

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

April 30, 2025

8:06 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

HOUSE BILL NO. 183

"An Act relating to district-wide early education programs; and providing for an effective date."

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HOUSE BILL NO. 176

"An Act relating to notice of new fees and fee increases from the University of Alaska; relating to billing statements from the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

- -- INVITED & PUBLIC TESTIMONY --

HOUSE BILL NO. 39

"An Act relating to public school students who are deaf or hard of hearing."

- -- INVITED & PUBLIC TESTIMONY --

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 183

SHORT TITLE: EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STORY

04/11/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/11/25 (H) EDC, FIN
04/23/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/23/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/23/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)
04/28/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
04/28/25 (H) Heard & Held
04/28/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)

BILL: HB 176

SHORT TITLE: UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FEES

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) CARRICK

04/09/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/09/25 (H) EDC, FIN
04/30/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 39

SHORT TITLE: EDUCATION FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) ALLARD

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/17/25
01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25 (H) EDC, FIN
04/30/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ASHLEY CARRICK

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 176 to the committee.

GRIFFEN SUKKAEW, Staff

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Ashley Carrick, prime sponsor, presented HB 176 to the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE JAMIE ALLARD

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 39 to the committee.

ASHLYN BROOKS, Staff

Representative Jamie Allard
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Jamie Allard,
prime sponsor, presented HB 39 to the committee.

DEBORAH RIDDLE
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on HB 39.

DONALD ENOCH, Special Education Administrator
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on HB 39.

DUANE MAYES, Chair
Alaska Deaf Council's Public Policy & Legislative Committee
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 39.

CLARA BALDWIN, Assistant Director
Alaska State School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 39.

JILLIAN SCHROEDER
Parent & Advocate for Deaf Child
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 39.

AMANDA ARMAGOST
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

RICHARD SAVILLE
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

TORIN SMITH
representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

AMANDA COTTLE

representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

TINA LOCKHART
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

COURTNEY WESTMANN
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

JAMIE KOKOSZKA, PC2
The Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

CHRISTY KNIGHT
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

KAREN STRACHE
representing self
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

TYLER GREEN
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

BYRON JENSEN
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

AMY BOBICH
representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 39.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:06:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Representatives Elam, Dibert, Schwanke, Story, Eischeid, Underwood, and Himschoot were present at the call to order.

HB 176-UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FEES

8:07:45 AM

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 176, "An Act relating to notice of new fees and fee increases from the University of Alaska; relating to billing statements from the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

8:08:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ASHLEY CARRICK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 176 to the committee. She read from the sponsor statement for HB 176 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Student fees in the UA system have been consolidated at each of the three main campuses since at least 2020. These consolidated fees are easier for University of Alaska administration to process, though consolidation provides far less transparency for students. In addition to the lack of fee transparency, the University system is not required to consult students in the creation or raising of fees. Until last year, the University of Alaska Fairbanks involved student leaders in the fee process through the Tuition and Fee Committee. However, UAF changed its committee structure to only allow student involvement in tuition decisions, not fees, and there is no formalized process for student involvement at either of the other main campuses. This lack of student involvement coupled with the lack of transparency in what fees students actually pay are concerning for student choice and freedom of information.

HB 176 seeks to provide more transparency for students in the fee process. It would require the Board of Regents to give students notice when a new fee is implemented or when fees are raised. It would also require all UA schools to provide itemized billing

statements detailing how much students pay for each component of their fees. While the fee categories and the amount of the consolidated fee are required to be published online, it is often extremely difficult to find the amount allocated to each category. Students can see the general categories their fees pay for, but they usually do not see the dollar amount paid for each service, such as student activities or recreation.

With HB 176, our hope is to provide more information to students about what students seeking higher education pay for and to support their right to transparency for where their dollars will be spent.

[8:11:29 AM](#)

GRIFFEN SUKKAEW, Staff, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Ashley Carrick, prime sponsor, presented HB 176 to the committee. He read from the sectional analysis for HB 176 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1: Page 1, Lines 5-7

Section 1 creates a short title for this bill.

Section 2: Page 1, Lines 8-14 and Page 2, Lines 1-3

This section adds subsection AS 14.40.170 which requires the Board of Regents to specify three things before imposing a new fee:

- the amount of the fee
- the reason for the fee
- the fee's status as temporary or permanent

Section 3: Page 2, Lines 4-7

Adds a new section, AS 14.40.252, that requires the University of Alaska to provide students with itemized billing statements showing all tuition and fees that were charged to the student.

Section 4: Page 2, Line 8

This section establishes an effective date of July 1, 2027

[8:12:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked what the current consolidated fees at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) are comprised of and asked if there is a dollar amount that could be attributed to the fee.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK answered that the UAF consolidated fee currently includes things like gym memberships, Information & Technology services, and Administrative services. She explained how a student attending UAF before 2020 would have received a tuition bill that individually listed out each fee, not simply a consolidated fee like the one that is presently used.

[8:15:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked what different types of fees are represented within a consolidated fee issued by UAF.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK answered that there are "probably" 6-10 fees represented within a consolidated fee issued by UAF.

[8:17:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Representative Carrick if she could obtain a list of items within the current consolidated fees issued to a student.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK replied that she would follow up with more information later.

[8:20:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked why the decision to not issue an itemized fee statement was made.

MR. SUKKAEW pointed to a statement made by the UAF tuition committee when the initial change was made.

[8:22:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on HB 176. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[HB 176 was held over].

[8:22:34 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:22 a.m. to 8:38 a.m.

HB 39-EDUCATION FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

[8:38:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 39, "An Act relating to public school students who are deaf or hard of hearing."

[8:39:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JAMIE ALLARD, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 39 to the committee. She read from the sponsor statement for HB 39 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 39 is a deaf and hard of hearing children's bill of rights that establishes consistency in the information provided to parents by the school district, allows parents to choose the best method of communication for their child and requires the school district to provide services using the parent's chosen method of communication.

Deaf children are born with the same ability to acquire language as others. They have the right and capacity to be educated, graduate from high school, obtain further education, and pursue a career. They have the right to have their ability to communicate and acquire language to be treated as a priority.

Lack of access in the classroom leads to students missing essential information in lectures and classroom discussions and can lead to low academic achievement and lower language acquisition. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to accommodations and access to academic instruction, school services, and extracurricular activities in their primary language. Access in their primary languages gives them the opportunity to benefit from all services and programs at their school and to fully access education and society.

Given the unique nature of rural Alaska, some children who are deaf or hard of hearing may require residential services as part of their educational program. HB 39 declares all deaf children have the right to an individualized education program and that their parent will be able to choose the method of communication that will be the most appropriate for their child.

House Bill 39 establishes that children who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to an individualized education program that identifies their primary language, considers their prognosis for hearing loss, provides instruction in their primary language, provides assistive devices and services, and provides appropriate and timely assessments in their primary language.

Seventeen states have passed a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights.

[8:43:35 AM](#)

ASHLYN BROOKS, Staff, Representative Jamie Allard, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Jamie Allard, prime sponsor, presented HB 39 to the committee. She read from the sectional analysis for HB 39 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1: amends AS 14.30.272 by adding new subsections:

1. School district must provide parent with comprehensive information regarding,
 - a. Hearing technology
 - b. Different methods of communication
 - c. Services and programs designed to help children who are deaf and hard of hearing
 - d. Information on support and advocacy services offered by public and private agencies.

2. Parent chooses the method of communication that will be the most appropriate for their child.

3. Services are delivered to child through professionals with training, experience and a background in the chosen method of communication.

d. School District must inform parent of school districts duties and the parents rights under section c.

e. In this section,

1. Definition of "bilingual approach"
2. Definition of "cued speech"
3. Definition of "deaf"
4. Definition of "hard of hearing"
5. Definition of "Listening and spoken language"
6. Definition of "total communication"

Section 2: amends AS 14.30.276 by adding a new subsection that requires the department to establish and operate a centralized program for students whose primary language is American Sign Language, provide residential services as part of the program, establishes that a school district may operate the program under specific requirements, and provide funding for the students who attend the program operated by a school districted under this subsection to that school district.

[8:47:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY opined that the zero fiscal note associated with HB 39 could be more accurately described as an "indeterminate" fiscal note.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD explained that the funding HB 39 would receive would be designated by the current education funding formula.

[8:50:10 AM](#)

DEBORAH RIDDLE, Department of Education & Early Development, added that students who are deaf and hard of hearing already receive intensive funding through the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and explained that the federal government would make up 40 percent of the cost of intensive need funding.

[8:53:23 AM](#)

DONALD ENOCH, Special Education Administrator, Department of Education & Early Development, explained that that the federal funding that committee members were referring to was not specifically designated for high-cost students.

[8:54:39 AM](#)

DUANE MAYES, Chair of the Alaska Deaf Council's Public Policy & Legislative Committee, gave invited testimony on HB 39. He emphasized the Alaska Deaf Council's formal support for HB 39 and explained how the rural deaf support services grant would be applied to further the proposed policies of HB 39. He detailed how a deafblind residential program in Alaska has had positive effects on children with intensive needs and emphasized the importance of not placing deafblind children in deaf boarding schools due to their isolating nature. He shared a series of personal anecdotes with his own experience with deafblind people and connected them to the importance of the proposed legislation and its goals.

[9:04:50 AM](#)

CLARA BALDWIN, Assistant Director, Alaska State School for Deaf & Hard of Hearing, gave invited testimony on HB 39. She began her testimony by thanking Representative Eischeid and Representative Allard for their support of the proposed legislation and shared how her experience living in a fully immersed deaf home allowed her to have a fulfilling childhood that many deaf children often do not get to experience. She explained the difference in lived experience between a hearing person and a deaf person and emphasized the vast array of lived experiences of deaf and hard of hearing people. She highlighted the negative impacts of a language-deprived child and stressed the importance of early intervention in a deafblind child's life.

[Clara Baldwin testified in American Sign Language with an interpreter to deliver her testimony in English].

[9:11:01 AM](#)

JILLIAN SCHROEDER, Parent & Advocate for Deaf Child, gave invited testimony on HB 39. She explained how an early hearing detection and intervention program allowed her daughter to receive a very early diagnosis of significant hearing loss, which set her up for success as a deaf person from the age of

three weeks old. She said that HB 39 is mainly about providing parents with the tools they need to make informed decisions on their child's wellbeing and detailed the often convoluted information landscape that parents of deaf children must navigate. She thanked the House Education Standing Committee, Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, and Representative Allard for sponsoring the proposed legislation,.

[9:16:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on HB 39.

[9:17:34 AM](#)

AMANDA ARMAGOST, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She explained that she has a hard of hearing daughter who might be permanently affected by her lack of early intervention to her condition and made a few remarks about specific sections of the proposed legislation.

[9:19:40 AM](#)

RICHARD SAVILLE, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. He said that deaf and hard of hearing children have a right to learn from qualified professionals, interact with deaf peers and adult role models, and have full access to information. He said that HB 39 would ensure the protection of these rights and urged the committee's support of HB 39.

[9:22:05 AM](#)

TORIN SMITH, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. He said that the lack of services and equitable treatment of deaf and hard of hearing children is "detrimental" to Alaska and emphasized his support for the proposed legislation.

[9:24:34 AM](#)

AMANDA COTTLE, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She explained that the late intervention of her daughters case of hearing loss has had a negative effect and said that HB 39 would allow her child to find community and feel included with her peers.

[9:26:31 AM](#)

TINA LOCKHART, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She said that no child should have to leave their families in order for them to receive deaf or hard of hearing services and urged the committee's support of HB 39.

[9:28:08 AM](#)

COURTNEY WESTMANN, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She shared her experience growing up as a deaf child in Alaska living with a hearing family and shared how knowing a deaf person when she was young changed her life for the better. She emphasized the negative impacts that late intervention has on a deaf or hard of hearing child and urged the committee's support of HB 39.

[9:31:25 AM](#)

JAMIE KOKOSZKA, PC2, The Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education, testified in support of HB 39. She shared her experience in being mistreated as a deafblind youth in Alaska's schools and emphasized the importance of the proposed policies of HB 39.

[9:34:36 AM](#)

CHRISTY KNIGHT, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She suggested that the House Education Standing Committee consult with Alaska's Early Intervention Infant Learning program to better the proposed legislation's parental communication and resource access.

[9:36:32 AM](#)

KAREN STRACHE, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She emphasized the positive impacts of her family's choice to move forward with a bilingual approach to her daughter's deafness and urged the committee's support of HB 39.

[9:38:20 AM](#)

TYLER GREEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. He shared his experience in having to move his family from Ketchikan to Anchorage in order to provide care to his deaf son and emphasized the often difficult circumstances that still persist in attempting to provide his child with the care that he needs.

[9:40:32 AM](#)

BYRON JENSEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. He shared his experience as a child in throwing his hearing aids in the toilet as a means to emphasize the importance of language choice with deaf and hard of hearing children. He added his belief that HB 39 would ensure school choice be left to a child's parent.

[9:44:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if the proposed legislation is stylistically correct in its usage of a capital "D" in the word "Deaf" as it is written in HB 39, given that there is a distinction between the two in the deaf and hard of hearing community.

MR. JENSEN replied that he appreciated Co-Chair Himschoot's consideration but is not concerned by the usage of a capital "D" in the word "Deaf" as it is written in HB 39.

[9:45:55 AM](#)

AMY BOBICH, representing self, testified in support of HB 39. She shared her experience working as a deaf education teacher and emphasized the importance of early intervention in deafblind children. She explained the significance of choice with regard to how a family might choose to address its child's condition, whether that be spoken word or sign language and described how she still has children coming to her class well underprepared and behind in their language education. She thanked the committee members for their support of HB 39.

[Amy Bobich testified in American Sign Language with an interpreter to deliver her testimony in English].

[9:48:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 39.

[HB 39 was held over].

[9:49:44 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:49 a.m.