

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 5, 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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bill Elam

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 39

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

- MOVED CSHB 39(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

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."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 212

"An Act relating to the local contribution made by a city or borough school district; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

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
04/30/25 (H) -- Invited & Public Testimony --
05/05/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

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
04/30/25 (H) -- Invited & Public Testimony --
05/05/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 212

SHORT TITLE: LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) STORY

04/30/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/30/25 (H) EDC, FIN
05/05/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

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.

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.

REPRESENTATIVE ASHLEY CARRICK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

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

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director

State Relations
University of Alaska System
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 176.

JULIE QUEEN, Vice Chancellor
Administrative Services, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 176.

RYAN BUCHHOLDT, Vice Chancellor
Administrative Services, University of Alaska Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 176.

JON LASINSKI, Vice Chancellor
Administrative Services, University of Alaska Southeast
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 176.

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director
State Relations
University of Alaska System
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 176.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 212 to the committee.

TAMMY SMITH, Staff
Representative Andi Story
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Andi Story, prime sponsor, presented HB 212 to the committee.

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent
Juneau School District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 212.

KATIE PARROT, Senior Director
Office of Management & Budget
Anchorage School District

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 212.

JOSH COUGHRAN, Superintendent

Skagway School District

Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 212.

NILS ANDREASSEN, Executive Director

Alaska Municipal League

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 212.

MIKE COONS

representing self

Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 212.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:06:49 AM](#)

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

HB 39-EDUCATION FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

[8:08:24 AM](#)

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

[8:08:55 AM](#)

ASHLYN BROOKS, Staff, Representative Jamie Allard, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Jamie Allard, prime sponsor, presented HB 39 to the committee.

[8:09:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID moved Amendment 1 to HB 39, labeled 34-LS0199, Bergerud, 4/30/25, which read:

Page 2, line 15:

Delete "sign language"

Insert "American Sign Language"

CO-CHAIR STORY objected for the purposed of discussion.

[8:09:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID explained that the proposed amendment would specify the use of American Sign Language (ASL) in schools.

[8:10:30 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 said that Amendment 1 is a friendly amendment.

[8:10:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 to

[8:11:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT emphasized that children who experience any type of disability are welcome in Alaska's public schools.

[8:12:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT moved to report HB 39, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 39 was reported from the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:13:02 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:13 a.m. to 8:16 a.m.

HB 176-UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FEES

[8:16:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY 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."

[8:18:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ASHLEY CARRICK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 176 to the committee. She reminded the committee that the proposed legislation was previously brought up by the Alaska State Senate in the 33rd Alaska State Legislature.

[8:19:48 AM](#)

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director, State Relations, University of Alaska System, gave invited testimony on HB 176. He directed his comments to other testifiers.

[8:21:26 AM](#)

JULIE QUEEN, Vice Chancellor, Administrative Services, University of Alaska Fairbanks, gave invited testimony on HB 176. She said that all three universities within the University of Alaska (UA) system have consolidated fees and explained that each university has the discretion to assess fees specific to the services they offer. She said that the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) was the first school in the UA system to offer a consolidated fee based off of requests from students to improve the student bill that was described previously as "overly complicated". She detailed the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) tuition and fees committee, which asked for a review of the consolidated fee in the name of transparency in its billing process. She said that it is the goal of the UA administrative services to be transparent to students and explained that the current language of HB 176 was problematic because it was seeking to solve a problem that did not really exist.

[8:25:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT shared her understanding that HB 176 would create difficulty for the University of Alaska (UA) system websites in that each campus would have to create a different breakdown of its fees.

VICE CHANCELLOR QUEEN confirmed that Co-Chair Himschoot's understanding was correct.

[8:27:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if the UA system could implement a more simple method for a student to interact with their fees.

VICE CHANCELLOR QUEEN shared a series of methods that the UA administrative services could offer an itemized list of fees, such as a QR code.

[8:29:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked Vice Chancellor Queen for "more context" about the UA system website software.

VICE CHANCELLOR QUEEN explained that the UA system website has been updated in the recent years and said that UA Administrative services is working to modernize the invoice system for its student invoices.

[8:33:41 AM](#)

RYAN BUCHHOLDT, Vice Chancellor, Administrative Services, University of Alaska Anchorage, gave invited testimony on HB 176. He explained that the UA Board of Regents requires that fees are set prior to the start of class registration for a given semester, particularly so students may know of the cost of a credit before they register for the class. He said that currently, the fees on the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) campus are around \$42, while the UA community campus fees range \$14-\$22 dollars. He explained that an itemized list of fees is always available on the UA course catalogue.

[8:40:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if there are any other postsecondary institutions that deliver an itemized fee list and asked how a UA student might find the fee codes listed on their student invoice.

VICE CHANCELLOR BUCHHOLDT said that the way that UAA and its sister institutions handle consolidated fees is unique to the UA system and explained how a student might go about obtaining an itemized fee statement from their consolidated fee list.

[8:44:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if a UA student might be able to challenge a consolidated fee.

VICE CHANCELLOR BUCHHOLDT explained that a "contested fee" doesn't happen very often and has only occurred a few times over the previous years.

[8:48:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked how many pages are in the UA course catalogue and asked what is "inherently confusing" about the process of breaking down a student's invoice.

VICE CHANCELLOR BUCHHOLDT emphasized that the UA student body and student government have expressed a desire for a consolidated fee.

[8:52:52 AM](#)

JON LASINSKI, Vice Chancellor, Administrative Services, University of Alaska Southeast, gave invited testimony on HB 176. He explained that the UAS Juneau campus established a consolidated fee in the fall of 2013, with its Ketchikan and Sitka campuses following suit in the fall of 2015. He said that the fees were implemented in the interest of student feedback and wellbeing, and are regularly reviewed and published on the UAS website "well in advance" of the start of each academic year. He said that a recommendation of a 2019 UA internal audit was to bring the consolidated fees to the rest of the UA system, given their success in streamlining the student billing process. He suggested that limiting a bill statement to an electronic mail service would be problematic and affirmed that the UA administrative services "remain committed to transparency to student fees."

[8:54:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked who conducted the 2019 audit that recommended the implementation of consolidated fees and asked why text message was the best way to communicate with its students regarding fees.

VICE CHANCELLOR LASINSKI answered that the 2019 UA internal audit was conducted by Mickey Pittman and said that the text message fee statement was based off of feedback from students.

[8:56:56 AM](#)

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director, State Relations, University of Alaska System, gave invited testimony on HB 176. He said that the UA system is making its best effort to work with its students and maintain transparency in its consolidated fees.

[8:57:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked about a letter of resolution from the Association of Students from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and asked about the necessity of HB 176.

MR HUTCHINSON said that the proposed legislation is unnecessary and the issues it was trying to address could be resolved through the UA administrative process.

[9:00:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK commented that the "fight" for an itemized list of consolidated fees has been going on since at least 2013. She noted that UA students are currently able to see a more rudimentarily itemized list of consolidated fees than they were in years prior. She emphasized that an itemized list of consolidated fee would not be "too confusing" for a person enrolling in college level courses.

[9:07:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that HB 176 would be held over.

HB 212-LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

[9:07:58 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 212, "An Act relating to the local contribution made by a city or borough school district; and providing for an effective date."

[Co-Chair Story handed the gavel to Co-Chair Himschoot].

[9:09:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDI STORY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 212 to the committee. She read from the sponsor statement for HB 212 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Upon the draft recommendation of the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development will consider a regulation change to 4 AAC 09.990(b), which will amend the definition of local contribution in AS14.17.990. Currently under Sec.14.17.990 Definitions, (6) states, "local contribution means appropriations and the value of inkind services made by a district." If passed by the State Board of Education, the draft proposal will have far-reaching implications for school districts by limiting services and opportunities for our youth.

The language presented to the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development seeks to prohibit municipalities from making additional, voluntary contributions to their school district for non-instructional purposes and/or to designated non-operating funds. Districts have long received additional funding outside of the foundation formula limit through the local discretionary maximum also known as "the cap" for non-instructional expenses such as student transportation before and after-school programs, early childhood and pre-k education, career and technical education, nutritional services, student activities, and more. Additional revenues provided to local school districts to support programs, services, projects, and events deemed critical by the local communities is a long-held practice.

At a time when state-wide revenues continue to be stretched, many of our municipalities around the state have stepped up to support their community-wide schools beyond their required contribution mandated under the foundation formula. One of the concerns facing this bill is the lack of ability to raise revenue in our school districts that are most rural. I support equitable funding for all children, and we must find ways to ensure equity. However, this draft regulation will not do that. It is much more complicated. Some Rural Education Attendance Area schools (REAA) receive revenue which puts them in the top 95th percentile. Prohibiting a revenue source is not the solution to achieving equity for Alaska's children and communities.

A school district's operating budget funds the day-to-day instructional operations, legal obligations, and administrative duties of providing public education. However, a school district is much more than an instructional institution. It is the cornerstone of a community. This bill is about allowing local control in a municipality to fund programs and services that improve and preserve quality of life as needed. It is of utmost importance that we prioritize protecting any loss of services to children and their families particularly in this time of budget shortfalls. Without this bill, the funding crisis for some Alaska school districts stand to worsen as we head into the next few years, and so I urge your support of House Bill 212.

[9:13:35 AM](#)

TAMMY SMITH, Staff, Representative Andi Story, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Andi Story, prime sponsor, presented HB 212 to the committee.

Section 1.

Amends 14.17 by adding a new section Sec. 14.17.530: Determination of local contribution made by a city or borough school district. A local school district shall define the terms "student transportation," "nutrition services," "food services," "preschool, pre-kindergarten, or other early education program," "career and technical education", "before-school program," "after-school program," and "student activity" when determining the calculation of a local contribution.

Section 2.

Amends Sec. 2. AS 14.17.990(6) to read "local contribution" means appropriations and the value of in-kind services made by a district does not include appropriations or the value of in-kind services made by a district for student transportation, nutrition services, food services, a preschool, pre-kindergarten, or other early education program, career and technical education, a before-school program, an after-school program, or a student activity.

Section 3.

Amends AS 01.10.070(c) to provide for this Act to take effect immediately.

[9:16:18 AM](#)

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent, Juneau School District, gave invited testimony on HB 212. He began his testimony by explaining how the proposed legislation would change how local communities within a school district would be able to fund non-instructional items, such as extracurricular sports, activities, community schools, after school programs, student nutrition, student transportation, and early education programs. He highlighted the positive impacts of allowing local school communities within school districts to allocate funds at their own discretion and emphasized the possible negative impacts upon a school district were its local community not allowed to allocate it funds. He described how a proposed regulatory change by the DEED would threaten the very way that school districts are currently allowed to budget by eliminating local governments' authority to make decisions with local dollars and non-instructional priorities. He said that the proposed regulatory changes by the DEED would not succeed in providing the equitable outcome that they aim to achieve and explained how HB 212 would provide a "targeted approach" to maintain both federal funding exceptions and a free and fair public education.

[9:27:12 AM](#)

KATIE PARROT, Senior Director, Office of Management & Budget, Anchorage School District, gave invited testimony on HB 212. She explained how school districts around Alaska are utilizing local funds for their schools to offset the impacts of a flat-funded Base Student Allocation (BSA) and an increasing cost of operation for school districts in Alaska. She emphasized how the proposed legislation would balance school district funding needs by retaining the ability for local communities to fund their local school districts at their own discretion. She explained how the proposed regulatory change by the DEED would result in a more unfair funding environment for Alaska's schools and describe the positive impacts of local funding on school districts around the state.

[9:36:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked why the supplemental transportation funding for the Anchorage School District (ASD) is set to increase in the next fiscal year.

MS. PARROT answered that enrollment decline is often to blame in the increase of a transportation route's cost. She said that the passing of 2024 Ballot Measure 1 also has an impact on the cost of labor.

[9:39:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked if 1600 kids would lose transportation services if HB 212 were not to become law.

MS. PARROT explained that the 1600 figure she shared was comprised of a multitude of different sectors of education.

[9:42:16 AM](#)

JOSH COUGHRAN, Superintendent, Skagway School District, gave invited testimony on HB 212. He explained how the Skagway School District (SSD) utilizes local funding to make up a funding disparity from the state and fund programs that might not otherwise be able to exist were local funds not available. He explained how the limiting of special revenue funds would negatively impact schools all over Alaska and detailed the various school services that special revenue funds uphold in Skagway. He urged the committee to help protect the special revenue funding avenue that currently exists for school districts in Alaska.

[9:47:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT opened public testimony on HB 212.

[9:48:03 AM](#)

NILS ANDREASSEN, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League, testified in support of HB 212. He emphasized the importance of local governments being able to provide their own revenue to their own school districts and said that HB 212 would create a clear distinction between the state's obligation to provide a free and fair public education and a local government's need to tailor state funding.

[9:50:32 AM](#)

MIKE COONS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 212. He said that the proposed legislation would push for "equity, which is part in parcel of D-E-I.". He continued to

ask how the ASD would "it do this once the \$17 million is pulled by the U.S. Department of Education for their pushing of DEI, CRT, and LGBCDQ. Why can't the ASD use the \$80 million slush fund that they have, BSA needs to be going to classroom and teachers, not any and all other things that are not classroom and teachers. So long as this legislature continues with no real accountability, I call on the governor to veto HB 57, and if this passes, veto this as well."

[9:52:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT, after ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 212.

[9:52:32 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY made clear that HB 212 would concern only funding that would be raised by local governments and had nothing to do with the BSA.

[HB 212 was held over].

[9:53:50 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.