

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE

February 26, 2024

1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senator Click Bishop, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Kelly Merrick
Senator Forrest Dunbar

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 144

"An Act relating to rates and time allowances for motor vehicle warranty work."

- MOVED SB 144 OUT OF COMMITTEE

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."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 228

"An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Massage Therapists; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 228 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 144

SHORT TITLE: RATES: MOTOR VEHICLE WARRANTY WORK

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) CLAMAN

05/09/23 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

05/09/23 (S) L&C
02/19/24 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/19/24 (S) Heard & Held
02/19/24 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
02/26/24 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 204

SHORT TITLE: CERT. OF FITNESS: PLUMBERS/ELECTRICIANS
SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/24/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/24 (S) L&C, FIN
02/26/24 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 228

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND BOARD OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS
SPONSOR(s): LABOR & COMMERCE

02/12/24 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/12/24 (S) L&C, FIN
02/26/24 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 144.

JEFF PERRY, Director of Public Policy
General Motors
Detroit, Michigan
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 144.

CATHY MUNOZ, Commissioner-Designee
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Gave introductory remarks on SB 204.

SCOTT DAMEROW, Chief of Mechanical Inspection
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation on SB 204.

KONRAD JACKSON, staff
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SB 228 on behalf of the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

KRIS CURTIS, Legislative Auditor
Legislative Audit Division
Legislative Affairs Agency
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 228.

SYLVAN ROBB, Director
Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing
(DCBPL)
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
(DCCED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 228.

ANNETTA ATWELL, Chair
Board of Massage Therapy
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 228.

JILL MOTZ, Government Relations Chair
American Massage Therapy Association Alaska Chapter
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 228.

VOLKER HRUBY, Representative
American Massage Therapy Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 228.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:33:09 PM](#)

CHAIR JESSE BJORKMAN called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Bishop, Merrick, and Chair Bjorkman.

SB 144-RATES: MOTOR VEHICLE WARRANTY WORK

[1:34:09 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 144, "An Act relating to rates and time allowances for motor vehicle warranty work."

[1:34:42 PM](#)

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 144, gave an overview of SB 144. He stated that SB 144 would allow auto dealers to bill the same time allowance for warranty service as is used for non-warranty service. This would help auto dealers combat workplace challenges when recruiting - and retaining - employees to perform this essential work. He noted that SB 144 is an effort to equalize the marketplace and keep mechanics working in Alaska.

[1:36:14 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 144.

[1:37:16 PM](#)

JEFF PERRY, Director of Public Policy, General Motors, Detroit, Michigan, testified in opposition to SB 144. He stated that prior to the hearing, they were asked to randomly sample 25 labor operations to compare Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) times to after-market times. They evaluated warranty repair orders submitted by dealers and found that in more than 50 percent of the cases, the mechanics recorded completing the work in the OEM published time. He added that over 50 percent of the cases were completed within after-market times. He suggested that SB 144 is not about needing more time to complete the work; rather, it is about wanting more for the sake of getting more. He stated that when technicians are not able to complete the work within the time allotted, OEM alone has a process for the dealer to submit a request for additional time.

MR. PERRY said that in 2023 General Motors (GM) approved 97 percent of additional time requests from Alaska dealers. He stated that GM makes a great effort to accurately measure the time needed for each labor operation and contrasted this with after market time guides. He commented that an after-market time guide is a product, and the customer is the dealer or the repair shop. He explained that these after-market guides compete based on who publishes the highest prices. It is not uncommon for repair shops to have multiple after-market time guides in order to "cherry-pick" the highest time for a repair when charging their customers - even though these guides come with disclaimers stating that they are estimates only - and are not intended for use when billing. He pointed out that the Alaska Auto Repair Act

requires repair shops to provide detailed receipts to avoid misrepresentation of the work performed. He suggested that charging for two hours of work when only one hour of work was done is a misrepresentation - and opined that the state of Alaska should not be endorsing this practice.

[1:40:19 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN closed public testimony on SB 144.

[1:40:34 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited a motion.

[1:40:36 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP moved to report SB 144, work order 33-LS0736\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[1:40:55 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no objection and SB 144 was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:41:07 PM](#)

At ease

SB 204-CERT. OF FITNESS: PLUMBERS/ELECTRICIANS

[1:42:50 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of 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."

[1:43:19 PM](#)

CATHY MUNOZ, Commissioner-Designee, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Juneau, Alaska, gave introductory remarks on SB 204. She stated that this legislation changes the trainee certificate for fitness (COF) from two years to six years. She explained that currently, if a trainee fails to renew their COF - which is required by law - the hours worked during the lapsed period cannot be counted towards their journeyman certification. This specifically impacts electricians and plumbers. She stated that the fee for a journeyman certificate would increase from \$200 to \$300 and added that this fee has not changed since 2006. She explained that the fee increase would partly cover the loss in revenue that would result from the changes made to the training certificate. In addition, trainees

would no longer be required to apply - and pay for - renewals during their training period, thus expediting the apprenticeship procedure - and will avoid the difficult situation of having to deny hours worked on a lapsed COF.

[1:45:10 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP asked if they received input from the industry.

[1:45:24 PM](#)

MS. MUNOZ replied yes.

[1:45:35 PM](#)

SCOTT DAMEROW, Chief of Mechanical Inspection, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Anchorage, Alaska, gave a presentation on SB 204. He first offered a brief overview of the work done by the Labor Standards and Safety Division, Mechanical Inspection section. This includes licensing and field enforcement for plumbing and electrical code work, performing inspections, issuing certificates of operation, and a variety of other related licensing services.

[1:46:20 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW moved to slide 2 and began the presentation SB 204 - Certificate of Fitness: Plumbers/Electricians:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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

[1:46:46 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW reviewed slide 3:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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

[1:47:24 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 4, displaying a pie chart depicting mechanical inspection active licenses. He pointed out that this includes electrical journeymen, electrical trainees, plumbing journeymen, and plumbing trainees.

[1:47:43 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 5, displaying a line graph depicting new licenses issued by type and year from 2019-2023. He explained that this does not include renewals. He noted a slight uptrend in both plumbing and electrician licenses issued; however, he explained that this is offset by a loss in overall licenses as workers leave the workforce.

[1:48:13 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 6, displaying a line graph depicting plumbing licenses issued by year from 2019-2023. He pointed out that the graph shows a decrease in overall licenses.

[1:48:23 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 7, displaying a line graph depicting electrical licenses issued by year from 2019-2023. He pointed out that, as with plumbing licenses, electrical licenses show a slight increase in trainees but a decrease in overall licenses.

[1:48:36 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 8, displaying a line graph depicting other licenses issued by year from 2019-2023. He noted that these are included to give an overall picture of licensing and trainees, though they do not directly apply to SB 204. He noted that there are downtrends in most areas. He commented that, while this is to be expected in asbestos abatement, it is alarming to see in the other areas.

[1:49:07 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW reviewed slide 9:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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 percent or better on the exam
- Payment of \$200 fee

[1:49:19 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP asked if the terms (e.g. electrical trainee) used in the presentation are federal identifiers or if they are unique to Alaska.

[1:49:55 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW replied that the identifiers are unique to the state. He explained that there are no federal guidelines for this; however, the identifiers used in Alaska match the general federal requirements for the federal apprenticeship program.

[1:50:08 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP commented on the distinction between an "electrician trainee" and "electrician apprentice."

[1:50:19 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW replied that there are no apprenticeship programs offered. He explained that Alaska is a federally managed apprenticeship state. The state of Alaska issues a trainee card to complete the training work - and this works in conjunction with the federal apprenticeship program.

[1:50:33 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP referred to the use of the term "journeyman" and opined that "journeypersons" is a more apt term.

[1:50:44 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW expressed agreement and clarified that the language used in the presentation is what is in current statute.

[1:50:56 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked why workers are leaving the industry.

[1:51:09 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW replied that reasons include Covid-19; an increase in college attendance and a resulting decrease in trade workers; and a lack of promotion of the trades. He said that training and work are available and part of the intention behind SB 204 is to keep these jobs in Alaska.

[1:52:14 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked for clarification that many of these workers are state and municipal employees.

[1:52:23 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW replied that those workers are included in the chart data.

[1:52:30 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if a lack of concrete retirement impacts whether individuals stay in the industry.

[1:52:45 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW replied that he cannot speak to this.

[1:53:01 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW continued reviewing slide 9.

[Original punctuation provided.]

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 percent or better on the exam
- Payment of \$200 fee

[1:53:36 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW reviewed slide 10:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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
 - Maintenance hours may not be counted
 - Trainee certificate of fitness was lapsed when the hours were worked

MR.DAMEROW said that SB 204 removes one barrier that trainees experience.

[1:54:05 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW spoke to points on slide 11:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Lapsed Trainee Card Hours

In the period from 2019-2023:

Electrical trainee license days lapsed:

- 21,142 (57.9 years)
- Average number of licensees affected per year: 51.6
- Average days lapsed for each affected licensee: 81.9

Plumbing trainee license days lapsed:

- 15,513 (42.5 years)
- Average number of licensees affected per year: 28.8
- Average days lapsed for each affected licensee: 107.7

MR. DAMEROW noted that some of the trainee hours were worked illegally and could not be put toward their journeyman license.

[1:54:49 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW reviewed slide 12:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Trainee Card Renewal Requirements

Renewal of a two-year trainee certificate of fitness:

- Pay \$200 renewal fee

MR. DAMEROW explained that there are no training requirements or other markers used for trainee card renewal.

[1:55:06 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW spoke to points on slide 13:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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 explained that extending the timeframe to six years would cover the full length of the trainee program, thus ensuring that trainees do not experience lapsed licenses. He noted that the changes in SB 204 would go into effect on July 1, coinciding with the new fiscal year. Additionally, current trainee cardholders would be able to upgrade to the six-year card.

[1:56:32 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW advanced to slide 14, displaying a bar graph of current and proposed fees and the following text:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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 said that lowering these fees would remove a barrier for those entering the trainee group directly out of high school.

[1:57:30 PM](#)

MR. DAMEROW reviewed slide 15:

[Original punctuation provided.]

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

[1:58:02 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP surmised that one reason fewer people are applying for the trade programs is the legalization of cannabis. With respect to fees, he commented that apprentices often begin at 60 percent of the journey person's pay and work 70 hours per week. He opined that the trainees can afford the \$200 fee.

[2:00:05 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 204; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[2:00:32 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked if the other crafts are required to have a certificate of fitness and, if so, why aren't they included in SB 204.

[2:01:01 PM](#)

MS. MUNOZ answered that the Department of Labor oversees the training for electricians and plumbers.

[2:01:19 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked if other crafts also need a certificate of fitness.

[2:01:27 PM](#)

MS. MUNOZ expressed her understanding that the other trades do not require a certificate of fitness. She deferred to Mr. Damerow.

MR. DAMEROW said that he would defer this to the Department of Commerce.

[2:02:20 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 204 in committee.

[2:02:26 PM](#)

At ease

SB 228-EXTEND BOARD OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS

[2:06:11 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 228, "An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Massage Therapists; and providing for an effective date."

[2:06:34 PM](#)

KONRAD JACKSON, Staff, Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented SB 228 on behalf of the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee. He explained that SB 228 would extend the sunset date of the Board of Massage Therapists by six years, to 2030. He noted that an audit of the board found four issues that need to be addressed by the department and the board. He acknowledged that EO 127 would eliminate the Board of Massage Therapists and explained that if

EO 127 is disapproved, this board extension needs to be in place.

[2:08:12 PM](#)

KRIS CURTIS, Legislative Auditor, Legislative Audit Division, Legislative Affairs Agency, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 228. She paraphrased from the following statement:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The Division of Legislative Audit conducted a sunset audit of the Board of Massage Therapists. I believe you all have a copy of the report in your meeting packets. This audit is dated August 2023. The objectives of a sunset audit are to determine whether a board or commission is serving the public's interest and whether it should be extended.

Overall, the audit concluded that the board operated in the public's interest by conducting its meetings in an effective manner and actively amending regulations to address statutory changes, improve the licensing process, and enhance public safety. The audit also concluded that licenses were not consistently issued in compliance with state law, board related cases were not consistently investigated in a timely manner, continuing education audits were not completed, and licensing fees did not cover the cost of regulating the profession.

We recommend the legislature extend the board's termination date six years, to June 30, 2030, which is two years less than the maximum allowed by statute. The reduced extension reflects the need for more routine oversight in recognition of the audit findings.

On page 6 you will find the board's licensing statistics. As of December 2022, the board had 1, 157 active licenses and registrations.

On Page 9 of the report you will find the board's schedule of revenues and expenditures. As of March 2023, the board had a surplus of approximately 36,000. You can see that during FY 22, the board was allocated just over \$289,000 of general funds to replace revenue

lost due to the license fee freeze mandated by the governor to help mitigate the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. General fund allocations are not expected in the future. And the board was expected to have a deficit at the end of FY 23. Exhibit 3 indicates that a fee increase is needed to prevent a continuing deficit. DCBPL did not recommend a fee increase for the 2023 licensure renewal period based on DCCED's FY 24 proposed operating budget that requested general funds be used for all occupational board investigative costs. The request was not approved by the legislature and DCBPL management stated that there was insufficient time to update fees once the request was denied. Consequently, this board's deficit is expected to grow.

2:10:51 PM

MS. CURTIS continued:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The audit includes four recommendations that begin on page 12. First we recommend the DCBPL's director develop procedures to ensure licenses are not approved based on outdated documentation. We tested 32 licenses and registrations found three had been approved with stale documentation. Regs say that licensing documents older than six months must be resubmitted. Staff turnover and a lack of procedures was the cause of this error.

Second recommendation - we recommend DCCED's commissioner work with policy makers to improve the recruitment and retention of investigators.

Recommendation 3 is similar - we recommend the commissioner work with policy makers to improve the recruitment and retention of licensing staff. These recs are the result of our testing timeliness of investigations and continuing education audits. Both of these functions had deficiencies which were caused by vacancies.

Rec 4 is on page 14, We recommend the board and DCBPL director consider increasing licensing fees. Statues require that the fees be set at a level to covers the

regulatory cost of the occupation. This board's fees are not sufficient.

Management's response to the audit begin on page 23. The commissioner concurred with the conclusions and recommendations. The audit does not include a response form the board chair. The board did not have a chair at the time we requested response.

[2:12:34 PM](#)

SENATOR MERRICK asked how many investigations or complaints are filed per year.

[2:12:46 PM](#)

MS. CURTIS replied that they do not summarize by year. However, 155 cases were open or opened between FY 21 and December 2022.

[2:13:18 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON referred to the schedule of revenue and expenditures and asked for clarification of the "personnel services."

[2:13:33 PM](#)

MS. CURTIS replied that this includes licensing staff and investigators. It would also include any legal assistance would fall under "services."

[2:14:15 PM](#)

SYLVAN ROBB, Director, Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing (DCBPL), Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), Juneau, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 228. She said that there were four recommendations contained in the audit. One was related to outdated documentation, and she explained that this was partly due to staffing issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. She said that this has since improved and added that some positions have been restructured to provide greater oversight. She stated that the next two recommendations are related to recruitment. She acknowledged that this is an issue and said the department is taking steps to improve recruitment. However, she said that this is a statewide issue that may need a statewide solution. The division is in the middle of a classification study for all licensing examiners and records and licensing supervisors (50 personnel within the division). She expressed hope that, once concluded, this will help to make positions more attractive. She explained that currently, occupational licensing examiners are a single position type. The study would create multiple examiner

positions based on varying degrees of responsibility and oversight.

[2:16:58 PM](#)

MS. ROBB stated that the final recommendation was related to fees. She explained that in 2023, the Governor proposed switching the investigation fund source from licensing fees to the general fund. However, this change did not make it into the final budget and there was not enough time to implement a licensing fee change. She explained that massage therapist licenses are renewed every two years on odd years (2023 was a renewal year) and changing the fee during the renewal period would be problematic. She said that the division will be doing a fee analysis and adjusting the fee as necessary.

[2:18:18 PM](#)

ANNETTA ATWELL, Chair, Board of Massage Therapy, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 228. She said that the board has done a great deal of work over the past 9 years to improve the status of the massage therapy profession in Alaska. This work has included the establishment of licensing, revising regulations, professional input on investigations concerning the scope of practice, and the development of disciplinary matrices over the diverse range of definable negligence or illegal activity. She said that the board continues to maintain connections with national massage therapy organizations and state boards which allows the board to gather information on a variety of issues. She stated that one goal of the board is to ensure that members are knowledgeable about human and sex trafficking in order to identify perpetrators and briefly explained how these individuals can be identified. She emphasized the importance of communication between the board and licensees. She said that licensees are currently able to bill insurance - which would change if the board were allowed to expire.

[2:21:50 PM](#)

JILL MOTZ, Government Relations Chair, American Massage Therapy Association Alaska Chapter, Palmer, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 228. She said the board ensures public safety by providing expert oversight when reviewing applications and consulting on investigations, and keeping up with industry standards, among others. She opined that the board helps to keep DCBPL honest and focused. She shared a variety of issues that she observed within DCBPL which then impacted the board's ability to perform its work. She said that the board plays an important role in combating human and sex trafficking and

emphasized the importance of experts who understand the massage therapy profession and can watch for the signs of these occurring. She detailed the myriad ways massage therapists are able to identify these individuals. She pointed out that all of the board members are volunteers who give of their personal time. The current structure ensures that both DCBPL and the board are held accountable. She stated that the board has grown a great deal since its inception and opined that it should be allowed to continue to grow. She detailed the ways the profession has grown as a result of work done by the board.

[2:26:43 PM](#)

VOLKER HRUBY, Representative, American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 228. He said that he has been a licensed massage therapist since 2005 and has served on AMTA at both a state and national level. He stated that continuing the board is crucial to the profession of massage therapy. He pointed out that the board is primarily made up of licensed volunteer massage therapists, thus giving massage therapists a voice in the various processes governing the profession. He stated that massage therapy is a healthcare profession, and therapists work with vulnerable populations. He stated that the expertise of members is beneficial when dealing with the myriad issues that come before the board. In addition, the board has worked to minimize board-related expenses and increase efficiency of the licensing process. He noted that the recent audit recommended that the board continue and shared his belief that the board has and will continue to work hard to improve all aspects of their work. He said that allowing the board to lapse would create a public safety issue. He stated that the board increases efficiency, helps keep costs down, helps protect the profession from illegal entities, and helps maintain the respectability of the profession in Alaska.

[2:29:17 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked for clarification regarding massage therapists' ability to bill insurance.

[2:29:49 PM](#)

MR. HRUBY deferred to Ms. Motz.

[2:30:07 PM](#)

MS. MOTZ answered that currently massage therapists can bill insurance companies directly. While some insurance companies require a prescription from a medical doctor, chiropractor, or

physical therapist, the massage therapist no longer needs their direct oversight in order to bill insurance.

[2:30:53 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 228; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[2:31:30 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited the will of the committee.

[2:31:37 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP moved to report SB 228, work order 33-LS1311\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[2:31:51 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no objection and SB 228 was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[2:32:17 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bjorkman adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:32 p.m.