

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 3, 2025

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Jubilee Underwood
Representative Rebecca Schwanke
Representative Bill Elam

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Maxine Dibert

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION

HEIDI BARNES - Wasilla

KIMBERLY BERGEY - Palmer

- CONFIRMATION(S) : ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 57

"An Act relating to wireless telecommunications devices in public schools; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 57

SHORT TITLE: COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(S) : REPRESENTATIVE(S) FIELDS

01/22/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(H)	L&C, EDC
01/29/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
01/29/25	(H)	Heard & Held
01/29/25	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
01/31/25	(H)	L&C AT 9:15 AM GRUENBERG 120

01/31/25	(H)	Heard & Held
01/31/25	(H)	MINUTE (L&C)
02/05/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
02/05/25	(H)	Moved CSHB 57(L&C) Out of Committee
02/05/25	(H)	MINUTE (L&C)
02/10/25	(H)	L&C RPT CS(L&C) 5DP 1NR
02/10/25	(H)	DP: CARRICK, SADDLER, COULOMBE, HALL, FIELDS
02/10/25	(H)	NR: NELSON
02/24/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/24/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/24/25	(H)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/03/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

HEIDI BARNES, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

KIMBERLY BERGEY, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, answered committee questions on CSHB 57(L&C).

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:04:15 AM

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Himschoot, Schwanke, Underwood, Eischeid, Story, and Elam were present at the call to order.

^CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

^Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

[8:05:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the first order of business would be two confirmation hearings to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

[8:06:25 AM](#)

HEIDI BARNES, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Testified during her confirmation hearing to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission. She began her testimony by explaining her background in Alaska public education and said that she is "passionate about teaching because of the positive impacts that I directly make on students lives, getting to make a positive experience at such an early age".

[8:07:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Barnes to give an overview of the duty of the PTPC and what her goals would be while serving on the PTPC. She asked what challenges she sees that educators are facing both as a profession and in the classroom. She asked Ms. Barnes to elaborate on what her leadership duties might entail.

MS. BARNES answered that the duty of the PTPC is to discipline members of the teaching profession and said that she wants to continue to help shape the future of teaching in "other capacities". She shared her understanding that educators today are facing job instability and "very large classroom sizes". She said that she is taking more leadership roles within her school currently and explained how that might translate to the PTPC.

[8:12:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked Ms. Barnes what the genesis of her application to the PTPC was. He asked if a teacher is wrong to teach a district-approved curriculum in the face of public scrutiny.

MS. BARNES answered that she "wants to be a part of the advancement of our profession" and said that she cares about the integrity of the teaching profession. She said that she was recommended to apply to the PTPC by a previous educator and

colleague. She replied that she didn't know if she could say whether or not it was wrong for a teacher to teach a certain curriculum in the face of public scrutiny.

[8:20:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked Ms. Barnes what else she is involved in beside her teaching profession.

MS. BARNES answered that she is currently serving on her son's baseball team board and said that she does volunteer work.

[8:21:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Barnes if she has had any experience with hands-on, place-based learning models.

MS. BARNES replied that her entire experience as a kindergarten teacher was in giving kinesthetic instruction.

[8:23:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked Ms. Barnes how she might respect a school district's approved curriculum and an individual student families own religious views at the same time.

MS. BARNES replied that she didn't know how to answer such a question.

[8:27:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked Ms. Barnes what grade levels she has taught during her teaching career.

MS. BARNES answered that she taught 3rd grade for four years, taught as a substitute teacher for five years, then moved to her position as a kindergarten teacher for the previous 6 years.

[8:29:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Barnes if ethics could be divided into conservative ethics and progressive ethics.

MS. BARNES answered that there are "just ethics" and said that she doesn't believe that "any of that plays a part" in influencing ethics.

[8:31:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT thanked Ms. Barnes and

[8:31:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the committee would hear from Kimberly Bergy, the second appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:31:55 AM](#)

KIMBERLY BERGEY, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Testified during her confirmation hearing to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission. She began her testimony by explaining her background in Alaska public education and said that she viewed the opportunity to continue her service on the PTPC as an opportunity to provide "exemplary service back to my peers".

[8:33:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Bergy why she is choosing to continue to serve on the PTPC and asked what she believed to be the biggest challenge that is facing educators today. She asked how teachers are initially introduced to their code of ethics upon their hiring as a teacher. She asked how often the PTPC meets and how often alleged teaching ethics violations are brought before the commission.

MS. BERGEY replied that the PTPC plays a critical role in ensuring the integrity of the work that teachers do and said that she wants to be a good member of the PTPC. She said that she views communication with families and the various pressures that teachers face as the biggest challenges facing education today. She answered that all teachers must acknowledge the code of ethics upon their licensure as a teacher. She explained that the amount of alleged teaching ethics violations brought before the commission varies year by year.

[8:41:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Bergy what her experience is with regards to teaching with hands-on, place-based teaching models and asked her to explain a situation where place-based teaching models might not have worked.

MS. BERGEY answered that place-based learning can be very helpful for some students, not all students.

[8:44:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked Ms. Bergey if she is currently serving as a teacher or as a superintendent on the PTPC. He asked if it is normal for the PTPC to make decisions when less than a quorum of members is present.

MS. BERGEY replied that she serves as a principal representative on the PTPC. She said that during an administrative hearing, a quorum is not necessary to make action on agenda items.

[8:47:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Bergey if the PTPC is able to get clear background checks on teaching candidates who are applying from overseas. She asked for clarification on the information displayed on her resume and asked what her role as a principal is while working for a homeschool program. She asked if someone could serve on both the PTPC and the State Board of Education.

MS. BERGEY answered that the PTCS uses a separate background check system for international teachers hired in Alaska. She said that she deals with students who are "not compliant" and works to help families who are experiencing difficulty with their education experience. She explained that the work of the PTPC is to adjudicate teachers' compliance with teaching ethics, while the work of the State Board of Education is to implement education policy.

[8:54:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT stated that the House Education Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Heidi Barnes and Kimberly Bergey, Professional Teaching Practices Commission. She said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection].

[8:55:00 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:55 a.m. to 9:01 a.m.

^#hb57

HB 57-COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[9:01:59 AM](#)

[Due to technical difficulties, the call back to order was not captured on the recording but was reconstructed from the secretary's log notes.]

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the final order of business would be CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 57(L&C), "An Act relating to wireless telecommunications devices in public schools; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSHB 57(L&C).]

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Representative Fields if there should be a sunset clause associated with CSHB 57(L&C) and asked if a student on an Individual education Plan (IEP) should be allowed an exception for cell phone use. She asked why CSHB 57(L&C) does not direct school boards to implement the proposed cell phone ban. S

[9:02:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, answered committee questions on CSHB 57(L&C). He said that it would not be effective to apply a sunset date and said that he doesn't see the dangerous effects of social media addiction in children changing within the next three to five years. He clarified that Section 1 of the proposed legislation directs school districts to implement the policy of CSHB 57(L&C) and shared his preference for the bill to go into effect in the fall of 2025.

[9:06:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM shared his appreciation for the proposed legislation

[9:07:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID echoed Co-Chair Story's idea for CSHB 57(L&C) to include a follow-up report on the effects of the proposed legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS shared his agreeance that it could be beneficial for the Department of Education and Early Development

[9:08:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD shared her understanding that the model policy of the proposed legislation would be the baseline for all other policy adopted under CSHB 57 (L&C).

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS said that Representative Underwood's understanding was correct.

[9:09:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE shared her opinion that the legislators must tread carefully when creating laws that local school boards might be able to handle on their own.

[9:10:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked how school districts around Alaska would get the proposed policies off the ground.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS shared his understanding that school districts would each adopt their own individual policy that concerned the implementation of the proposed legislation.

[9:11:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on CSHB 57(L&C). after ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[9:12:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that HB 57 would be held over.
#

[9:13:34 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:13 a.m.