

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2025

8:02 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): PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES
COMMISSION

Kathryn Baird, Fairbanks
Angela Alston, Fairbanks

CONFIRMATION(S): ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 105

"An Act relating to mental health education."

- MOVED HB 105 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
03/17/25	(H)	Heard & Held

03/17/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)
03/26/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

KATHRYN BAIRD, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing.

DAVID JIANG, Staff
Representative Alyese Galvin
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Alyese Galvin, prime sponsor, presented HB 105 to the committee.

ANGELA ALSTON, Appointee*
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during her confirmation hearing.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Story, Himschoot, Eischeid, Schwanke, Elam, and Dibert were present at the call to order. Representative Underwood arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): Professional Teaching Practices Commission

[8:03:36 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the first order of business would be a confirmation hearing for Kathryn Baird to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

[8:04:51M](#)

KATHRYN BAIRD, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, testified during her confirmation hearing. She began her testimony by describing her time working as a law clerk and district attorney in Alaska and explained how those

two positions qualified her to serve on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC). She detailed her current occupation as a 3rd grade educator and emphasized the need for well-prepared and informed educators to serve on the PTPC.

[8:07:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Baird why she chose to change her career paths from law to education and asked her to describe some of the challenges that educators face in the classroom today.

MS. BAIRD answered that her goal was to have "adults make better decisions and become better citizens" while working in law and explained her realization that she might be better able to serve that goal as an educator. She said that class sizes and family engagement are two of the biggest challenges that face public education in Alaska today.

[8:12:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked Ms. Baird what the most surprising thing she has experienced during her time in education.

MS. BAIRD said that she was most surprised by how quickly students can change in their behavior or learning.

[8:15:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked Ms. Baird to explain a "snapshot" of how she and other educators are working with the Alaska READS Act of 2021.

MS. BAIRD replied that her school has a multitude of programs within it that are mandated by the Alaska READS Act of 2021. She shared examples of successes within her classroom and more broadly among educators within her school district.

[8:18:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked MS. Baird how she might approach an accused violation of ethics that would be heard before the PTPC.

MS. BAIRD answered that she would "bring a position of neutrality, look at the information that has been presented, look at the code of ethics and see if a violation has occurred."

[8:21:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Baird what her thoughts were with regards to "alternative routes" for someone to obtain a teaching license within the state of Alaska and asked if the PTPC has a role to play in "alternative path teaching certifications".

MS. BAIRD said that her resume reflects her non-traditional route to becoming an educator and said that there is not "one path" to becoming an educator in Alaska. She said that part of the role of the PTPC is to be available to the community and remain impartial within its judgement of cases brought before it.

[8:25:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Baird if she thought that the PTPC does a "good job" in keeping its members educated on the teaching code of ethics.

MS. BAIRD answered that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) releases a newsletter that details the PTPC code of ethics and compliance.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT reminded the committee that all teachers are reminded of the teaching code of ethics when they sign their contracts.

[8:27:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing of Kathryn Baird to the PTPC. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony confirmation hearing of Kathryn Baird to the PTPC.

HB 105-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

[8:28:10 AM](#)

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

[8:29:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 105, labeled 34-LS0558\A.3, Bergerud, 3/24/25, which read:

Page I, line 5, following "INTENT.":

Insert "(a)"

Page I, following line 9:

Insert a new subsection to read:

"(b) It is the intent of the legislature that the state Board of Education and Early Development, Department of Health, Department of Family and Community Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations use evidence-based, nationally recognized terminology regarding mental health and adopt guidelines that address only the subjects in the promotion and prevention areas of the continuum of care classification system developed by the Institute of Medicine."

CO-CHAIR STORY objected.

[8:29:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE explained that the proposed amendment would mandate that mental health instruction in Alaska be taught under the definitions written by the Institute of Medicine. She read from specific definitions of mental health from the Institute of Medicine and said that "elevating physical and mental health is misguided". She said that kids' cell phone addictions and not getting outdoors are causing "really poor mental health outcomes" and said that terminology in mental health education curriculums around the world is unclear. She said it is "not the role" of educators to begin with mental health case identifications. She said that anxiety and stress are not mental health disorders, they're "emotions that we all feel on a daily basis".

[8:36:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY shared her understanding that teachers in schools are not taking it upon themselves to deliver psychiatric evaluations.

[8:37:04 AM](#)

DAVID JIANG, Staff, Representative Alyese Galvin, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Alyese Galvin, prime sponsor, presented HB 105 to the committee. He explained that it is not the role of teachers to diagnose or recommend treatment to their students and said that HB 105 was intended to create guidelines for a curriculum surrounding mental health, not allow for teachers to diagnose students with mental health conditions.

[8:38:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT shared her understanding that the National Academy of Medicine developed mental health terminology in the name of psychiatric recovery.

CO-CHAIR STORY maintained her objection.

[8:40:20 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Schwanke, Elam, and Underwood voted in favor of Amendment 1 to HB 105. Representatives Eischeid, Dibert, Story, and Himschoot voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 1 to HB 105 failed by a vote of 3-4.

[8:41:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT moved to report HB 105 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE objected. She shared her belief that the proposed legislation wasn't necessary, given the current curriculum outlined by Alaska state standards of education.

[8:43:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM shared his concern that HB 105 was more focused on the diagnostics of mental health rather than the education of mental health.

[8:44:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT commented that HB 105 would provide clear mental health curriculum guidelines for school districts and

said that the real issue is meeting the mental health needs of students in Alaska.

[8:46:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY added that it is important that the committee do the work to ensure a broad perspective is obtained while working to create new standards of education for schools in Alaska. She explained that the bill does include a clause for parental notification regarding a possible mental health concern of a student.

[8:48:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT said that she supported HB 105 because it could make in-person counseling more accessible for students in rural Alaska.

[8:51:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD shared that she did not support HB 105 because there were already school districts in Alaska that were implementing mental health curriculums of their own.

[8:53:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID explained that he supported HB 105 because of his own experience in witnessing the barrier to learning that is created by a student's poor mental health.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE maintained her objection.

[8:54:50 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Himschoot, Story, Eischeid, and Dibert voted in favor of reporting HB 105 out of committee. Representatives Schwanke, Elam, and Underwood voted against it. Therefore, HB 105 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee by a vote of 4-3.

[8:55:47 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:55 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): Professional Teaching Practices
Commission**

[8:59:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the final order of business would be a confirmation hearing for Angela Alston to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

[9:00:27 AM](#)

ANGELA ALSTON, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, testified during her confirmation hearing. She began her testimony by explaining her history working as a teacher in Alaska and said that her positions as a professor has allowed her to hear the realities of education in Alaska through her student teachers. She said that she brings her perspective as a parent, a former rural educator, and a current professor to the PTPC.

[9:03:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Alston if she believed that place-based education was integral in improving student engagement.

MS. ALSTON said that she "absolutely believes" in making education relevant to the students who receive it.

[9:08:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Alston how she would approach a case of a teaching ethics violation brought before the PTPC.

MS. ALSTON answered that she would look at each case individually and bring a "really strict adherence to the code of ethics that has already been established".

[9:12:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing of Angela Alston to the PTPC. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony confirmation hearing of Angela Alston to the PTPC.

[9:12:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY 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: Kathryn Baird, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Angela Alston, Professional Teaching Practices Commission. She said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commission in no way reflects an individual members approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[9:13:12 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:13 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

[9:15:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY delivered committee announcements.

[9:16:23 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:16 a.m.