

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 13, 2025  
4:34 p.m.

4:34:33 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Josephson called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Brenda Stanfill, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Juneau; Caroline Storm, Self, Juneau.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Representative Bill Elam; Ralph Mackie, Board Member, Community Connections, Craig; Wayne Woodgate, Federal Programs Director, Yupiit School District, Akiachak; Christopher Eisel, Self, Kotzebue; Eileen Arnold, Tundra Women's Coalition, Bethel; Anna Rose MacArthur, Self, Nome; Kimberly Imbert, Self, Fairbanks; Alex Bernard, Director, ANSEP Acceleration, Bethel; Debbie Collins, Self, Cordova; Eric Walsh, Self, Anchorage; Wanda Baltazar, Self, Kotzebue; Alyssa Motgin, Youth Peer Mentor, ANSEP, Bethel; Janine Allen, Southeast Alaska Independent Living, Haines;

Sam Crow, Special Education Service Agency, Bethel; Sarah Nelson, Self, Fairbanks; Monica Garcia, Self, Kotzebue; Amy Davis, Self, Fairbanks; Lucy Bauer, Alaska Behavioral Health Association, Anchorage; Saazulik Henfly, Self, Kotzebue; Halle Littlefish, Alaska Excel Program, Kalskag; Bree Swanson, Self, Kotzebue; Emma Bech, UA Volleyball Team, Kenai; Leigh Bolin, ED, Resource Center for Parents and Children, Alaska Children's Alliance, Fairbanks; Mimoza Pellumbi, Self, Bethel; Bonnie Mund, Self, Fairbanks; Dean Swope, Self, Bethel; Kelly Nash, Interior Patriots, Fairbanks; Jennifer Sampson, Self, Fairbanks; Vjosa Pellumbi, Self, Bethel; Dilyn Hackney, Self, Bethel; Isabella Mandrique, Self, Bethel; Patty Wisel, Self, Fairbanks; Carmen Murat, Self, Bethel; Barbara Haney, Self, North Pole; Janet Johnson, Self, Cordova; Willy Keppel, Self, Quinhagak; Peter Hoepfner, Vice President, Cordova School Board, Cordova; Cheri Backman, Director, Client Care, Homecare Assistance Alaska, Anchorage; Jon LaValle, Self, Bethel; Maia LaValle, Self, Bethel; Gabriella Sandei, Self, Bethel; Ellie LaValle, Self, Bethel; Erin Bernard, ANSEP and Excel, Bethel; Lori Elleson, Self, Fairbanks; Richard Wassillie, Alaska Excel, Chugiak; Maria Pyree, Self, Wasilla; Tina Richards, Self, Kotzebue; Drini Pellumbi, Self, Bethel.

#### 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."

[4:36:06 PM](#)

Co-Chair Josephson noted that public testimony was limited to two minutes per person.

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: FAIRBANKS, KENAI, NOME, BETHEL, KOTZEBUE, UTKIAGVIK; CORDOVA; OFFNETS

[4:36:32 PM](#)

BRENDA STANFILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA NETWORK ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT, JUNEAU, testified in support of funding for child advocacy centers (CACs), which she thought were a core component of the state's response to crime. She supported increased funding for the Supportive Needs Housing Grant (SNHG) and the Homeless Assistance Program through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). She discussed use of the programs. She emphasized her concern about the Victims of Crime Compensation Board (VCCB) funding, which assisted victims of crime. The board had experienced cuts and was anticipated to have less than \$1 million to distribute funds to victims of violent crime. She cited that for each dollar the state spent on victims of crime, it received 70 percent back from the federal government. She thanked committee members who had funded the \$3.7 million for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) the previous year. The council had not requested an increase this year.

Co-Chair Josephson thanked Ms. Stanfill for her work.

Representative Hannan asked about the reason the funding for victims of crime was down so much.

Ms. Stanfill answered that VCCB was funded through the Restorative Justice Account from Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) felon dollars. The funding did not get General Funds (GF) but was related to the rise and fall of the PFD amount.

Representative Stapp thanked Ms. Stanfill for being an excellent representative for Fairbanks. He referenced the shortage in the VCCB fund. He asked if the PFD was going to be substantially lower if a bigger shortfall in the fund could be expected.

Ms. Stanfill agreed that if the PFD went down the funds would go down and there would have to be a decision related to providing GF or not.

[4:41:14 PM](#)

CAROLINE STORM, SELF, JUNEAU, testified in support of funding for public education. She referenced the state constitution and the legislature's obligation to maintain public schools. She relayed that she was the executive director of the Coalition for Education Equity. She believed it was the legislature's job to find a way to pay for constitutionally mandated services. She asked the legislature to support a \$1,000 Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase and raise revenue to pay for the increase.

Co-Chair Josephson noted that Representative Allard was online.

[4:42:52 PM](#)

RALPH MACKIE, BOARD MEMBER, COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, CRAIG (via teleconference), spoke in support of a \$13.7 million behavioral health increment. He relayed that clinic and rehabilitation rates were supposed to be rebased in 2022, but they were still waiting. Meanwhile, costs had increased substantially. He considered it unthinkable to suspend services. He emphasized that the children who benefit from state mental health services received what was essential and needed. He mentioned fiscal responsibility and asserted that failure to spend the funds today would result in ten

times greater costs in emergency rooms and correctional facilities in the future. He stated they were talking about Alaskan kids with special needs. He thanked the subcommittee for supporting the increment.

Co-Chair Josephson recognized Representative Elam in the room.

[4:45:57 PM](#)

WAYNE WOODGATE, FEDERAL PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, YUPIIT SCHOOL DISTRICT, AKIACHAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Alaska Excel program. He stated that communities in the district were geographically isolated and there were few to no postsecondary trade programs. The program filled the gap for students in the district. He shared statistics of the students using the program the past year. He mentioned course topics in algebra, aviation, driving, and others. His students made up 13 percent of the total number of Alaska Excel students with a 95 percent pass rate. The program strengthened the overall workforce. The program trained over 500 students statewide annually. He stated that he hosted in-person and online meetings with parents and tribes to understand the needs of communities. It was consistently requested that the majority of funding be allocated to travel costs to allow students to travel to attend Alaska Excel. He thanked the committee.

[4:48:49 PM](#)

CHRISTOPHER EISEL, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP). He mentioned the importance of programs in rural regions. His daughter was taking classes in college-level trades, which would not have been possible without the program.

[4:49:42 PM](#)

EILEEN ARNOLD, TUNDRA WOMEN'S COALITION, BETHEL (via teleconference), thanked the committee and Representative Jimmie in particular for funding a balanced budget. She thanked the committee for funding \$3 million the previous year for CDVSA shelters. She stated that flat funding was not ideal, as the cost of food was very high, which affected the ability to have fairly compensated staff. She discussed providing housing vouchers to survivors of

violence. She warned that in FY 27, \$4.2 million in federal funds were going away, and it would not be possible to maintain services. She noted there were programs such as children advocacy centers that were losing funding. She stated that child advocacy staff were specially certified to interview children. She discussed the difficulty in hiring a forensic interviewer for the sensitive and difficult task. She testified in support of the Homeless Assistance Program, which her organization used to pay utilities and help families to avoid homelessness.

Representative Stapp thanked Ms. Arnold for her testimony. He asked about the Homeless Assistance Program.

Ms. Arnold agreed. She stated that people needed to apply and show an eviction notice or a utility shutoff notice. She explained that it was a limited funding stream to help families avoid homelessness. She estimated that they assisted a total of about 80 people per year, and it was typically a multigenerational home.

Representative Stapp requested to talk with Ms. Arnold in the future offline.

Ms. Arnold agreed.

[4:54:23 PM](#)

ANNA ROSE MACARTHUR, SELF, NOME (via teleconference), testified in support of public schools and funding an increase to the BSA. She shared that the Nome School District would have to cut ten teachers and one assistant principal without an increase to the BSA. She thought class sizes would increase, student travel funds would decrease, and there would be cuts to teacher housing. She mentioned substantial cumulative cuts to education. She thought education should be the state's top funding priority. She encouraged the legislature to create new revenue streams. She thought a start was closing the S corporation loophole and reducing oil tax credits.

Co-Chair Foster thanked Ms. MacArthur for calling in. He congratulated her on a new addition to her family.

Ms. MacArthur agreed she wanted her daughter to have a thriving school system to attend.

[4:56:48 PM](#)

KIMBERLY IMBERT, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of full funding for ANSEP. She was an ANSEP alumni. She stated that ANSEP was a successful and impactful educational program, through which students could graduate from high school with almost two years of college credits. The program provided internship opportunities. She made note of a higher retention rate, and increased strength in the Alaskan workforce and communities. She shared that the program had provided her with a lot of support. She thanked the committee for its time.

[4:58:24 PM](#)

ALEX BERNARD, DIRECTOR, ANSEP ACCELERATION, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of full funding for ANSEP. He shared he had been the director for three years in Bethel. He had seen the program's dramatic impact on students. The program offered support to students and their families. He discussed the growth of the program from 17 students to 50 students with the projection of 60 to 70 in the fall. There was a college GPA average of 3.4 with a 98 percent completion ratio. Students participating in the full four years would graduate with over 103 college credits. He cited a lack of educational opportunities in rural Alaska. He strongly encouraged the committee to fund the program fully.

[5:00:41 PM](#)

DEBBIE COLLINS, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), testified in support of Special Education Service Agency (SESA). She shared that she was a special education teacher. She stated they were the most wonderful professional specialists that helped the most challenging students. She described professionals that helped look at behavior of students and helped them to overcome disabilities. She believed it had helped to retain good professional staff. She discussed challenges of working with difficult behaviors. She thought the work helped kids to regulate emotions and to learn. She shared a story. There was also a library they could borrow materials from.

[5:04:07 PM](#)

ERIC WALSH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) athletics in the operating budget. He was an alumnus /of UAA and worked there as a coach.

Co-Chair Josephson asked what sport.

Mr. Walsh replied that he was a track and field athlete.

[5:05:22 PM](#)

WANDA BALTAZAR, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for childcare grants. She was a grandparent. She spoke to the importance of reliable childcare for families. She asserted that rural children needed the same high-quality childcare as other students around the state.

[5:06:41 PM](#)

ALYSSA MOTGIN, YOUTH PEER MENTOR, ANSEP, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for ANSEP. She stated it was inspiring to see youth learn about the importance of education.

Co-Chair Josephson asked if Ms. Motgin was calling in support of ANSEP.

Ms. Motgin agreed.

[5:08:08 PM](#)

JANINE ALLEN, SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING, HAINES (via teleconference), testified in support of page 11, lines 9-10 in HB 55 for home modifications and upgrades. She supported the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) recommendation for state funding. The request was for a \$575,000 top-off to historic levels of funding. The funding would enable seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities to live in their homes and not move away. It benefited Alaskan communities and families to keep individuals at home. It was much cheaper to do home modifications to allow individuals to remain at home and not in facilities. She cited that on average, an assisted living home costs the state \$143,000 per person, per year.

[5:10:11 PM](#)

SAM CROW, SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of SESA funding. He shared the positive impact SESA had on his son and family. He detailed that his son was in high school and it was his eleventh year receiving SESA services. At the time of his son's diagnosis there was a possibility of losing his eyesight. A specialist had traveled to Bethel to work with his son, the family, and the school. For over a decade, the service provider had surrounded his son with the best possible services, giving him the best chance to attend school. The specialist worked with his teachers to ensure he had access to learning. The services prepared him for college and his adult life. He stated that when his son graduated and went to college it would be thanks to SESA. He thought there were many other parents that had a similar experience.

[5:13:31 PM](#)

SARAH NELSON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), thanked the committee for previous funding for childcare. She requested support for the \$7.5 million in childcare grants in the operating budget. She thought the funding was critical for childcare programs. She felt very fortunate to have her kids at a daycare center and stated she would not be able to stay employed without it. She believed it was necessary to work together to provide kids with the best learning environment.

[5:15:05 PM](#)

MONICA GARCIA, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in support of full funding for ANSEP. She shared her family's experience with the program. She thought the program gave students a head-start in college. She asserted that the program had a record of academic achievement. They would not be living in Kotzebue without ANSEP. She acknowledged that the state was facing financial challenges but asked members to consider ANSEP's positive track record.

[5:16:54 PM](#)

AMY DAVIS, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support for CACs. She had been a law enforcement officer for several years and understood the importance of the

service CACs provided to communities. The CACs had provided a safe haven for children that had experienced trauma. She commented that CAC's provided comprehensive care. She noted that CACs relied heavily on state and federal funding to provide its services. Without adequate funding, CACs would not be able to provide the services that families depended on. She thanked the committee.

[5:18:59 PM](#)

LUCY BAUER, ALASKA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for mental health and behavioral health services. She stated that Alaska was a high risk of suicide, especially for young people. She stated that youth needed help with case management and treatment. She thought caring for vulnerable people was directly related to public safety. She mentioned the need for help on different levels.

[5:20:56 PM](#)

SAAZULIK HENFLY, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), shared that she had two kids in school. She testified in support of ANSEP funding. The school district needed additional proposed BSA funding to meet students' basic needs. She thought the flat funding had been inadequate. There was nothing left for schools to cut and at the end of the day it was the students who suffered. She thought administrators were doing their best with the resources at hand. She was concerned there would continue to be outmigration from Alaska. She thought ANSEP was a huge ray of light in the region. She supported funding for childcare grants. She stated that springtime in the Arctic was the time when incidents of people attempting suicide increased.

[5:24:12 PM](#)

HALLE LITTLEFISH, ALASKA EXCEL PROGRAM, KALSKAG (via teleconference), shared that she was a student. She shared how the Alaska Excel Program had changed her life. She relayed that the program was a great opportunity. The program provided many other students opportunities such as getting their drivers permits, outdoor leadership, hiking, and exploring. She stated that the program had changed her life by teaching her many more things than she would have otherwise learned. The program had helped her overcome her

shyness. She mentioned getting credit for high school and college.

Co-Chair Josephson asked if she lived in lower or upper Kalskag.

Ms. Littlefish shared that she lived in Upper Kalskag.

[5:28:32 PM](#)

BREE SWANSON, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), spoke in support of full funding for the BSA in the amount of \$1,000. She stated that she was a mother of four and had seen a major decline in the state's educational system. She relayed that arts, music, extra curriculums had been cut from her son's middle school. She was concerned about the lack of predictable funding and questioned what else could be cut. She thought education was the cornerstone of the community. She thought it was important to show that kids were the greatest resource. She emphasized the high turnover of teachers and the loss of student-teacher relationships. She discussed high rates of suicide and alcohol abuse and thought normally schools were a safe place. She thought that lack of funding for schools correlated with behavioral health and the state's jail system.

[5:31:55 PM](#)

EMMA BECH, UA VOLLEYBALL TEAM, KENAI (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for University of Alaska (UA) athletics. She relayed that she was a member of the volleyball team and was in her first year at UAA. She shared that her parents were educators. She discussed cutting teachers in Kenai. She discussed sports camps in the state. She planned to remain in Alaska and help out her community.

[5:33:50 PM](#)

LEIGH BOLIN, ED, RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN, ALASKA CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of \$5.5 million in funding for CACs. She was president of the board for the Alaska's Children's Alliance. She shared that CACs had pursued federal funding and had exhausted all other avenues before requesting funds from the legislature. The program faced funding cuts that

would impact services. She stated that CACs were statutorily mandated to collaborate with multiple partners including law enforcement, the Office of Children's Services, and the district attorney's office to respond to cases of child sexual abuse. She reminded that the state had the highest rates of domestic violence and child abuse in the nation. She emphasized that it was crucial to provide the resources necessary for healing.

Co-Chair Josephson recalled that Ms. Bolin had been in his office 30 days ago. He had indicated at the time that the topic was the top priority of the Department of Family and Community Services budget subcommittee.

Ms. Bolin agreed.

[5:36:12 PM](#)

MIMOZA PELLUMBI, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She thought the program supported equal education opportunities for all. The program had allowed her kids to grow educationally.

[5:37:01 PM](#)

BONNIE MUND, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), called in support dependable ongoing funding of the BSA. She relayed that her district was currently working to pass a balanced budget. She shared that the funding reductions were coming at the cost of heartbreaking cuts, including the closure of her children's school where she also worked as a special education aide. She encouraged members to consider funding a strong education system throughout the state.

[5:39:16 PM](#)

DEAN SWOPE, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP. He shared that four of his seven children had been involved with the program. The program allowed students to expand their abilities and to help transition from a small rural school to the university level. He stated that the program was exemplary in how it took care of kids. He recognized that the program had more and more kids with opportunities that were unimaginable 12 years ago. Their performance was awarded with a level of academic

excellence that would ultimately cultivate professionals for the future of the state.

[5:41:43 PM](#)

KELLY NASH, INTERIOR PATRIOTS, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), testified in support of a full PFD. She questioned how more education funding would help students learn more. She was a grandmother and had a daughter in high school. She mentioned the state deficit. She did not think more funding would address problems such as abuse.

[5:43:25 PM](#)

JENNIFER SAMPSON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), thanked the committee for keeping a full PFD in the bill. She thought it was important for Alaskans to pay for energy, groceries, and for kids to explore the state.

[5:44:21 PM](#)

VJOSA PELLUMBI, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for ANSEP. She stated that educational opportunities were limited in rural Alaska. She relayed that education opportunities were very limited in Bethel where she grew up. She shared that without ANSEP, she would not have had the academic preparation to apply for scholarships to further her education. She described ANSEP as a lifeline. She stated that cutting the funding risked taking away crucial pathways for students to pursue higher education, develop leadership skills, and contribute meaningfully to the state. She urged the committee to restore full funding for the program.

Representative Jimmie thanked Ms. Pellumbi for speaking up for the youth in their district.

[5:46:27 PM](#)

DILYN HACKNEY, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), called in support of funding for ANSEP. She had learned so much from ANSEP. She stated that the public school system had declined in recent years. She stated that students from all over the state benefitted from the program.

Representative Jimmie was happy to hear young people speaking up. She thanked Ms. Hackney for her testimony.

[5:48:05 PM](#)

ISABELLA MANDRIQUE, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for ANSEP. She shared that she was a student. She shared that she had learned a lot, and it was her second semester. She stated she would be done with her high school credits in a year. She hoped the program would continue to thrive. She thought students were the key for the state's future.

[5:49:48 PM](#)

PATTY WISEL, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), thanked the committee for maintaining the full statutory PFD. She stated it would make a huge difference. She highlighted the expense of gas and living in Alaska.

[5:50:38 PM](#)

CARMEN MURAT, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of ANSEP. She shared that her daughter was a current ANSEP student. She emphasized that ANSEP had provided the opportunity for equal education opportunities for rural students in the state. She felt that engineering and sciences were vital for the long-term success of communities. She implored the committee to not cut the program.

[5:51:41 PM](#)

BARBARA HANEY, SELF, NORTH POLE (via teleconference), thanked the committee for leaving the full PFD in the budget. She thought the primary determinate of education outcomes was household income. She stated that keeping the funding in families helped improve education. She thought the PFD also helped local governments because it arrived near the time property taxes were due.

[5:53:00 PM](#)

JANET JOHNSON, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for disabled children and SESA. She discussed SESA's work in remote locations. She shared that she had a daughter that utilized SESA's services. She described local professionals as not having the training that was provided by SESA. Her child was currently living

in the community independently. She noted that SESA's case load was growing. Without the program, some kids would have nothing. The program helped find ways to include children with disabilities in the school system.

5:56:09 PM

WILLY KEPPEL, SELF, QUINHAGAK (via teleconference), testified in support of a full PFD. He stated it was the poorest region of the state. He thought that the PFD lowered the levels of stress and suicide. He stated that happy people did not create nearly as many problems as unhappy people. He referenced testimony in support of ANSEP and considered students were not getting what was needed from public schools. He stated that the schools had gone from great to pathetic, and he thought the curriculum had suffered. He lamented the lack of shop classes, and interesting classes focusing on the needs of the community. The kids going to ANSEP were the ones going to college. Everyone else in the community wanted to be able to live and do normal things. He asked for flat funding for everything. He pointed out there was a \$70 million drop in the revenue projection. He did not support taxes. He was against increasing education funding. He supported cuts to education administration.

5:59:43 PM

PETER HOEPFNER, VICE PRESIDENT, CORDOVA SCHOOL BOARD, CORDOVA (via teleconference), thanked the committee for increasing the BSA level in HB 69. He spoke about the school's deficit in Cordova. Cordova schools were facing a \$1.5 million deficit, which would risk cutting food service and stopping all student activities as well as increasing class sizes. He pointed out that education funding had increased only by about 4.6 percent in 17 years. He highlighted that the Department of Public Safety had increased by 82 percent, and the Department of Corrections had increased by 52 percent in the same time frame. He thought health insurance had gone from \$400,000 to \$1.3 million in recent years.

Mr. Hoepfner made note of a 15 percent increase in electrical bills. He stated that businesses could increase and generate new revenues. He thought that what was happening to education was awful. They were cutting teachers and increasing class sizes. He was confused why

the state would want to cut education funding. He asked members to imagine no sports and no food in schools. He thought the state needed new revenues in order to not cut services to Alaskans.

6:03:03 PM

CHERI BACKMAN, DIRECTOR, CLIENT CARE, HOMECARE ASSISTANCE ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for childcare assistance. She was director of an in-home care company that provided care to seniors and employed 70 caregivers. She shared that most of her employed caregivers could not find childcare. She mentioned the importance of continuity in home care for seniors. She requested support for childcare funding.

6:04:42 PM

JON LAVALLE, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. He had been a teacher in rural Alaska for 22 years, 18 of which were in Bethel. He mentioned former students that were in ANSEP and became engineers that were working in Alaska. He stated that ANSEP allowed students to take college classes in high school. Many of the students returned to rural Alaska to help communities. He shared that both of his daughters were ANSEP students. He noted that ANSEP students entered the workforce earlier than if they just went to high school and college. He asserted that ANSEP helped support at-need kids.

6:07:49 PM

MAIA LAVALLE, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), testified in support of ANSEP funding. She was an ANSEP student. She discussed her experience in the program. She had a goal of graduating with a Bachelor of Mathematics when she graduated from high school.

6:08:45 PM

GABRIELLA SANDEI, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of ANSEP funding. She was a student of ANSEP. She spoke about the benefits of the program and impact on her life.

6:09:31 PM

ELLIE LAVALLE, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in favor of full funding for ANSEP. She shared her personal experience as an ANSEP student.

6:10:25 PM

ERIN BERNARD, ANSEP AND EXCEL, BETHEL (via teleconference), shared that she was the school counselor in Bethel. She had been a teacher for ten years. She testified in support of ANSEP and Excel Alaska. She stated there was a population of students who needed hands-on experience and vocational training, which Excel Alaska provided. She emphasized that children were the state's future. She spoke about the importance of keeping talent in the state.

6:12:19 PM

LORI ELLESON, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), thanked the committee for its time. She shared that she was a third generation Alaskan. She supported a full PFD. She wanted the revenue to go to the local economy.

6:13:10 PM

RICHARD WASSILLIE, ALASKA EXCEL, CHUGIAK (via teleconference), testified in support of funding for Alaska Excel. The program prepared students for postsecondary education and the workforce. The majority of graduates remained in rural Alaska. The program provided counseling, offered positive mentors, and made a difference in his kids' lives. The program increased graduation rates. He shared that 92 percent of Alaska Excel alumni resided in the state. Last year, program students earned over 850 high school credits. He thanked the committee.

6:15:09 PM

MARIA PYREE, SELF, WASILLA (via teleconference), spoke in support of a full PFD. She loved schools and the teachers, but she did not think they needed more money, and believed the funding went to administrators and not teachers. She thought America was 40th in the world's education systems. She did not want to see taxation of oil exploration. She thought the state needed to have the economy moving. She thought the state needed a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

6:16:59 PM

TINA RICHARDS, SELF, KOTZEBUE (via teleconference), testified in support of education funding. She thought children were the future. She thought sports played a huge factor in mental health.

6:18:15 PM

DRINI PELLUMBI, SELF, BETHEL (via teleconference), spoke in support of education funding. He relayed that he was a freshman at UAA. He testified in support of the ANSEP program. He stated it was not merely an academic program it was a community seeking equal access to education. He thought ANSEP created a strong community. He was 18 and had already made significant progress towards his engineering career, which would not have been possible without ANSEP. He stated that investing in ANSEP was an investment in Alaska's future.

Co-Chair Josephson thanked all the callers for participating in the process. He reviewed the schedule for the following day.

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

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

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ADJOURNMENT

6:21:33 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

