

SB

112

SFIN

FILE

SB 112

**was referred to the
Senate Finance
Committee**

Hearing(s) were held

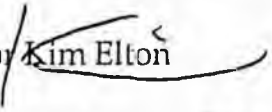
**The bill did not move
from Committee**

SENATOR KIM ELTON

MEMORANDUM

April, 29, 1999

TO: Senator John Torgerson, Co-chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Senator  Kim Elton

RE: Waiving SB 112, the "Running Start" bill, from Senate Finance

I would like to request to have SB 112 waived from Senate Finance Committee. The bill has an indeterminate fiscal note and will have minimal, if any, impact on the state treasure.

SB 112 allows eligible 11th and 12th grade high school students to get dual credit for courses taken at a publicly funded Alaska college or vocational school. Tuition fees are paid by the student's home school district. Called the "Running Start" program, the bill offers significant new opportunities to students and their families. It is as valuable to students looking for advanced vocational and technical training as it is to students who want to get a "running start" on college. Under this program, a student could graduate from high school with up to two years of college credits transferable to any postsecondary institution in the country.

The Running Start program broadens student choices and makes available to all students similar opportunities which currently exist in some Alaska school districts. Fairbanks, Valdez, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kenai and Kodiak have agreements with their local college campuses to allow some courses to be taken for dual credit. These programs are very popular with students as well as teachers and administrators. SB 112 builds on those successes to widen academic opportunity for all Alaska students.

SB 112 requires a school district to pay either the cost of tuition to the postsecondary institution in which a Running Start student is enrolled, or a proportional amount of the student's foundation formula allotment, whichever is less. Since the University of Alaska charges less than \$100 per credit hour, and most program participants are expected to take between three and six credit hours, a school district can afford to pay the full cost of tuition without disrupting the school's finances.

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SENATOR_KIM_ELTON@LEGIS.STATE.AK.US

The indeterminate fiscal note is attached because, although SB 112 was specifically constructed so that it did not require additional appropriations to either school districts or postsecondary institutions, the new exit exam requirement may serve to keep some students in high school longer. Those additional students (an indeterminate number) will create a demand for additional foundation formula dollars and, by extension, make additional students eligible for the "Running Start" program. **By itself, the program does not require any separate or additional appropriation.**

I have attached a sponsor statement and the fiscal note prepared by the Department of Education. I urge your consideration of this request for a waiver.

SENATOR KIM ELTON

CSSB 112 • The Running Start Education Program

Sponsor Statement

CSSB 112 establishes the "Running Start" program which offers high school students and their families new academic choices and opportunities. In this program, 11th and 12th grade high school students get dual credit for courses taken at a publicly funded Alaska college or vocational school. Tuition fees are paid by the student's home school district.

The Running Start program offers new challenges and choices to high school students. Students are drawn to this opportunity for several reasons. Some high school students are ready for advanced placement classes which may not be offered in their own high school. This includes both the traditional academic courses such as foreign language and mathematics, and vocational offerings such as diesel mechanics and computer technology. In addition, students who feel alienated from the high school arena may find new opportunities for success in a more academically focused setting.

The Running Start program ensures a more successful transition to college after high school graduation. Students who enter the job market directly after high school will find better job opportunities if they have completed advanced vocational training prior to high school graduation. For both kinds of students, the additional education and training is at no cost to their families. Program participants may graduate from high school with up to two years of completed college credits or vocational courses.

CSSB 112 is patterned on a program of the same name begun in the State of Washington in 1990. Initially a pilot project which went on to win acclaim on a statewide basis, the "Running Start" program allows 11th and 12th grade high school students to take college-level courses, tuition-free, at community and technical colleges in that state. Students receive dual credit at both the secondary and postsecondary level. Payment is provided to the postsecondary institutions by the school districts in which the students live.

More than 10,000 high school students in Washington participated in the Running Start program in the 1996-97 school year. By allowing them to earn high school and college credits simultaneously, the program reduced the amount of time they have to spend in college, and held down college costs for students and their families. Washington reports that taxpayers saved about

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\$18 million as a result of the program's operation in 1996-97, and that students saved \$9 million in college tuition costs. Best of all, reports also indicate Running Start students do better academically when they enter college after high school graduation.

In order to participate, students must possess a high school GPA of 2.75, and must apply to the colleges or vocational schools they wish to attend. Colleges in Washington have made an effort to balance the number of Running Start students with adult students in class, and prevent Running Start participants from displacing adults in class. The average credit load taken by the students was 10-11 credits per quarter, but many students took just one course per quarter with the balance of classes taken in high school.

CSSB 112 includes all the elements of the Washington program, including the provision in which colleges receive payment from the school districts in which the Running Start students reside, in proportion to the amount of college credits taken. CSSB 112 requires school districts to pay either the regular tuition fee, or a percentage of the per-student foundation formula in proportion to the number of hours of college instruction. SB 112 provides no reimbursement to a postsecondary institution for students who take a full load at their high school and attend postsecondary classes in addition.

Several Alaska school districts currently enjoy cooperative arrangements with the University of Alaska, similar to the Running Start program, which allow students to receive dual credit for college classes. In most of these districts, students must pay for those classes themselves, a circumstance which creates a barrier for students who cannot afford the fees. This legislation creates new opportunities for all Alaska students by removing those financial barriers.

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SIGN-IN

SB 112-POSTSECONDARY CLASS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

NAME: Eddy Jeans Subject/Bill No: SB112

Co./Dept./Title: DOE Phone: 8679

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Do you wish to testify? Yes No Respond To Questions

NAME: _____ Subject/Bill No: _____

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