

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 9, 2025

3:22 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Zack Fields, Co-Chair  
Representative Carolyn Hall, Co-Chair  
Representative Ashley Carrick  
Representative Robyn Niayuq Burke  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Julie Coulombe

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative David Nelson

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 110

"An Act relating to a social work licensure compact; relating to the practice of social work; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 110 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 138

"An Act establishing a behavioral health crisis services surcharge; establishing the behavioral health crisis services fund; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 138(L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 156

"An Act relating to disclosure of information regarding employee compensation by employers, employees, and applicants for employment."

- MOVED CSHB 156(L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 79

"An Act relating to wage payments."

- HEARD & HELD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 133(L&C)

"An Act relating to prior authorization requests for medical care covered by a health care insurer; relating to a prior authorization application programming interface; relating to step therapy; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 110

SHORT TITLE: SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) GRAY

02/21/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/21/25	(H)	L&C, FIN
05/07/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
05/07/25	(H)	Heard & Held
05/07/25	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/09/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 138

SHORT TITLE: BEH. HEALTH CRISIS SURCHARGE & FUND

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MINA

03/17/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/17/25	(H)	HSS, L&C, FIN
04/24/25	(H)	HSS AT 3:15 PM DAVIS 106
04/24/25	(H)	Heard & Held
04/24/25	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
05/01/25	(H)	HSS AT 3:15 PM DAVIS 106
05/01/25	(H)	Moved HB 138 Out of Committee
05/01/25	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
05/02/25	(H)	HSS RPT 3DP 1NR 3AM
05/02/25	(H)	DP: FIELDS, GRAY, MINA
05/02/25	(H)	NR: SCHWANKE
05/02/25	(H)	AM: PRAX, RUFFRIDGE, MEARS
05/07/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
05/07/25	(H)	Heard & Held
05/07/25	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/09/25	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 156

SHORT TITLE: DISCLOSURE OF WAGE INFORMATION

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) MINA

03/26/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/26/25	(H)	JUD, L&C

04/14/25 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/14/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 04/16/25 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/16/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 04/16/25 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
 04/18/25 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/18/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --  
 04/25/25 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/25/25 (H) Scheduled but Not Heard  
 04/30/25 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120  
 04/30/25 (H) Moved HB 156 Out of Committee  
 04/30/25 (H) MINUTE(JUD)  
 05/02/25 (H) JUD RPT 3DP 2NR 1AM  
 05/02/25 (H) DP: EISCHEID, MINA, GRAY  
 05/02/25 (H) NR: UNDERWOOD, KOPP  
 05/02/25 (H) AM: VANCE  
 05/02/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124  
 05/02/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 05/02/25 (H) MINUTE(L&C)  
 05/07/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124  
 05/07/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 05/07/25 (H) MINUTE(L&C)  
 05/09/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

BILL: SB 79

SHORT TITLE: PAYMENT OF WAGES; PAYROLL CARD ACCOUNT  
 SPONSOR(s): LABOR & COMMERCE

01/31/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 01/31/25 (S) L&C  
 02/07/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 02/07/25 (S) Heard & Held  
 02/07/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)  
 02/12/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
 02/12/25 (S) Moved SB 79 Out of Committee  
 02/12/25 (S) MINUTE(L&C)  
 02/14/25 (S) L&C RPT 2DP 2NR  
 02/14/25 (S) DP: BJORKMAN, GRAY-JACKSON  
 02/14/25 (S) NR: MERRICK, YUNDT  
 02/24/25 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)  
 02/24/25 (S) VERSION: SB 79  
 02/26/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
 02/26/25 (H) L&C  
 03/19/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124  
 03/19/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 03/19/25 (H) MINUTE(L&C)  
 03/24/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

03/24/25 (H) Heard & Held  
03/24/25 (H) MINUTE (L&C)  
05/09/25 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124

**WITNESS REGISTER**

KIERNAN RILEY, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 110.

KAY RILEY, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 110.

YVONNE CHASE, President  
National Association of Social Workers  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 110.

JENNIFER PECK, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 110.

TONIE PROTZMAN, Executive Director  
National Association of Social Workers, Alaska Chapter  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 110.

TASHA CHILDS, representing self  
North Pole, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 110.

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, answered questions during the hearing on HB 110.

JASON CUSTER  
Vice President, Regulatory & Government Affairs, Alaska Power & Telephone  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 138.

KERMIT WILSON, Executive Director  
Advocacy Board, Alaska Mental Health Board

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 138.

BRENDA MCFALANE, Crisis Now Coordinator

City of Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 138.

DARCI NEVZUROFF, Director of Operations

Division of Behavioral Services, South Central Foundation

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 138.

STEVE WILLIAMS, Director

Diversion Programming, Anchorage Police Department

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 138.

REPRESENTATIVE GENEVIEVE MINA

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, gave closing remarks on HB 138; as prime sponsor, answered questions during the hearing on HB 156.

JEREMY APPLGATE, Chief of Wage & Hour

Division of Labor Standards & Safety, Department of Labor &

Workforce Development

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 156.

EVAN ANDERSON, Staff

Representative Zack Fields

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave summary of changes from Version A to Version N of SB 79 on behalf of Representative Fields, who serves as co-chair of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:22:47 PM](#)

**CO-CHAIR CAROLYN HALL** called the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:22 p.m.

Representatives Carrick, Coulombe, Burke, Saddler, Fields, and Hall were present at the call to order.

CO-CHAIR HALL gave an overview of the committee's agenda.

**HB 110-SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE COMPACT**

[3:24:18 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 110, "An Act relating to a social work licensure compact; relating to the practice of social work; and providing for an effective date."

[3:24:27 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL opened public testimony on HB 110.

[3:24:49 PM](#)

KIERNAN RILEY, representing self, testified in support of HB 110. They stated that they are a trained social worker and recently finished their master's in social health. They asserted that not only is telehealth access important, but for many, it is their only option for specialty services not offered in Alaska. They stated that HB 110 would ensure that qualified social workers from other states can continue to provide care in Alaska, as well as making it easier for social workers to move to Alaska to practice, meaning fewer gaps in service and more professionals available to meet urgent behavioral health needs. They asserted that HB 110 provides for continuity of care, strengthens Alaska's workforce and removes barriers for both clients and clinicians. They asserted that HB 110 was good policy and provided essential infrastructure for Alaska with its vast geography and lack of providers.

[3:26:04 PM](#)

KAY RILEY, representing self, testified in support of HB 110. They asserted that HB 110 would make it easier for licensed social workers in other states to practice in Alaska without unnecessary "delays and paperwork." They further stated it is difficult to get social work professionals in rural and underserved communities. They stated that Alaska is facing major behavioral health challenges from the opioid crisis to housing and stability. They asserted that the compact would expand the workforce and further asserted that HB 110 would

still hold professionals to high standards. They concluded by offering their support, stating that HB 110 was a "practical bipartisan solution."

[3:27:15 PM](#)

YVONNE CHASE, President, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), testified in support of HB 110. She stated that NASW had over 110,000 members. She explained that HB 110 would enable Alaska to join the social work interstate compact. She stated that clinical social workers were the largest providers of mental health services in the nation. She stated that the United States was facing a nationwide mental health and opiate addiction crisis. She stated that the compact would allow licensed social workers to practice across state lines, thereby improving access to care. She referred to page 4 of the proposed legislation, noting that it would reduce burdensome and duplicative requirements associated with holding multi-state licenses. She reported that more than 60 percent of rural Americans live in areas with a shortage of mental health providers. She further reported that Alaska's suicide mortality rate was higher than the national average, and HB 110 would give Alaska broader access to licensed professionals. She further asserted that HB 110 would strengthen Alaska's disaster response capabilities and help Alaska qualify for increased federal funding through the expansion of Alaska's behavioral health workforce. She reported that 24 states have already joined the social work interstate compact, noted that several states had pending legislation, and stated that there was a national compact in progress. She thanked the committee members for their time and encouraged them to pass HB 110.

[3:29:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER stated that the committee had frequently heard that Alaska was experiencing a mental health crisis. He asked when it became a crisis.

MS. CHASE replied that rates of suicide in adolescence and adults continue to increase in Alaska, where other states have been able to lower their statistics. She pointed to a lack of immediate preventative care, particularly in rural areas.

[3:31:12 PM](#)

JENNIFER PECK, representing self, testified in support of HB 110. She stated that she was a licensed clinical social worker.

She stated that it took her nearly a year to acquire a license in Alaska, commenting that the process was "long, tedious, and expensive." She further stated that a percentage of her clients are transient, making continuity of care impossible without legislation like HB 110. She stated that her clients either go without services until they return to Alaska or restart the therapeutic process elsewhere. She reported that social workers are the largest group of mental health providers and that 60 percent of mental health therapists are clinically trained social workers. She further reported that the Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest employer of social workers with a master's degree. She stated that all social workers take the same licensure test. She asserted that the compact under HB 110 would eliminate licensing wait times and allow for continuity of care to patients across state lines. She thanked the committee members for their time and urged support of HB 110.

[3:33:42 PM](#)

TONIE PROTZMAN, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers, Alaska Chapter, stated that she was calling back to answer a prior question from Representative Saddler regarding the survey conducted on members of the Alaska Chapter of NASW. She noted that a major theme of the survey was improved continuity of care under HB 110, explaining that the compact would allow clients to receive continuous services, even after moving out of Alaska. She further noted that in Alaska, there are many people that travel frequently, or are transient for other reasons.

[3:35:38 PM](#)

TASHA CHILDS, representing self, testified in support of HB 110. She stated that she is a licensed social worker and has been a social work educator for the past 7 years, and an Alaska resident for the past 3 years. She noted that she is also a military spouse. She reported that Alaska is home to over 21,000 active military members, with nearly 30,000 dependent spouses and children. She stated that military spouses face bureaucratic barriers to license reciprocity in Alaska, as well as other states without licensure compacts. She noted that she currently maintains licensure in four different states, which she asserts is expensive and burdensome. She echoed other speakers stating that 26 other states are already a part of the social work compact. She addressed concerns regarding standards of care under a compact, noting that social workers would still be held to national standards, including graduation from an

accredited social work program, completion of clinical hours and the professional licensing exam - all of which ensure ethical practice and safeguarding for clients. She encouraged the committee to vote yes on HB 110.

[3:38:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 110.

[3:38:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked Representative Gray to opine whether Alaska has a mental and behavioral health crisis and the proposed legislation's ability to address said crises.

[3:39:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, noted that the Department of Corrections (DOC) was the largest provider of health care in Alaska, and there are still not enough providers for those seeking help. He asserted that HB 110 could have a real impact on DOC.

[3:39:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK noted that Alaska has the highest or second highest rate of suicide in the country, which she remarked should be considered a crisis. She opined that the value of the proposed legislation has been well documented.

[3:40:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER clarified that he does not dispute that there is a need for behavioral health providers and stated that he was simply trying to pinpoint at what point behavioral health became a crisis in Alaska.

[3:40:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRAY said that social workers do much more than mental health care, noting that the Office of Children's Services (OCS), for example, needs professionals. He commented that there are "enormous needs" in Alaska, preferring not to "quibble over the word crisis" and that HB 110 would help address those needs.

[3:41:29 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to report HB 110 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 110 was reported out of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[3:41:57 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:41 p.m. to 3:44 p.m.

**HB 138-BEH. HEALTH CRISIS SURCHARGE & FUND**

[3:44:30 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 138, "An Act establishing a behavioral health crisis services surcharge; establishing the behavioral health crisis services fund; and providing for an effective date."

[3:44:41 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL opened public testimony on HB 138.

[3:44:56 PM](#)

JASON CUSTER, Vice President, Regulatory & Government Affairs, Alaska Power & Telephone (AP&T), testified in opposition to HB 138. He asserted that HB 138 would adversely impact people who "suffer from socioeconomic distress," reporting that a 0.98 cent rate increase would increase a typical lifeline bill by about 12 percent. He noted that a lifeline bill is typically \$8 and that there are 75,000 lifeline-eligible customers in Alaska. He reported that, for non-lifeline customers, a 0.98 cent rate increase was representative of a 5 percent increase. He asserted that the surcharge would create administrative tasks and costs that would likely be passed onto the customers and predicted that some customers would discontinue their telephone service as a result. He asserted that, with fewer customers, utilities would be pressured to increase rates to cover the operating costs for the people who need and depend on telephone services. He said that the proposed 0.98 cents surcharge would be more than ten times California's surcharge of 0.08 cents and further noted that California caps its future surcharges at 0.30 cents. He argued that HB 138 would force telecom utilities into the role of tax collector and further stated that AP&T currently pays the Mental Health Trust Authority for utility right of way.

MR. CUSTER argued that the proposed surcharge was a regressive tax, and that low-income and vulnerable populations would be the most affected by HB 138. He asserted that it was at odds with state efforts to improve affordability of telecom services in Alaska. He encouraged committee members not to advance HB 138.

[3:47:47 PM](#)

KERMIT WILSON, Executive Director, Advocacy Board, Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB), testified in support of HB 138. She stated that HB 138 would establish a surcharge on landlines and wireless phones to provide funding to expand Alaska's capacity to respond to mental crises and emergencies. He reported that adults and youth are increasingly using the call center, with contacts in 2024 reaching an all-time high of just shy of 40,000 calls. He stated that it was practical to increasing funding to services that would prevent costly emergencies. He stated that HB 138 would offer a sustainable funding solution to address the increasing need for mental health and substance use crises services, such as the 988 hotline, crisis stabilization, and the mobile crisis team. He stated that the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board encourage the passage of HB 138.

[3:49:35 PM](#)

BRENDA MCFALANE, Crisis Now Coordinator, City of Fairbanks, testified in support of HB 138. She stated that Fairbanks has partnered with Alaska Behavioral Health to dispatch the mobile crisis team for the last 3 years. She stated that, in collaboration with the local police officers, the mobile crisis team has kept over 82 percent of community members in the community, diverting them from hospitals, incarceration, or travel to Anchorage or out of state for care. She reported that they received 113 calls in March 2025 and noted that the call center saves the state thousands of dollars in emergency care. She emphasized that it was very important to support life-saving services, noting that mobile crisis teams are proven and effective, save money, and prevent potentially fatal interactions with law enforcement. She thanked the committee members for their attention to HB 138.

[3:51:53 PM](#)

DARCI NEVZUROFF, Director of Operations, Division of Behavioral Services, South Central Foundation (SCF), testified in support

of HB 138. She stated that SCF is investing over \$120 million to construct two new facilities in Anchorage: a crisis stabilization center and a crisis residential center. She stated that SCF is the largest provider of mental health services in Alaska. She stated that individuals that can access help immediately are less likely to need more expensive interventions, such as emergency hospital stays, psychiatric in-patient, or involvement in the criminal justice system, in the long run. She stated that crisis services are expensive to start up and sustain and noted that HB 138 provides for a sustainable funding model. She strongly urged the support of HB 138.

[3:53:56 PM](#)

STEVE WILLIAMS, Director, Diversion Programming, Anchorage Police Department (APD), testified in support of HB 138. He stated that HB 138 would provide an additional revenue stream to support the components of a comprehensive system of care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. He stated that this revenue would cover a crisis care line, mobile response teams, crisis stabilization and residential centers. He encouraged the committee to pass HB 138 as written.

[3:55:19 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 138.

[3:55:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE moved to adopt Amendment [1] to HB 138, labeled 34-LS0471\I.1, A. Radford, 5/5/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 7:  
Delete "\$.98"  
Insert "\$.48"

CO-CHAIR FIELDS objected.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE explained that the amendment would decrease the surcharge, or "tax," from 0.98 cents to 0.48 cents, noting that it could be burdensome to low-income and senior individuals. She further noted that there is already almost \$8 of taxes on phone lines, citing the 911 charge, the universal service fund surcharge, universal access surcharge, et cetera.

She stated that 0.48 cents would be adequate to fund only the 988 call line. She said that phones are necessities.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS offered his appreciation but stated that he could not support the amendment because of how difficult it had been to get funds appropriated for behavioral health.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER offered his support for the amendment and noted that HB 138 was proposing the highest surcharge in the nation. He noted that Vermont currently charged the highest surcharge at 0.72 cents a month. He cited the arguments about the surcharge being regressive on careline phones.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS maintained his objection.

[3:58:32 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Coulombe and Saddler voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [1] to HB 138. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [1] failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[3:59:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE moved to adopt Amendment [2] to HB 138, labeled 34-LS0471\I.2, A. Radford, 5/7/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1:

Delete **"behavioral health crisis services"**

Insert **"988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system"**

Page 1, line 2:

Delete **"behavioral health crisis services"**

Insert **"988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system"**

Page 1, line 5:

Delete **"Behavioral Health Crisis Services"**

Insert **"988 Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Hotline System"**

Page 1, lines 6 - 7:

Delete **"Behavioral health crisis services surcharge; behavioral health crisis services"**

**Insert "988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system surcharge; 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system"**

Page 1, line 7:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system"

Page 1, line 11:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 1, lines 13 - 14:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, lines 1 - 2:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, lines 3 - 4:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, line 6:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, line 9:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, lines 11 - 12:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, line 13:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "services provided to users of the 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline"

Page 2, line 17:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Insert "988"

Page 2, lines 24 - 25:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 2, line 27:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 2, line 28:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 2, line 31:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 3, line 6:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 3, line 8:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988 suicide prevention and mental health  
crisis hotline system"

Page 3, lines 9 - 10:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"  
Insert "988"

Page 3, line 11:

Delete "behavioral health crisis services"

Page 3, line 14:

Delete "may"  
Insert "shall"

Page 3, line 16, through page 4, line 4:

Delete all material and insert:

"(1) ensuring the efficient and effective routing of calls made to the 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline to an appropriate crisis center; and

(2) personnel and the provision of acute mental health, crisis outreach, and stabilization services by directly responding to the 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline."

Reletter the following subsection accordingly.

Page 4, following line 5:

Insert a new paragraph to read:

"(1) "988 surcharge" means the 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system surcharge;"

Renumber the following paragraphs accordingly.

CO-CHAIR HALL objected.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE explained that the amendment would take out funding for different types of behavioral health services, limiting it to only the 988 call line. She again shared her concern about the funds being shared equitably among various communities. She opined that people living in rural Alaska would get frustrated were Anchorage to receive all of the grant funding.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER offered his support for the amendment. He offered his understanding that the amendment would constrain the surcharge strictly to use of the 988. He additionally commented that federal standards prohibit the fee from being used for anything other than 988 support.

[4:01:09 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS offered his appreciation for the desire to distribute funds equitably across Alaska communities. He pointed to prior behavioral health grants, noting that they have been relatively equitable between urban and rural communities.

[4:01:39 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK stated that she was initially inclined to support the amendment because she agreed with the amendment sponsors comments on the non-specificity of funds. She noted that the rates of substance abuse and rates of mental health issues will vary by community. She noted that in her community of Fairbanks, there are specific issues with individuals needing services in the middle of the night that are not a jail cell or the hospital. She said she shared concerns with the amendment sponsor on distribution of funds. She further stated that HB 138 was a "revenue-neutral" way to collect funds to address behavioral health needs in Alaska. She said that ultimately, she was opposed to Amendment [2].

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE asserted that the amendment would create a dedicated fund that could not be appropriated for purposes other than behavioral health. She noted that "behavioral health crisis service fund" was loosely defined in HB 138 and could be used for purposes other than behavioral health with the way the legislation was currently written. She further noted that the amendment would ensure that the 988 funds could not be swept by future legislatures.

[4:04:51 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL maintained her objection.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Saddler and Coulombe voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [2] to HB 138. Representatives Carrick, Burke, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [2] failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[4:05:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER indicated that he would not be offering Amendment [3].

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment [4] to HB 138, labeled 34-LS0471\I.4, A. Radford, 5/7/25, which read as follows:

Page 3, line 16:  
Delete "(1)"

Page 3, line 19:  
Delete ";"  
Insert "."

Page 3, line 20, through page 4, line 3:  
Delete all material.

CO-CHAIR HALL objected.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER explained that the amendment would prevent the surcharge from being used for anything other than the maintenance and improvement of the 988 system. He stated that, under HB 138 as currently written, the surcharge could be used for "direct services, workforce development, recruitment and retention, public outreach, public education and data collection, and administrative services." He reasoned that the

variety of services resulted in the high surcharge of 0.98 cents and offered his preference to reduce the burden and costs on consumers.

[4:06:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE asked how Amendment [4] was different from Amendment [2].

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER referred to page 3 of the proposed legislation and explained that the amendment would delete [paragraphs (2)-(7) under Section 1, subsection (g)].

[4:07:27 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:07 p.m. to 4:08 p.m.

[4:08:31 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL maintained her objection.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Coulombe and Saddler voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [4] to HB 138. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [4] failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[4:09:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Amendment [5] to HB 138, labeled 34-LS0471\I.5, A. Radford, 5/7/25, which read as follows:

Page 4, following line 13:

Insert new bill sections to read:

"\* **Sec. 2.** AS 43.98.080(a), enacted by sec. 1 of this Act, is amended to read:

(a) A monthly behavioral health crisis services surcharge [OF \$.98 A MONTH] is imposed for each wireless telephone number and for each local exchange access line for wireline telephones. The department shall determine the amount of the surcharge based on the actual cost of providing behavioral health crisis services during the preceding fiscal year.

\* **Sec. 3.** Section 2 of this Act takes effect July 1, 2026."

Renumber the following bill section accordingly.

Page 4, line 14:

Delete "This"

Insert "Except as provided in sec. 3 of this Act,  
this"

CO-CHAIR HALL objected.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER explained that the amendment would allow the surcharge to be adjusted annually a year after implementation. He stated the intent was to allow the fee to reflect the "real operating expenses."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment [5], which he stated as follows:

I propose Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment [5] that would set an upper limit to the fee at 0.98 cents per line per month. By clarification, that means the fee could be adjusted to pay the actual costs but does not leave it open-ended. It puts the per line cap envisioned in the original bill but still allows the mechanism for annual adjustments in case that expense were less than that full amount.

[4:10:58 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS asked for additional explanation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER explained that the conceptual amendment would place an upper limit on the proposed fee at 0.98 cents per line.

CO-CHAIR HALL announced there being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment [5] was adopted.

[4:12:11 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK stated that the language in Amendment [5], as amended, was nebulous, citing "The department shall determine the amount of the surcharge based on the actual cost of providing behavioral health crisis services". She asked how Representative Saddler envisioned the Department of Health (DOH) would make its determination.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER clarified that he was referring to behavioral health services as defined by the proposed legislation, which he stated were found on page 3, lines 16 through page 4, line 3.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK asked for confirmation that the amendment would not, theoretically, prevent [DOH] from charging 0.98 cents a month.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER confirmed that was correct.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK said she presumed the need in Alaska was higher than 0.98 cents a customer and said she did not anticipate the need being less than 0.98 cents for a long time. She offered her appreciation for the intent of the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER offered his concern that HB 138 envisions funding a lot of services through landline and cellphone fees and asserted that there should be a cap on the funding mechanism. He urged a yes vote from committee members.

[4:15:06 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL maintained her objection to Amendment 5, as amended.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Saddler and Coulombe voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [5], as amended, to HB 138. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [5], as amended, failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[4:15:42 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to adopt Amendment [6] to HB 138, labeled 34-LS0471\I.6, A. Radford, 5/9/25, which read as follows:

Page 4, line 14:  
Delete "2025"  
Insert "2026"

[4:15:47 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 4:15 p.m.

[4:16:35 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL objected for the purpose of discussion.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS explained that the amendment would change the effective date of the proposed legislation from 2025 to 2026.

CO-CHAIR HALL removed her objection. There being no further objection, Amendment [6] was adopted.

[4:17:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GENEVIEVE MINA, Alaska State Legislature, noted that she was open to excluding lifeline phones from the 988 surcharge proposed under HB 138, as amended, as she did not intend to burden those who are struggling to pay their phone bills.

[4:18:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER argued that the "behavioral health crisis fee" was actually a regressive phone line tax that would not necessarily serve every individual that was paying for it. He asserted that the proposed legislation would disqualify Alaska from the 988 federal grant funding. He noted that the behavioral health crisis was a difficult situation and commended the sponsor for addressing it but asserted that it should be addressed through a different legislative funding mechanism. He stated that he would not be supporting HB 138, as amended.

[4:19:57 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to report HB 138, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER objected.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted in favor of the motion to report HB 138, as amended, out of committee. Representatives Coulombe and Saddler voted against it. Therefore, CSHB 138(L&C) was reported out of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee by a vote of 4-2.

[4:20:47 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:20 p.m. to 4:22 p.m.

**HB 156-DISCLOSURE OF WAGE INFORMATION**

[4:22:59 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 156, "An Act relating to disclosure of information regarding employee compensation by employers, employees, and applicants for employment."

[4:23:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE indicated that she would not be offering Amendment 1 to HB 156.

[4:23:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE moved to adopt Amendment [2] to HB 156, labeled 34-LS0752\A.2, A. Radford, 5/5/25, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 30:  
Delete "three years"  
Insert "one year"

CO-CHAIR HALL objected.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE explained that Amendment [2] would decrease the time an employee can file a grievance under HB 156 from three years to one year.

CO-CHAIR HALL maintained her objection.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Saddler and Coulombe voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [2] to HB 156. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [2] failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[4:25:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE indicated that she would not be offering Amendment [3].

[4:25:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE moved to adopt Amendment [4] to HB 156, labeled 34-LS0752\A.5, A. Radford, 5/7/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 7:

Delete "publishes"

Insert "recruits for a position by publishing"

Page 3, line 4, following "violation":

Insert "of AS 23.10.700(b), 23.10.705, or 23.10.710"

Page 3, line 5, following "commissioner.":

Insert "Each recruitment for a position in violation of AS 23.10.700(a) is a single violation, regardless of the number of notices, advertisements, or other solicitations for the position that are published."

CO-CHAIR HALL objected.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE explained that the amendment would apply a penalty per position, not per advertisement under HB 156.

CO-CHAIR HALL maintained her objection.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Coulombe and Saddler voted in favor of the motion to adopt Amendment [4] to HB 156. Representatives Carrick, Burke, Fields, and Hall voted against it. Therefore, Amendment [4] failed to be adopted by a vote of 2-4.

[4:26:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BURKE moved to adopt Amendment [5] to HB 156, labeled 34-LS0752\A.6, A. Radford, 5/8/25, which read as follows:

Page 2, line 13, following "employment":

Insert ";

(4) requires an employer to disclose the compensation of any individual employee, unless otherwise required by law"

CO-CHAIR FIELDS objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE BURKE explained that Amendment [5] would "[add] language stating that nothing in this section requires an employer to disclose the compensation of any individual employee unless otherwise required by law." She noted that it was a recommendation made during testimony.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS removed his objection. There being no further objection, Amendment [5] was adopted.

[4:27:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to adopt Amendment [6] to HB 156, as amended, labeled 34-LS0752\A.7, A. Radford, 5/9/25, which read as follows:

Page 2, lines 27 - 28:

Delete ", separate from and in addition to a fine recoverable by the state under AS 23.10.725"

Page 2, line 31, through page 3, line 8:

Delete all material.

Page 3, line 9:

Delete "**23.10.730**"

Insert "**23.10.725**"

[4:27:32 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:27 p.m. to 4:29 p.m.

[4:29:15 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL objected for the purpose of discussion.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS explained that the amendment would eliminate fines and new positions under HB 156, as amended. He stated that the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) confirmed that, with this amendment, there would be no new position control numbers (PCNs). He suggested that the amendment would allow for the implementation of HB 156 without costs.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE offered her support for the amendment.

[4:30:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GENEVIEVE MINA, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, offered her support for Amendment 6. She requested (DLWD) to speak to how positions might be impacted by the proposed amendment.

[4:31:28 PM](#)

JEREMY APPLGATE, Chief of Wage & Hour, Division of Labor Standards & Safety, Department of Labor & Workforce Development, confirmed that with the removal of the investigative component of the proposed legislation, there would be no need for investigators. He noted that one PCN would definitely be removed under Amendment [6].

[4:32:27 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL removed her objection to the motion to adopt Amendment [6] to HB 156, as amended. There being no further objection, it was so ordered.

[4:32:38 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to report HB 156, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

[4:32:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER objected.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Burke, Carrick, Fields, and Hall voted in favor of the motion to report HB 156, as amended, out of committee. Representatives Coulombe and Saddler voted against it. Therefore, CSHB 156(L&C) was reported out of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee by a vote of 4-2.

[4:33:30 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:33 p.m. to 4:35 p.m.

**SB 79-PAYMENT OF WAGES; PAYROLL CARD ACCOUNT**

[4:35:32 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL announced that the final order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 79, "An Act relating to wage payments."

CO-CHAIR HALL stated that the committee would be looking at a House committee substitute for SB 79.

[4:36:05 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR FIELDS moved to adopt the proposed House committee substitute (HCS) for SB 79, Version 34-LS0494\N, A. Radford, 3/19/25, as a working document.

[4:36:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK objected for the purpose of discussion.

CO-CHAIR FIELDS explained that the request to prohibit interchange fees on taxes and tips from restaurant owners had been incorporated into the HCS.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK removed her objection. There being no further objection, Version N was before the committee.

[4:37:24 PM](#)

EVAN ANDERSON, Staff, Representative Zack Fields, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Fields, who serves as co-chair of the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee, gave summary of changes from the original bill version to Version N of SB 79 [included in the committee file], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

**Section 1.**

This section adds new sections to AS 06.90:

**Sec 06.09.020(a):** prohibits issuers, payment card networks, acquirer banks, or processors from receiving or charging merchants interchange fees on the tax or gratuity portion of an electronic payment transaction if proper documentation is provided during the authorization or settlement process.

**Sec 06.09.020(b):** Allows merchants to submit tax or gratuity documentation up to 180 days after the transaction if it was not originally transmitted. The issuer must refund the merchant within 30 days of receiving this documentation.

**Sec 06.09.020(c):** Clarifies that documentation may be for individual or multiple transactions, as long as it clearly shows total transaction amounts and tax or gratuity portions.

**Sec 06.09.020 (d):** States that payment card networks are not liable for the accuracy of the tax or gratuity documentation submitted by merchants.

**Sec 06.09.020 (e):** Prohibits raising interchange fees on the remaining (non-tax/gratuity) portion of a transaction to compensate for prohibited fees on tax or gratuity.

**Sec 06.09.020 (f):** Establishes a civil penalty of \$1,000 per violation and requires refunding the improper fee to the merchant.

**Sec 06.09.020 (g):** Restricts use of electronic payment transaction data to processing or legal requirements only, safeguarding data privacy.

**Sec 06.09.020 (h):** Defines key terms such as "acquirer bank," "issuer," "interchange fee," "electronic payment transaction," "settlement," "tax," and others for the purposes of this section.

**Section 4.**

**AS 45.50.471 (b):** Amended to add a new violation under the Act for misuse of electronic payment transaction data as described in Section 1, AS 06.09.020 (g).

[4:39:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE asked if the committee intended to take public testimony on the HCS for SB 79, Version N.

[4:40:03 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 4:40 p.m. to 4:41 p.m.

[4:41:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that Sections 2 and 3 of SB 79, Version N, mirrored HB 171.

[4:41:53 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR HALL announced that SB 79 was held over.

CO-CHAIR HALL set an amendment deadline for SB 79 and noted that the committee would take public testimony on the adopted HCS for SB 79 at a later hearing.

[SB 79, Version N, was held over.]

[4:42:10 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:42 p.m.