

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 2, 2025

3:32 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair  
Senator Jesse Bjorkman  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Senator Mike Cronk

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA BOARD OF REGENTS

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Karen Perdue - Fairbanks

Christine Kesler - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 110

"An Act establishing the museum construction and major expansion matching grant program; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 20

"An Act relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation education in public schools; relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 20 OUT OF COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 69(RLS) AM

"An Act relating to education; relating to open enrollment in public schools; relating to school and student performance reports; relating to school and district accountability; relating to charter schools; relating to an annual report for

correspondence study programs; relating to the base student allocation; relating to reading proficiency incentive grants; relating to wireless telecommunications devices in public schools; relating to the duty of the legislature to pass a public education appropriation bill; relating to the duty of the governor to prepare a public education appropriation bill; establishing the Task Force on Education Funding; relating to a report on regulation of school districts; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SCS CSHB 69(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 110

SHORT TITLE: MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANTS

SPONSOR(s): STATE AFFAIRS

02/26/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/26/25	(S)	EDC, FIN
03/07/25	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/07/25	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
04/02/25	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 20

SHORT TITLE: CPR CURRICULUM

SPONSOR(s): GRAY-JACKSON

01/10/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	EDC, FIN
03/26/25	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/26/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/26/25	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/02/25	(S)	EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HB 69

SHORT TITLE: EDUCATION: FUNDING, SCHOOLS, DEVICES

SPONSOR(s): HIMSCHOOT

01/24/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
01/27/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
01/27/25	(H)	Heard & Held
01/27/25	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
01/29/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
01/29/25	(H)	Heard & Held

01/29/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)  
 01/29/25 (H) EDC AT 5:00 PM DAVIS 106  
 01/29/25 (H) -- Public Testimony --  
 02/03/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
 02/03/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/03/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)  
 02/06/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 02/06/25 (H) <Pending Referral>  
 02/12/25 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106  
 02/12/25 (H) Heard & Held  
 02/12/25 (H) MINUTE (EDC)  
 02/12/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 02/12/25 (H) <Pending Referral>  
 02/18/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 02/18/25 (H) <Pending Referral>  
 02/19/25 (H) MOTION TO DISCHARGE FROM EDC, RULE  
 48(D)  
 02/19/25 (H) DISCHARGE FROM EDC, RULE 48, PASSED Y21  
 N18 E1  
 02/19/25 (H) RESCIND ACTION TO DISCHARGE FAILED Y19  
 N20 E1  
 02/19/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 02/19/25 (H) Scheduled but Not Heard  
 02/20/25 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519  
 02/20/25 (H) Moved HB 69 Out of Committee  
 02/20/25 (H) MINUTE (FIN)  
 02/21/25 (H) FIN RPT 5DP 4DNP 1NR 1AM  
 02/21/25 (H) DP: HANNAN, GALVIN, FOSTER, JOSEPHSON,  
 SCHRAGE  
 02/21/25 (H) DNP: TOMASZEWSKI, STAPP, ALLARD,  
 JOHNSON  
 02/21/25 (H) NR: JIMMIE  
 02/21/25 (H) AM: BYNUM  
 02/21/25 (H) MOTION TO WITHDRAW FROM RLS TO CAL,  
 RULE 18  
 02/21/25 (H) WITHDRAW FROM RLS TO CAL, RULE 18,  
 FAILED Y18 N20 E2  
 02/24/25 (H) MOTION TO WITHDRAW FROM RLS TO CAL,  
 RULE 18  
 02/24/25 (H) WITHDRAW FROM RLS TO CAL, RULE 18,  
 FAILED Y19 N19 E2  
 03/05/25 (H) RLS AT 8:00 AM GRUENBERG 120  
 03/05/25 (H) Moved CSHB 69(RLS) Out of Committee  
 03/05/25 (H) MINUTE (RLS)  
 03/06/25 (H) RULES TO CALENDAR PENDING RLS RPT/REF  
 03/06/25 (H) NOT TAKEN UP 3/6 - ON 3/10 CALENDAR  
 03/10/25 (H) RLS RPT CS(RLS) NEW TITLE 4DP 3AM

03/10/25 (H) DP: EDGMON, KOPP, SCHRAGE, STUTES  
03/10/25 (H) AM: VANCE, COSTELLO, TILTON  
03/10/25 (H) DEADLINE FOR ALL AMS AT 12 P.M. TODAY  
Y21 N19  
03/11/25 (H) BEFORE HOUSE IN SECOND READING  
03/11/25 (H) TAKE AM 23 FROM TABLE UC  
03/12/25 (H) MOTION TO RETURN TO EDC COMMITTEE, RULE  
39 B, FAILED Y19 N21  
03/12/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)  
03/12/25 (H) VERSION: CSHB 69(RLS) AM  
03/12/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/12/25 (S) <Pending Referral>  
03/14/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/14/25 (S) EDC, FIN  
03/17/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/17/25 (S) Heard & Held  
03/17/25 (S) MINUTE(EDC)  
03/19/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/19/25 (S) Heard & Held  
03/19/25 (S) MINUTE(EDC)  
03/21/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/21/25 (S) Heard & Held  
03/21/25 (S) MINUTE(EDC)  
03/24/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/24/25 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard  
03/26/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/26/25 (S) Scheduled but Not Heard  
04/02/25 (S) EDC AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

KAREN PERDUE, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

CHRISTINE RESLER, Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

JOHN DAVIES, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Karen Perdue to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

MARY K. HUGHES, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointments of Karen Perdue and Christine Kesler to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

SALLY RAFSON, Staff  
Senator Scott Kawasaki  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 110 on behalf of the sponsor.

DIXIE CLOUGH, Director  
Museums Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 110.

EMILY EDENSHAW, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 110.

ANGELA LINN, Senior Collections Manager  
University of Alaska Museum of the North  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 110.

GREGORY STEWART, Director of Grants  
Alaska Native Heritage Institute  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

VIRGINIA HATFIELD, Executive Director  
Museum of the Aleutians  
Unalaska, Alaska

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

TANIA CLUCUS, Executive Director  
Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center  
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

MIKE MASON, Staff  
Senator Löki Tobin  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Offered an Explanation of Changes for Senate committee substitute (SCS) for CSHB 69, version S.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:32:39 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Bjorkman, Cronk (via teleconference), and Chair Tobin. Senator Stevens arrived thereafter.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(s) :**  
**UNIVERSITY OF Alaska BOARD OF REGENTS**

[3:34:47 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of governor appointees Christine Resler and Karen Perdue to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[3:35:08 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated that she would speak before the appointees testified so both could address her concerns during their remarks.

CHAIR TOBIN shared that she is a current PhD student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and has earned multiple degrees from the University of Alaska System. She expressed strong pride in the university, citing a sense of belonging and support from programs such as Native Services and the Black Student Union. Her doctoral research focuses on culturally responsive education and inclusive pedagogy, and she emphasized the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge into Alaska's education system.

CHAIR TOBIN noted her financial and personal commitment to the university, including tuition contributions and a five percent bequest in her will, reflecting her belief in its mission. She said her faith in the institution had been deeply shaken in recent weeks and that many students and colleagues feel unheard and unseen.

CHAIR TOBIN urged the appointees to consider the perspectives of students who care deeply about the university's academic freedom and research integrity. She emphasized that the appointees represent students—not just federal interests or institutional leadership—and asked them to protect the university from actions that undermine its core academic values.

[3:37:49 PM](#)

KAREN PERDUE, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified as the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She stated she was seeking reappointment to the Board of Regents and expressed appreciation for speaking before a student legislator. She shared her background growing up in Fairbanks, her work in healthcare policy, including Denali KidCare, and her past role as Associate Vice President at the University of Alaska, where she helped develop academic programs such as nursing.

MS. PERDUE emphasized the importance of serving place-committed students through technology and innovation and noted that three of her four children and two grandchildren have attended the University of Alaska. She highlighted her 19 years of experience with the university, including eight on the board, and stated the institution is currently stable, with rising enrollment and research investments.

[3:42:02 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS arrived at the meeting.

[3:42:14 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE said 36,682 degrees have been awarded during her tenure and reaffirmed the board's responsibility to uphold accreditation standards across more than 150 specialized programs. She described challenges the board faced, including major budget cuts, COVID-19 adaptations, and accreditation reviews, and noted her leadership in creating an annual accreditation report.

[3:42:24 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE stressed the importance of maintaining stability for students and faculty and shared her role in a board-led effort to reverse enrollment declines. She warned that without action, enrollment could fall to 13,000 students and cited contributing factors such as brain drain, fewer high school graduates, and national trends in higher education.

[3:42:27 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE concluded by underscoring her commitment as a volunteer regent, noting nearly 100 percent attendance over her term, including during a year with 44 meetings.

[3:42:59 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE concluded by thanking the legislature and governor for revising the Alaska Performance Scholarship, calling it a major improvement that increases funding and gives students earlier notice. She emphasized the eight-year time limit and the need to inform students so they can use the funds for both undergraduate and graduate education. She described the scholarship as a key part of the university's recruitment and retention strategy. She pledged full commitment to the university's success, promising to listen, ask difficult questions, rely on data, and help build a stronger institution for the next 100 years.

[3:49:50 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked the appointee to share her vision for the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS).

[3:50:46 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE stated that enrollment declines have affected the entire university system, including UAS, and emphasized the need to maximize how UAS delivers education. She highlighted UAS's innovation in teacher education, especially the largely online Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, which has graduated thousands of people. She pointed to UAS's dual statewide and local mission and praised its marine sciences partnership with UAF as a model for system-wide collaboration. She expressed strong support for UAS, confidence in its current chancellor, and commitment to fostering enrollment growth and inter-university partnerships.

[3:52:45 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS emphasized that accreditation is essential to a university's survival and described it as a long, multi-step process with opportunities for correction. He referenced the loss of teacher education accreditation at UAA and recalled being surprised by it, despite his long relationship with President Johnson. He asked what the Board of Regents is doing to ensure similar surprises do not happen again. He acknowledged the complexity of overseeing many accreditations but stressed that maintaining them is critical to the university's future.

[3:54:08 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE stated she supported the board's decision to end seven initial licensure programs at UAA due to concerns about degree portability. She emphasized that accreditation ensures students can use their degrees nationwide, especially in licensed professions. UAS and UAF, both fully accredited, stepped in to continue teacher education, and UAS recently

passed its Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) review with high marks.

MS. PERDUE said UAA is rebuilding its CAEP accreditation on a seven-year cycle and is doing well in early childhood education. She noted the creation of a college of education consortium, a consolidated academic plan, and an early warning system requiring chancellors to alert the president of any concerns. She emphasized the board's commitment to never failing students on program promises again.

SENATOR STEVENS thanked her for her explanation of the university having an early warning system

[3:56:33 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL referenced current federal uncertainty and asked Ms. Perdue to clarify her view on the appropriate role of the federal government in relation to the Board of Regents. He noted that this issue extends beyond higher education and is of broad concern to Alaskans. He asked what Alaskans can expect from Ms. Perdue regarding how the board navigates its responsibilities alongside federal influence.

[3:57:39 PM](#)

MS. PERDUE acknowledged the complexity of the current federal environment, noting it is more challenging than past reforms she worked on, such as welfare and Medicaid. She cited the rapid pace of executive orders, appropriation pauses, and guidance letters as unusual. She said the board will soon meet with federal relations staff to review the federal landscape. She emphasized the need for better internal analysis and early warning systems. She proposed using university experts to help the board stay informed and better prepared in this unpredictable environment.

[3:59:37 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL expressed agreement.

[3:59:52 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN invited Ms. Christine Resler to testify

[4:00:13 PM](#)

CHRISTINE RESLER, Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Anchorage, Alaska, testified as appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She stated she has served as President and CEO of Arctic Slope Regional Corporation's Energy Services Division since 2018 and chose to make Alaska her

permanent home in 2017. She emphasized her commitment to the state, her extensive board experience in both U.S. and Canadian energy sectors, and her active roles with the American Petroleum Institute and Alaska's Resource Development Council.

[4:03:00 PM](#)

MS. RESLER described her work leading innovative energy projects in Alaska, including carbon capture, geothermal, and methane hydrate wells, and stressed how such initiatives could tie into university research. She highlighted her passion for education, holding degrees from Boston University and the University of Chicago, and teaching since 2002 at institutions including University of Houston, Alaska Pacific University, and University of Alaska Fairbanks.

MS. RESLER shared that teaching has been her way of giving back and noted her previous affiliation with the Alaska Center for Energy and Power. Although she stepped back from teaching after her regent appointment, she expressed hope her board role will help students find job opportunities and better connect industry and academia.

[4:06:12 PM](#)

MS. RESLER concluded by reaffirming her commitment to strengthening partnerships, supporting workforce development, and helping the university serve as a catalyst for economic growth. She noted her role on the regents' ad hoc committee for retention and graduation and said she was honored to be considered for the position.

[4:07:26 PM](#)

MS. RESLER responded to Chair Tobin's remarks by stating that the board meeting in question was her first and involved a difficult, time-sensitive decision. She said the board acted quickly to provide funding while preserving program integrity. As president of Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and a long-time professor, she emphasized her deep commitment to Alaska Native education and to supporting students' careers beyond the classroom.

MS. RESLER shared her experience mentoring students over decades, including staying in touch long after graduation to offer guidance. She stressed the importance of listening, recognizing recent events have highlighted the need for broader input in board decisions. While standing by the intent behind the board's actions, she acknowledged the community's concerns

and the difficult climate for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

[4:10:37 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Resler to share her vision for the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), specifically its purpose and value, and whether she believes it matters.

[4:11:12 PM](#)

MS. RESLER expressed strong support for UAS and praised its chancellor as dynamic and impactful. She highlighted the university's unique geographic position and potential in areas like maritime programs, coastal erosion, and research partnerships. She emphasized the importance of teamwork and sees UAS as key to expanding educational and economic opportunities, especially in Southeast and rural Alaska. She supports growing both degree and non-degree programs and believes UAS plays a critical role in the state's future.

[4:12:50 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated Ms. Resler's husband works for the Governor and noted the expectation that the Board of Regents operate without political influence.

MS. RESLER interjected that her husband does not work for the Governor.

SENATOR KIEHL apologized for his misinformation and asked her to comment on the independence of the board in general

MS. RESLER replied that the Board of Regents must operate independently. She stated it is her desire to expand economic opportunities for the state by its resources innovatively. It will take support from the university to accomplish this vision. She described sacrificing her love of teaching to serve on the board to make a difference for the state and its educational institutions. She stated she never considered the Board of Regents as political.

[4:15:22 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated his belief that it is valuable to have a faculty member on the Board of Regents. He asked her to share her vision of the university's involvement with research.

[4:15:55 PM](#)

MS. RESLER said she loves being on the UAF campus because it is a research university and she is excited to see it receive a R1

designation. She briefly discussed polymer research and how it benefits the state.

[4:17:23 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked whether Ms. Resler had read the Executive Branch Ethics Act.

MS. RESLER replied that she has not read the act.

CHAIR TOBIN noted that board members are held to accountability standards under the act. She encouraged her to read the act. She stressed the importance of open meetings so that the public can participate.

[4:18:32 PM](#)

MS. RESLER stated participation is important and she takes the involvement of others seriously.

CHAIR TOBIN expressed her desire for Ms. Resler to stop any meeting not properly noticed so the public can participate.

[4:19:02 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL referenced a motion that occurred within the board regarding diversity and toadying to the federal government. He questioned whether the board maintains any red line when it comes to taking orders from the federal government.

[4:20:16 PM](#)

MS. RESLER stated she would act to make sure the Board of Regents supports students, faculty, and alumni of the state and the university system.

[4:20:42 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked for clarity on whether her response is to stand up for students, faculty, and the institution or is it to protect the dollar.

[4:21:02 PM](#)

MS. RESLER replied there is a balance that the regents must find. Moving forward the board will focus on what is right for the students and faculty. What students and faculty find important is important to regents.

[4:21:38 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN found no further questions from committee members.

[4:21:54 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on the confirmation of the governor's appointees Karen Perdue and Christine Resler to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[4:22:15 PM](#)

JOHN DAVIES, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Karen Perdue to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. He said he served in the legislature and on the Board of Regents. He is an alumnus of the University of Alaska. He said Ms. Perdue is a deeply caring person as demonstrated by her work history. Regarding her previous term on the board, he stated she did her homework, asked hard questions and then supported the decisions of the board. He said during their time on the board together they faced challenging issues, including Title IX compliance, deep funding cuts, and accreditation issues. He said Ms. Perdue set the university on a path to recovery and growth and highly recommends her confirmation.

[4:24:29 PM](#)

MARY K. HUGHES, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of the appointments of Karen Perdue and Christine Kesler to the University of Alaska Board of Regents. She said she agrees with the comments made by Mr. Davies regarding Ms. Perdue. She said Ms. Kesler was nominated to take her place on the board of regents and she is a fabulous person. She shared her father's love of education and stated Ms. Kesler has a similar love of teaching. She stated that she appreciates the governor nominating a person of high caliber to the board.

[4:27:47 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN closed public testimony on the confirmation of governor's appointees Karen Perdue and Christine Kesler to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

[4:27:49 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited a motion.

[4:27:54 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Education Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Karen Perdue - Fairbanks

Christine Kesler - Anchorage

He reminded members that signing the report(s) regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[4:28:19 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated the names of the appointees would be forwarded.

### **SB 110-MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION GRANTS**

[4:28:31 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 110 "An Act establishing the museum construction and major expansion matching grant program; and providing for an effective date."

[4:28:59 PM](#)

SALLY RAFSON, Staff, Senator Scott Kawasaki, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 110 on behalf of the sponsor. She read the following sponsor statement:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### **SB 110**

##### Sponsor Statement

"An Act establishing the museum construction and major expansion matching grant program; and providing for an effective date."

Alaska has a rich culture and history that is worth being shared with both residents and visitors to our state. Museums are instrumental in sharing our history and preserving our culture. A fund already exists in statute under AS 14.56.355 that provides grant funding to libraries; if enacted, SB 110 would create a similar fund to aid museums around the state in their growth and revitalization.

Not only do museums play a vital role in educating the public about our history, they also act as a gathering places for the community and contribute to our economy. According to a 2023 survey conducted by the

American Alliance of Museums, surveyed museums of Alaska had a financial impact of \$114 million on the economy and served over 22,000 K-12 students. According to the American Alliance of Museums, museums and other nonprofit cultural organizations return more than \$5 in tax revenues for every \$1 they receive in funding from all levels of government.

Many precious cultural artifacts are waiting to be displayed in buildings that need repairs and infrastructure updates. To adequately store and display current and future artifacts, museums need funding opportunities to do so. Alaska has over 100 museums and cultural centers located throughout the state. Recent surveys have shown that more than half of Alaska's museums and cultural centers anticipate undertaking major capital improvement projects in the next five years. I urge your support of SB 110 in order to help make such projects possible.

[4:31:10 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that Alaska has done a remarkable job with libraries. He attributed that to the legislature having the library association maintain a list of project priorities in need of funding. He asked whether a similar organization exists for museums.

[4:31:55 PM](#)

MS. RAFSON suggested the Director of Museums Alaska answer the question.

[4:32:16 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked if a museum must do all of the items listed in the major expansion plan outlined in SB 110 in order to qualify for a grant.

MS. RAFSON stated her belief that in order to qualify for a grant a museum would only need to do one item. She suggested other testifiers could elaborate.

[4:33:02 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL said he would like clarification.

MS. RAFSON said testifiers would discuss the projects for their museums.

[4:33:37 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced invited testimony on SB 110.

[4:34:01 PM](#)

DIXIE CLOUGH, Director, Museums Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 110. She said many of Alaska's museums are located in "hand-me-down" buildings that present various problems. She said about 66 percent of museums have plans for infrastructure projects or rebuilds. Alaska Native tribes have plans for about 10 new museums or cultural centers. There are also plans to create children's museums. There is no unbiased mechanism to fund museums. Funding currently occurs through the Capital Project Submission and Information System (CAPSIS) which requires support from the legislature and can be vetoed by the governor. Having a matching grant program makes the process efficient, transparent and equitable because a panel would decide project funding based on a score mechanism.

[4:36:01 PM](#)

MS. CLOUGH discussed amendments attached to her support letter which included:

- Adding "Major Renovation" to the title and anywhere in the bill that says, "construction and expansion."
- Removing the list that specifies projects as it may create unnecessary limitations of grant use.
- Change the eligibility criteria from 20 percent to 50 percent matching funds.

[4:37:05 PM](#)

MS. CLOUGH said the library matching grant fund exists in statue only. She said as far as she is aware a program for the fund has not been created.

[4:37:56 PM](#)

EMILY EDENSHAW, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 110. The Native Heritage Center has operated for 20 years. Alaska does not spend any money on cultural tourism which matters because museums are places of learning and allow people to connect with who they are. She mentioned that marketing dollars primarily help businesses. The Native Heritage

Center has a responsibility to work with every Native cultural group in Alaska, but it is difficult to keep up. Native organizations have reached out to her stating they want to offer cultural centers in their communities. She said this is the third time a bill requesting support for museums has come before the legislature. Museums throughout Alaska are underfunded and SB 110 is a chance to right that wrong.

[4:42:21 PM](#)

ANGELA LINN, Senior Collections Manager, University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 110. She stated that she represents her own opinions and not the University of Alaska. The Museum of the North was renovated and expanded 20 years ago through a combination of private, state, and federal funds. The building, however, was built in the 1980's and has maintenance and expansion needs. She expounded on the number and types of artifacts in the museum's collection to illustrate the need for funding and preservation.

[4:46:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN opened public testimony on SB 110.

[4:46:55 PM](#)

GREGORY STEWART, Director of Grants, Alaska Native Heritage Institute, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 110. He said the bill is valuable for museums in Alaska which are important to Native and non-Native residents. At the core of museums is education for both locals and visitors. Museums teach what it means to be Alaskan. The ability for museums to access state money would be impactful. He said there are grant opportunities that require matching funds but all too often he has been unable to obtain assistance from the state.

[4:49:21 PM](#)

VIRGINIA HATFIELD, Executive Director, Museum of the Aleutians, Unalaska, Alaska, testified in support of SB 110. She said the Museum of the Aleutians was build 25 years ago to meet the mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing the rich cultural legacy of the region. To meet the needs of the community the museum needs to expand, as it collects hundreds of items every year. The museum's strategic plan includes expansion. The museum is also offering more services and needs room for staff. Alaska museums face clear and urgent facility issues. SB 110 would help address issues such as installing heating, ventilation, and air condition (HVAC) systems, repairing leaking roofs, and installing security systems to preserve and protect artifacts.

[4:51:50 PM](#)

TANIA CLUCUS, Executive Director, Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 110. Although not technically a museum, since 2008 approximately two million people have visited the center. The center offers activities and cultural education presentations similar to museums. She said she has encountered the same problem as museums and is unable to obtain matching funds to qualify for grants. SB 110 would make receiving state matching funds a possibility. She said the center does not have enough reserve funds to fix items such as the parking lot. The center was built from federal, state, and private donations which the center continues to seek support from. Passing SB 110 will provide a mechanism to maintain museums in the state.

[4:54:12 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN closed public testimony on SB 110.

[4:54:19 PM](#)

MS. RAFSON said she intends to request a committee substitute containing the amendments Ms. Clough discussed.

[4:54:37 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN held SB 110 in committee.

### **SB 20-CPR CURRICULUM**

[4:54:41 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 20 "An Act relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation education in public schools; relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; and providing for an effective date."

[4:54:55 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited the will of the committee.

[4:54:59 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS moved to report SB 20, work order 34-LS0253\N, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[4:55:17 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN found no objection and SB 20 was reported from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

### **HB 69-EDUCATION FUNDING: INCREASE BSA**

[4:55:35 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 69(RLS) am "An Act relating to education; relating to open enrollment in public schools; relating to school and student performance reports; relating to school and district accountability; relating to charter schools; relating to an annual report for correspondence study programs; relating to the base student allocation; relating to reading proficiency incentive grants; relating to wireless telecommunications devices in public schools; relating to the duty of the legislature to pass a public education appropriation bill; relating to the duty of the governor to prepare a public education appropriation bill; establishing the Task Force on Education Funding; relating to a report on regulation of school districts; and providing for an effective date."

[4:56:10 PM](#)

MIKE MASON, Staff, Senator Löki Tobin, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, offered an explanation of changes for Senate committee substitute (SCS) for CSHB 69, version S. He said funding for Alaska's education system has not kept up with inflation and simultaneously there is a teacher and professional staff shortage nationwide. By not funding Alaska's education system students are shortchanged academically and economically. HB 69 would provide Alaska's education system with a significant investment of resources. He noted that data is very clear that there is a strong correlation between increased funding and improved student test scores. Every \$1,000 per pupil increase in instructional expenditures results in a two-percentage point increase in reading proficiency and a one-percentage point increase in math proficiency.

[4:58:04 PM](#)

MR. MASON said HB 69, version S, maintains the \$1000 Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase. The BSA supports all forms of public education. The BSA helps maintain school buildings, reduce class sizes, and provides better programs. He highlighted that HB 69, version S, amends the statute governing the Alaska Workforce Investment Board requiring the board to partner with Alaska Post Secondary Education, school districts, and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Child Development.

[4:59:18 PM](#)

MR. MASON said HB 69, version S, retains a cell phone ban and a provision to make starting a charter school easier. A class size reduction policy was added to the bill and Senator Kiehl is

working on language to address the local contribution issue. The bill also contains provisions to clarify, modify, and expand Alaska's open enrollment system and reading proficiency grants. There is also language to track student's post-secondary education. A final highlight was the task force on education funding that HB 69, version S, authorizes. The task force will analyze the state of education funding and the current accountability provisions for schools and other factors such as chronic absenteeism and school major maintenance:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**House Bill 69 - Education: Funding, Schools, Devices**

*Version S - Explanation of Changes*

**Section 1** - Amends AS 14.03 to add a new section directing school districts to adopt a target average class size policy for each grade level. Maximum class sizes are set for grades pre-K through sixth grade and seventh through twelfth grade. Districts may exclude non-essential courses and mixed-grade classes from the class size restrictions. Districts unable to meet the target class size limits, would be required to report why they were unable to meet the limits and how they plan to meet the limits in the future.

**Section 2** - Amends AS 14.03.080 to direct districts to adopt an inter-district open enrollment policy. Districts must address the military status of parents or guardians, the placement of siblings, and the employment of parents or guardians. Districts must establish a procedure for appealing the denial of an enrollment application.

**Section 3** - Directs district to public enrollment practices and policies.

**Section 4** - Amends AS 14.03.080 by requiring the Department of Education and Early Development to report on student academic progress over time.

**Section 5** - Amends AS 14.03.120 and directs DEED to publish class sizes for grades K through 12th grade.

**Section 6** - Directs DEED to collaborate with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

to collect data on each high school graduating class every 5 years until 20 years after graduation.

**Section 7** - Establishes a student academic improvement recognition program.

**Section 8** - Reduces the time the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development is required to review a charter school application appeal.

**Section 9** - Conforming language for section 11.

**Section 10** - Adds a new subsection under AS 14.03.255 to allow a school board to establish a simplified renewal process for a charter school in good standing.

**Section 11** - Adds a new section under AS 14.03 regarding appeal procedures for a charter school contract. The language mirrors administrative law governing contracts.

**Section 12** - Amends AS 14.03.260 to allow a school district to apply an indirect administrative cost rate for a charter school for actual accrued administrative costs or up to eight percent, whichever is less.

**Section 13** - Extends the report on correspondence study programs that was set to expire on July 1, 2025.

**Section 14** - Conforming language for section 15.

**Section 15** - Amends AS 14.03.310 to provide an allotment to a student enrolled in a correspondence program who participates in a state standards-based assessment, alternative assessment, or provides a student portfolio based on criteria established by DEED.

**Section 16** - Conforming language to section 13.

**Section 17** - Conforming language to section 13, based on the Alaska Reads Act repeal in 2034.

**Section 18** - Conforming language to section 19.

**Section 19** - Amends AS 14.17.410 by adding a new subsection to allow a city or borough school district

to support non-classroom related activities permitted by federal guidance.

**Section 20** - Increases the base student allocation by \$1,000.

**Section 21** - Conforming language related to inter-district open enrollment policies by permitting a child over age 16 to attend a school chosen by the student's parent or guardian.

**Section 22** - Conforming language relate to inter-district open enrollment policies by permitting a child who receives services under a 504 special education plan to attend a school of their parent or guardian's choice.

**Section 23** - Conforming language related to section 22.

**Section 24** - Provides reading proficiency grants for non-Kindergarten ready students, Kindergarten through third grade students who are not reading at grade level, and kindergarten through third grade students who are reading at grade level. Grants are subject to appropriation.

**Section 25** - Amends AS 14.33 by adding a new section that directs districts to adopt a wireless telecommunications device policy.

**Section 26** - Directs the Alaska Workforce Investment Board to work with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and DEED to develop a statewide policy for coordinated and effective technical and vocational education training including offering each high school student an opportunity to take a career or college entrance exam or assessment. The section also requires the creation of a recognition program for high schools that achieve a 90 percent assessment rate.

**Section 27** - Conforming language to section 6.

**Section 28** - Allows DEED to adopt correspondence programs in regulation.

**Section 29** - Removes the exemption from complying with AS 14.17.505 for unobligated allotment funds.

**Section 30** - Establishes a Task Force on Education Funding to review and recommend education reforms. The task force's report will be due January 31, 2027.

**Section 31** - Amends uncodified law to add a new section with applicability language noting that sections 8-12 apply to a contract that becomes legally binding on or after the effective date of sections 8-12 of this act.

**Section 32** - Conforming language for section 13 regarding the repeal of the Alaska Reads Act in 2034.

**Section 33** - Sets a July 1, 2025, effective date for the act.

[5:03:16 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN noted that the committee also retained and amended a particular section of the bill that was added on the House floor. Also, there was a change made offered by Senator Bjorkman concerning tracking academic performance. Some components that were added on the House floor were retained and expanded to allow districts to create a recognition program for schools that show case academic growth at 75 percent or above of all students.

[5:03:43 PM](#)

MR. MASON stated those changes occur in Section 4, which amends AS 14.03.080 requiring the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to report student academic progress over time.

[5:03:58 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited a motion.

SENATOR STEVENS moved to adopt the Senate committee substitute (SCS) for CSHB 69, work order 34-LS0309\S, as the working document.

[5:04:16 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN objected to offer Conceptual Amendment 1.

[5:04:18 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited a motion.

[5:04:22 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1.

**CONCEPTUAL AMENDMENT 1**

Insert New Section:

Section 32. Section 15 of this Act takes effect on July 1, 2026.

Renumber following sections accordingly.

[5:04:24 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN objected for purposes of discussion.

[5:04:27 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN offered Conceptual Amendment 1, to insert a new Section 32 that delays the effective date of Section 15, making it effective on July 1, 2026. Legislative Legal Services was authorized to make technical and conforming changes.

SENATOR BJORKMAN stated the reason for the delayed effective date is to provide time for people to adjust and understand the provision so no homeschool student goes without an allotment that is expected for the next school year. He commented he has general concerns about the provision.

[5:05:42 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN removed her objection; she found no further objection and Conceptual Amendment 1 to the SCS CSHB 69 was adopted.

[5:05:55 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked if Senator Bjorkman maintained his objection to the adoption of SCS CSHB 69 as the working document.

[5:05:59 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN removed his objection.

[5:06:03 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN found no further objection and SCS CSHB 69, as amended, was adopted.

[5:06:20 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN solicited a motion.

[5:06:22 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS moved to report SCS CSHB 69, work order 34-LS0309\S, as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s) and the needed title change resolution.

5:06:40 PM

CHAIR TOBIN found no objection and SCS CSHB 69(EDC) was reported from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

5:07:17 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 5:07 p.m.