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, explained the bill.

KRIS CURTIS, AUDITOR, LEGISLATIVE AUDIT, addressed the audit attached to the legislation.

[2:36:23 PM](#)

Senator Merrick MOVED to REPORT SB 234 from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note

SB 234 was REPORTED OUT of committee with four "do pass" recommendations and with one new fiscal impact note from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

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ADJOURNMENT

[2:37:05 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:37 p.m.