

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 17, 2025

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

University of Alaska Board of Regents:

Cristine Resler - Anchorage

Karen Purdue - Fairbanks

CONFIRMATION(S) : ADVANCED

Board of Education and Early Development:

Kathryn McCollum - Anchorage

Kimberly Bergey - Anchorage

PUBLIC TESTIMONY - HEARD

CONFIRMATION(S) : ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 105

"An Act relating to mental health education."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 28

"An Act establishing a student loan repayment pilot program; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 28 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 105

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) GALVIN

02/14/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/14/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
03/14/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/14/25	(H)	Heard & Held
03/14/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/17/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 28

SHORT TITLE: TEACHER/STATE EMPLOYEE STUDENT LOAN PRGRM

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STORY

01/22/25	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/12/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/12/25	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
02/17/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/17/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/17/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/24/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
02/24/25	(H)	Heard & Held
02/24/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/12/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/12/25	(H)	Heard & Held
03/12/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/17/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

CHRISTINE RESLER, Governor's Appointee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing.

SHELLEY CORDOVA
representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

LIAM ZSOLT

representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MARY K. HUGHES

representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

LORI DAVEY

representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

GABRIEL LOW

representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

ADAM LOW, Director

Teaching Through Tech, University of Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

KAREN PERDUE, Governor's Appointee

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing.

JOHN DAVIES

representing self

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents

JOMO STEWART, Member

Fairbanks Economic Development Council

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents

PHIL MOSER

representing self

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents

TREVOR STORRS, President & CEO,

Alaska Children's Trust

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 105.

KATHLEEN WEDEMEYER, Deputy Director

Citizens Commission on Human Rights

Seattle, Washington

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 105.

ADRIANNE RICHARDSON, Member

The Faithful Few

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 105.

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director

Innovation & Education Excellence

Department of Education & Early Development

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the fiscal note associated with HB 105.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:34 AM](#)

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

^CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

^CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Board of Education and Early Development

[8:06:19 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the first order of business would be two confirmation hearings.

[8:06:59 AM](#)

CHRISTINE RESLER, Governor's Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Testified during her confirmation hearing. She shared that she has three children in the University of Alaska (UA) system and explained her academic history and background in working as an educator. She highlighted her work at the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) Energy department and emphasized her desire to aid university students in their preparation for a career and also boost Alaska's economic potential in the process.

[8:13:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Resler if she had any idea of how much money the UA system is at risk of losing due to Federal funding cuts and asked Ms. Resler what she thought of the recent decision by the UA Board of Regents to remove all language concerning Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the UA system.

MS. RESLER answered that there are no current indications from the Federal Government that it would cut any funding dedicated towards the UA System. She said, "I am certainly in support of strong universities, and to have strong universities, we need funding." she said that the UA Board of Regents didn't think that anything would change regardless of their open recognition of DEI programs and emphasized that the decision to remove DEI programs and references was in the name of protecting funding to the UA System. She said that she is in "full support" of making sure that UA faculty is hired on merit and "doing everything we can to not see significant changes to our university system."

[8:18:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if the UA Board of Regents was doing anything it could to ensure more funding and industry support for career & technical education (CTE) classes.

MS. RESLER said yes, the UA Board of Regents was looking to ensure the viability of funding to CTE classes and pointed to the UA Kenai campus as an example of a place within the UA system that was actively supporting CTE classes.

[8:21:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked what the UA system is doing to entice professional talent from outside of Alaska.

MS. RESLER pointed to her time on the UA committee for recruitment, retention, & graduation as an example of the UA system's work in enticing professional talent from outside of Alaska. She said that the UA Board of Regents has recently approved a plan to address and specifically target certain aspects of faculty recruitment and retention.

[8:26:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked if the proposal to ban DEI language from the UA system was on the agenda the day of the meeting and asked if the Board took public testimony on the day that it chose to ban DEI language and programs from UA schools.

MS. RESLER answered that she did not know whether or not the item was on the agenda and said that there was no public testimony on the committee meeting, so there was no need to have it on any agenda beforehand.

[8:29:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Resler why she wanted to serve on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MS. RESLER said that teaching is her passion and said "I never remember taking maternity leave, I taught 48 hours after giving birth to number two". She said that teaching is her hobby, her pastime, and said that she sees the UA Board of Regents as a way of bringing industry and students together.

[8:32:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked Ms. Resler how she would work to entice young people to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and asked what she thought of the Troth Yeddha Indigenous Studies center.

MS. RESLER answered that she is "all for the building, but we have to make sure that we can fund it in a way that does not take away from the rest of the University". She said that the UA Board of Regents would work to excite new UA students by

creating an environment that felt like a campus that is "warm and cozy."

[8:37:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on Ms. Resler's confirmation hearing.

[8:37:39 AM](#)

SHELLEY CORDOVA, representing self, Testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She shared her work history with Ms. Resler and emphasized that she was strongly dedicated to Alaska and its education system. She said that she had "no doubt that Ms. Resler would make a positive impact on Alaska and make it a place that we can all thrive."

[8:40:03 AM](#)

LIAM ZSOLT, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said that Ms. Resler is "beloved by her students and colleagues" and said that she is a business leader who knows how to mentor young people into successful, professional, and skilled members of the Alaska workforce. She said that Ms. Resler has had an "incredibly positive impact on students and the UA system."

[8:42:54 AM](#)

MARY K. HUGHES, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She said that she believed that Ms. Resler was "absolutely the most qualified person to serve on the University of Alaska Board of Regents."

[8:45:01 AM](#)

LORI DAVEY, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She said that she has watched Ms. Resler "continually invest in Alaska through her dedication to the UA system and education."

[8:46:26 AM](#)

GABRIEL LOW, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He shared a series of his own professional endeavors that Ms. Resler has been a part of and said that the UA system would "really benefit" from her presence on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[8:49:15 AM](#)

ADAM LOW, Director, Teaching Through Tech, University of Fairbanks, testified in support of Ms. Resler's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said that Ms. Resler "absolutely represents the kind of innovation that is needed in Alaska" and emphasized her career experience as a perspective that is "so needed" on the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[8:52:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on Ms. Resler's confirmation hearing.

[8:52:45 AM](#)

KAREN PERDUE, Governor's Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Testified during her confirmation hearing. She shared her history in Alaska in her professional and personal capacity and said "education is the great equalizer in our society." She shared that she worked for four Alaska governors, beginning with Governor Jay Hammond and said that her belief that the UA Board of Regents needs to work to assist place-committed students. She said that distance delivery has been "transformative" in helping students study and work in their communities around Alaska and said that the UA system is currently in a "strong and stable position." She highlighted that both enrollment and research investment are growing and said that financial reductions, the cutting of academic programs, federal cuts and accreditation issues are the biggest issues that the UA system is currently facing.

[9:00:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Purdue how the Alaska State Legislature could better prepare students looking to enter the UA system.

MS. PURDUE answered that the UA system has "fundamentally transformed" its developmental education program and pointed to the UA system's dual enrollment program as an example of a highly effective tool to better prepare prospective UA students.

[9:05:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked Ms. Purdue if the proposal to ban DEI language from the UA system was on the agenda the day of the meeting and asked if the Board took public testimony on the day that it chose to ban DEI language and programs from UA schools.

MS. Purdue answered that the issue regarding DEI was considered financially "urgent" and shared her belief that the decision was necessary to ensure federal funding to the UA system. She said that there was "ample reason" for the UA Board of Regents to act as they did given the financial pressure of the situation.

[9:11:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how the UA Board of Regents could ensure that community members and students are understood, valued, safe, and have access to opportunities within the UA system given the recent changes to DEI policy.

MS. PURDUE answered that all students are welcome and valued within the UA system. She said that there has been no change in what students and faculty can say or teach, the change to language regarding DEI was purely performative.

[9:16:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on Ms. Purdue's confirmation hearing.

[9:16:51 AM](#)

JOHN DAVIES, representing self, testified in support of Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said that Ms. Purdue's service as Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and as Chair of the UA Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs Committee "indicate a deeply caring person." He said that Ms. Purdue is "always prepared and asked the hard questions."

[9:18:17 AM](#)

JOMO STEWART, Fairbanks Economic Development Council, testified in support of Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said that Ms. Purdue was "brilliant and big-hearted" and said that she was committed to the advancement of Alaska. He highlighted Ms. Purdue's background in healthcare as evidence of her capacity to champion and develop healthcare shortfalls in Alaska.

[9:20:16 AM](#)

PHIL MOSER, representing self, testified in opposition to Ms. Purdue's appointment to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said that the UA Board of Regents recent decision regarding DEI was short-sighted and unfairly made without any public notice beforehand. He said that the UA Board of Regents is more concerned with the "overcompliance" of federal regulations and funding rather than the safety of the students who attend the UA system. He said that he was troubled that both of the appointees heard during the current committee meeting were appointed by Governor Dunleavy, whom is an outspoken advocate for the deconstruction of the United States Department of Education.

[9:23:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, she closed public testimony on Ms. Purdue's confirmation hearing.

^CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

^**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**
Board of Education and Early Development

[9:23:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the next order of business would be public testimony on a confirmation hearing previously heard by the committee.

[9:24:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on both Kathryn McCollum and Kimberly Bergey's confirmation hearings to the Board of Education and Early Development. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

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: Cristine Resler, Karen Purdue, University of Alaska Board of Regents; Kathryn McCollum, Kimberly Bergy, Board of Education and early Development. 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.

[9:25:41 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease from 9:25 a.m. to 9:32 a.m.
#

^#hb105

HB 105-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

[9:32:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 105, "An Act relating to mental health education."

[CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony].

[9:32:53 AM](#)

CAROLINE STORM* representing self* Anchorage, Alaska testified in support of HB 105.{ Testified in support of HB 105. She explained how mental health education in schools is related to eating disorders and said that she supported HB 105 in the hopes that it would allow students to tackle their mental health issues before they became more serious.

[9:34:09 AM](#)

TREVOR STORRS, President & CEO, Alaska Children's Trust, testified in support of HB 105. He said that suicide was the leading cause of death for Alaskans aged 15-24 in 2019 and said that the proposed legislation would reduce stigma surrounding mental health care, provide resources for parents and students, and allow kids to better learn about themselves.

[9:36:26 AM](#)

KATHLEEN WEDEMEYER, Deputy Director, Citizens Commission on Human Rights, testified in opposition to HB 105. She said that HB 105 leaves a gap in the types of mental health care that is able to be delivered to kids in Alaska by not accounting for other views on mental health held by alternative medical providers.

[9:38:50 AM](#)

ADRIANNE RICHARDSON, The Faithful Few, testified in support of HB 105. She said that she supported HB 105 because the bill could assist Alaskan children in becoming aware of their own mental health issues and emphasized the proposed legislation's potential to save lives.

[9:41:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 105.

[9:42:01 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:42 a.m.

[9:42:56 AM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Innovation & Education Excellence, Department of Education & Early Development, Explained the fiscal note associated with HB 105. She explained that the fiscal note is \$216,000 and includes one-time expenses such as updated guidelines and standards for mental health in schools. She said that it would be \$120,000 for the convening of the committee outline by the proposed legislation, \$32,000 for a facilitator, \$6,000 for the required regulation changes, and \$60,000 for the committee member's stipends.

[9:45:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the amendment deadline for HB 105 would be Thursday, March 30, 2025.

#

^#hb28

HB 28-TEACHER/STATE EMPLOYEE STUDENT LOAN PRGRM

[9:45:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 28, "An Act establishing a student loan repayment pilot program; and providing for an effective date."

[9:46:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY moved to report HB 28 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE objected.

[9:46:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE explained that her belief that HB 28 would not be an appropriate use of the higher education investment fund, especially because the Alaska State Legislature has yet to see the impacts of an expanded Alaska Performance Scholarship.

[9:49:19 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY responded that the precipice of HB 28 was the necessity of the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WWAMI) school coalition program and shared her "respectful disagreement" that the teacher repayment program at \$1 million each year over the next three years compromise the higher education fund.

[9:50:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD added that she would like to see the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) fund the program that helped rural teachers stay in Alaska.

[9:51:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY reminded the committee that the loan forgiveness program was discontinued because it did not yield the results that the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education had initially hoped for and emphasized the differences between a loan repayment program and a loan forgiveness program.

[9:54:04 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease from 9:54 a.m. to 9:57 a.m.

[9:57:04 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Eischeid, Story, Dibert, and Himschoot voted in favor of HB 28. Representatives Underwood, Schwanke, and Elam voted against it. Therefore, HB 28 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee by a vote of 4-3.

[9:57:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT delivered committee announcements.

[9:58:43 AM](#)

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.