

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 12, 2025  
4:37 p.m.

[4:37:52 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Josephson called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 4:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative Andy Josephson, Co-Chair  
Representative Calvin Schrage, Co-Chair  
Representative Jeremy Bynum  
Representative Alyse Galvin  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Representative Nellie Unangiq Jimmie  
Representative DeLena Johnson  
Representative Will Stapp  
Representative Frank Tomaszewski

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jamie Allard

ALSO PRESENT

Sarah Lewis, Self, Fairbanks; Lynette Smith, Self, Anchorage.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Michele Girault, CEO, Hope Community Resources, Anchorage;  
Karolina Rojas, Self, Anchorage; Jon Scudder, Self, Anchorage;  
Dr. Herb Schroeder, Alaska Native Science and Engineering, Anchorage;  
Pamela Gebert, Self, Anchorage;  
Jesse L Boothe, Alaska Senior Center, Anchorage; Felicia Carpenter, Self, Anchorage;  
Amanda Klein, Self, Wasilla;  
Bethany Ochs, Self, Nunapitchuk; Megan Cary, Self, Anchorage;  
Margaret Bauer, Member, Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group, Anchorage;  
Gordon Glaser, Self, Anchorage;  
Brenda Bowler, Self, Anchorage; Jack McCaslin, Self, Anchorage;  
Tami Todd, Self, Wasilla; Mari Mukai, Alaska

Children's Alliance, Anchorage; Trevor Storrs, President and CEO, Alaska Children's Trust, Anchorage; Daniel Johnson, Self, Anchorage; Stephen Spangler, Self, Anchorage; Amy Simpson, Executive Director, Programs for Infants and Children, Anchorage; Tom Kron, Self, Anchorage; Rebecca Parker, Executive Director, Anchorage Senior Activities Center, Anchorage; Adrienne Active, Self, Anchorage; Katrina Stanley, Self, Anchorage; Michael Kutscheid, Self, Anchorage; Patrick Stanley, Self, Anchorage; Elizabeth Spangler, Self, Anchorage; Pam Kelley, Self, Eagle River; Samuel Lashle, Self, Anchorage; Carl Berger, Self, Anchorage; Rhoda Jal, Self, Anchorage; Matt Shasby, Men's Ice Hockey Coach, UA Athletics, Anchorage; Ethan Johnson, Self, Anchorage; Bishop Tosi, Self, Anchorage; Janelle Sharp, Self, Anchorage; James Bailey, Self, Anchorage; Kuach Dak, Self, Anchorage; Samuel Gebert, Student Success Liaison, ANSEP, Anchorage; Christina Eubanks, Executive Director, Hillcrest Children's Center, Anchorage; Jenny Stucky, COO, Campfire Alaska, Anchorage; Rachael Miller, Chief Advocacy Officer, Foodbank of Alaska, Anchorage; Aurora Courtney, Self, Anchorage; Judy Miller, Self, Dead Horse; Jennifer Arnone, Parent of Student, ANSEP, Mat-Su; Zackary Todd, ANSEP, Mat-Su; Ashli Mackey, Self, Anchorage; Lance Johnson, Alaska Behavioral Health Association, Talkeetna; Ryne O'Rielly, Self, Anchorage; Jennifer Wingard, Parent of Student, ANSEP, Girdwood; Rodney Dial, Ketchikan Mayor and Southeast Commander, Alaska State Defensive Force, Ketchikan; Eric Gurley, Executive Director, ACCESS Alaska, Inc., Anchorage; Tierra Colberg, Employee of Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, Mat-Su; Sylvia Maiellaro, Self, Anchorage; Jacob Richey, Self, Anchorage; Nick Moe, Public Policy Manager, Thread, Anchorage.

#### SUMMARY

HB 53            APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET; CAP; SUPP

HB 53 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 55            APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 55 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Josephson reviewed the meeting agenda. The committee would hear public testimony on the operating and mental health budgets. He reviewed public testimony protocol.

#hb53

#hb55

HOUSE BILL NO. 53

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making reappropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

HOUSE BILL NO. 55

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

[4:40:16 PM](#)

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY

[4:40:21 PM](#)

SARAH LEWIS, SELF, FAIRBANKS, advocated for education funding. She emphasized that investing in education funding was economic development. She shared that it had been very difficult in the education community in Fairbanks. She implored the committee to remember it was an important investment in the infrastructure of the state.

Representative Johnson asked for the testifier's name.

Ms. Lewis replied with her name and community.

[4:43:36 PM](#)

MICHELE GIRAULT, CEO, HOPE COMMUNITY RESOURCES, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), advocated for funding for HOPE community resources and the deaf navigator program

Co-Chair Josephson asked about the deaf navigator.

Ms. Girault replied asking for \$75,000.

Representative Galvin asked if the \$75,000 was not funded in the budget.

Ms. Girault responded that the request was for an additional \$75,000 to keep up with inflation.

[4:46:36 PM](#)

KAROLINA ROJAS, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of education funding.

[4:48:09 PM](#)

JON SCUDDER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported \$3 million for the senior center, and shared that he was the sole caregiver for his wife who had cancer. He stressed the importance of eating more vegetables and salads and less fried foods. He thanked the committee for funding the program in the Anchorage Senior Center. He urged the continued funding of the services.

[4:51:09 PM](#)

DR. HERB SCHROEDER, ALASKA NATIVE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP). He stated that it would save millions of dollars and transform the workforce.

[4:52:51 PM](#)

PAMELA GEBERT, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support for ANSEP funding. it was currently working in Alaska and had worked with some of the state's largest industries like oil and gas and tourism. Everyone wanted to employ people who were from Alaska and who were committed to remaining in AK. She supported investing in Alaskans and education. She thanked the committee for supporting Alaskans' future.

[4:56:08 PM](#)

JESSE L BOOTHE, ALASKA SENIOR CENTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of \$3 million for Meals on Wheels for the Anchorage Senior Center. He spoke to the attributes of the program.

[4:57:57 PM](#)

FELICIA CARPENTER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that she was currently almost living at the courthouse. She stated her children were suffering from mental illness and were undergoing counseling. She appreciated funding for the homeless community.

[5:00:09 PM](#)

AMANDA KLEIN, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for ANSEP. She stated that it was a highly successful program and students graduated high school with an average of many high school credits.

[5:02:02 PM](#)

BETHANY OCHS, SELF, NUNAPITCHUK (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Special Education Support Agency. She stated that she had two nonverbal students in her class that had made incredible strides in communication skills.

[5:04:27 PM](#)

MEGAN CARY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), asked for full funding for ANSEP. She felt that the program was essential from preventing brain drain from Alaska. She stated the program offered a supportive environment.

[5:06:01 PM](#)

LYNETTE SMITH, SELF, ANCHORAGE, supported funding for meals on wheels for the Anchorage Senior Center.

Co-Chair Josephson noted there was \$3.1 million in the budget.

[5:07:55 PM](#)

MARGARET BAUER, MEMBER, ALASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCACY GROUP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), asked for critical

funding support for childcare and early education. She stated that childcare was essential in the state's economy, and children need a healthy start for young lives to be prepared for kindergarten.

5:10:10 PM

GORDON GLASER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for healthcare and assisted living.

5:13:27 PM

BRENDA BOWLER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for meals for seniors in Anchorage. She encouraged continued support for the program.

5:14:52 PM

JACK MCCASLIN, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding and supported education funding.

5:17:25 PM

TAMI TODD, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She urged the committee to reconsider a cut by the subcommittee to ANSEP. She stressed they were worth the investment. She also spoke in support of health care funding.

5:19:40 PM

MARI MUKAI, ALASKA CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the programs within the Alaska Children's Alliance. The programs had been in jeopardy due to loss of federal funds, which accounted for over half the budget.

5:21:30 PM

TREVOR STORRS, PRESIDENT AND CEO, ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that Alaska had the highest number of child maltreatment cases and the state should prevent child abuse and neglect. He supported a 20 percent match in the budget for Head Start and funding for infant learning, Parents as Teachers, child advocacy center, and Medicaid behavioral health services. He

requested a permanent increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

Co-Chair Josephson asked Mr. Storrs to repeat his items.

Representative Galvin asked for a repeat of the specific line item.

Mr. Storrs responded that it was line item 1676 for chronic disease prevention.

Co-Chair Josephson asked about the recruitment and retention piece. He asked if it was different from the UA board of regents request.

Mr. Storrs responded that he believed that it was a different request.

[5:25:08 PM](#)

DANIEL JOHNSON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. He shared that he had a son and daughter and the investment could save millions in costs and helped attract skilled professionals to Alaska.

[5:26:20 PM](#)

STEPHEN SPANGLER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that he is 18 and is an ANSEP student. He spoke in support of funding for ANSEP. It reduced the cost for college and it helped Alaskans succeed in the workforce.

[5:27:27 PM](#)

AMY SIMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROGRAMS FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of an increment for the early childhood education budget. She stated that it would allow the program to expand eligibility. She shared that many children would be able to have access to very important services. Alaska had the most restrictive criteria for and nearly half the children receiving early intervention services would not require later special education services. An investment would save Alaska \$34 million per year in the future in special education costs.

[5:30:45 PM](#)

TOM KRON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the original ANSEP budget request. He stated that the reduction would have significant impacts to opportunities for thousands of Alaskan students.

[5:32:24 PM](#)

REBECCA PARKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ANCHORAGE SENIOR ACTIVITIES CENTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Anchorage Senior Center and meal program. She highlighted examples from seniors appreciating the meals allowing some individuals to remain at home.

[5:34:44 PM](#)

ADRIENNE ACTIVE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She appreciated continued support and it was not merely academic, but gave young people confidence and skills to thrive in society.

[5:37:49 PM](#)

KATRINA STANLEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She noted the committee proposed reducing the funding for the program. She shared that her son was currently in the ANSEP program and he was excelling with a 4.0 GPA. Her son was now considering a career in medicine. She had another son who wanted to enroll in ANSEP the following year. She asked the committee to consider restoring full funding for the program.

[5:40:05 PM](#)

MICHAEL KUTSCHEID, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for ANSEP. He stated that the ANSEP staff were dedicated and passionate. He believed it was one of the best education programs in Alaska. He asked the committee to restore full funding

[5:42:01 PM](#)

PATRICK STANLEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of full funding for the ANSEP program. He shared that he was in need of qualified Alaskans to work in

his business including geoscientists and other to deliver low cost energy in Alaska.

Co-Chair Josephson thought it sounded like a family project, which he appreciated.

[5:45:02 PM](#)

ELIZABETH SPANGLER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in favor of full funding for ANSEP. She stated that staff helped teach students how to study and manage time. Her kids spent time exploring careers and were learning about careers they did not know about previously.

[5:48:27 PM](#)

PAM KELLEY, SELF, EAGLE RIVER (via teleconference), called in support of a \$3 million increase for senior centers and other senior service providers to continue to provide meals, transportation, and other services. She had firsthand knowledge of the benefit of funding senior programs. She thanked the committee.

[5:50:39 PM](#)

SAMUEL LASHLE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for ANSEP. He was a staff member at the program. He discussed the benefits of the program. He noted that the program also provided social and emotional skills that were not part of regular high school. He was a former ANSEP student and without the program he would not be where he was today. He had not been in the best situation in the past year with the diagnosis of type 1 diabetes. He hoped the legislature continued to fully fund the program.

[5:52:38 PM](#)

CARL BERGER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the \$3 million to the senior community grants budget added in the subcommittee. He had always been impressed with the level of care and dedication by senior center employees around the state. He believed it was important that services were a blessing to have meals once a day during the week. He urged members to support the program.

Representative Galvin thanked Mr. Berger for testifying. She shared that he had introduced her to what the meal plan was like in Fairbanks. She thanked him for his years of work he brought to science at UAF.

[5:55:45 PM](#)

RHODA JAL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP. She asked the committee to reconsider cuts to the program. She shared that thanks to the programs her son had the opportunity were crucial and offered resources and guidance. She asked the committee to consider the long-term consequences. She urged the committee to protect the program.

[5:57:35 PM](#)

MATT SHASBY, MEN'S ICE HOCKEY COACH, UA ATHLETICS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that he had graduated from the University of Alaska. He was grateful for the support for the sports program. He asked for continued support.

[5:59:14 PM](#)

ETHAN JOHNSON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified against the proposed reduction in funding to ANSEP. He is 17 and a junior in high school. By the end of the school year, he would have 140 credits towards a degree. He would enter the workforce in Alaska with a bachelor's degree at the age of 18. He noted that ANSEP had already lost \$1 million in federal funding.

[6:01:22 PM](#)

BISHOP TOSI, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for funding at the university.

[6:02:50 PM](#)

JANELLE SHARP, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in favor of full funding for ANSEP. She spoke to the impact on the current students who had already fulfilled the credit requirements for the program.

[6:06:24 PM](#)

JAMES BAILEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for senior services in Anchorage. He supported the \$3 million increase to the senior grant budget to continue to maintain nutrition and support services. He stated that senior grant services were the least costly to help seniors continue to age in their homes. He thanked the committee.

[6:08:14 PM](#)

KUACH DAK, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP. He shared that his son was the first family member to go to college.

[6:11:10 PM](#)

SAMUEL GEBERT, STUDENT SUCCESS LIAISON, ANSEP, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of ANSEP.

[6:14:13 PM](#)

CHRISTINA EUBANKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HILLCREST CHILDREN'S CENTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support for childcare funding. She thanked the committee for its previous support for childcare funding.

[6:16:33 PM](#)

JENNY STUCKY, COO, CAMPFIRE ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for the \$7.7 million added for the childcare grants. She thanked the committee for its leadership and commitment to Alaska's future.

[6:18:35 PM](#)

RACHAEL MILLER, CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER, FOODBANK OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its time. She testified in support of funding for the Foodbank of Alaska and its partners. She advocated for continued work on the issue. She asked the committee to continue funding food bank funds in Department of Health and food funding in the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED). She asked for funding for programs that feed kids, including free school meals. School was often the only place some students received a hot meal.

Co-Chair Josephson asked Ms. Miller to repeat the two buckets of \$1.5 million. He asked if they were different.

Ms. Miller replied that the governor had originally proposed \$4 million through DCCED was administered differently than the funding through DOH, and that the state did not partake in the DCCED increment.

Co-Chair Josephson stated they were just told they received \$1.6 million a month ago. He asked if it was sufficient.

Ms. Miller answered that they could spend a lot more on direct food purchasing.

[6:24:23 PM](#)

AURORA COURTNEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She shared that ANSEP had been a huge part of her life at UAA. Her daughter was now an ANSEP student enrolled in courses at UAA.

[6:26:42 PM](#)

JUDY MILLER, SELF, DEAD HORSE (via teleconference), she shared that she was testifying from Dead Horse but she lived in Anchorage and Homer. She testified in support for public education. She felt that funding brick and mortar schools should be the highest priority. She shared that her family had homeschooled their daughter and had not expected the state to pay for it. Her parents sent her and her 8 siblings to a Catholic high school.

[6:29:34 PM](#)

JENNIFER ARNONE, PARENT OF STUDENT, ANSEP, MAT-SU (via teleconference), spoke in support of full funding for ANSEP. She shared that her son had struggled to make friends. The program had helped him both academically and socially.

[6:30:48 PM](#)

ZACKARY TODD, ANSEP, MAT-SU (via teleconference), testified in support of full funding for ANSEP. He shared that he is a high school student using the ANSEP program.

6:32:13 PM

ASHLI MACKEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of childcare funding. The funding would help childcare programs stay open. She shared that she is the adoptive parent of two and funding childcare for children in OCS paid on average \$998 per child which made it nearly impossible for foster families to afford childcare. She would not be able to work full time without childcare.

6:34:06 PM

LANCE JOHNSON, ALASKA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, TALKEETNA (via teleconference), shared that he had been advocating for behavioral health funding for the past 15 years. He thanked the committee for including a \$13 million grant for behavioral health. He shared there would be more people trying to access care through emergency rooms, which cost the state much more money.

Co-Chair Josephson asked if Mr. Johnson had stated the state office of rate review, and whether programs were underserved by 15 percent.

Mr. Johnson replied that the rate did not meet the cost of delivering services partly due to the upper payment limit imposed by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Co-Chair Josephson asked if it was something informal or in writing.

Mr. Johnson replied that it was in a presentation to providers.

6:38:36 PM

RYNE O'RIELLY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in favor of full funding for ANSEP. He is a staff member at ANSEP. He shared that he had been rewarded by a wonderful experience and was surrounded by bright and brilliant students. He highlighted math classes offered that were not offered in many schools in Alaska. The program had a summer residential program catering to courses that were not available in rural Alaska. He thanked

the committee for its time. He hoped the committee would reconsider the cut.

[6:41:16 PM](#)

JENNIFER WINGARD, PARENT OF STUDENT, ANSEP, GIRWOOD (via teleconference), testified in support of full funding for ANSEP.

[6:43:43 PM](#)

RODNEY DIAL, KETCHIKAN MAYOR AND SOUTHEAST COMMANDER, ALASKA STATE DEFENSIVE FORCE, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for the Alaska State Defense Force. He discussed the services provided by the organization. The individuals volunteered their time due to their love of Alaska.

Representative Bynum thanked Mayor Dial for his service as mayor and with the Alaska State Defense Force. He thanked the team for its work in the Ketchikan landslide

Mr. Dial thanked him.

[6:46:45 PM](#)

ERIC GURLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACCESS ALASKA, INC., ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for ACCESS Alaska. He spoke about the services provided to Alaskans with disabilities and seniors to enable them to remain in their own homes. He supported funds for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) recommendation for home modifications. He thanked the committee for including funds for meals for seniors.

[6:49:10 PM](#)

TIERRA COLBERG, EMPLOYEE OF ALASKA NATIVE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING PROGRAM, MAT-SU (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for ANSEP.

[6:50:37 PM](#)

SYLVIA MAIELLARO, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), called on behalf of AARP. She supported the \$3 million for senior center funding including services provided in Anchorage and throughout Alaska.

[6:53:02 PM](#)

JACOB RICHEY, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of full funding for the ANSEP program. He noted that the program taught some of the highest performing students in the country. The program offered his daughter the opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. one day.

[6:54:19 PM](#)

NICK MOE, PUBLIC POLICY MANAGER, THREAD, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for childcare grant funding. He discussed the Retaining Our Outstanding Teachers (ROOTS) program, and its benefits.

Co-Chair Josephson asked about a lawsuit lawsuit over corporate income tax funding, and federal COVID dollars disappearing.

Mr. Moe did not know where the COVID dollars were currently. He was happy to follow up with Co-Chair Josephson.

Co-Chair Josephson thanked testifiers.

HB 53 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 55 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Josephson discussed the schedule for the following day.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[6:59:38 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

