

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Legislative Committee

LOCATION

**Governor's Council Conference Room
3601 C Street
Anchorage, Alaska
Teleconference**

Meeting Date

**February 14, 2014
1:00 p.m.**

Attendees:

Dean Gates – Chair
Eric Gebhart
Alex Gimarc
Heidi Haas
Banarsi Lal
Terese Kashi
Steve Lesko
Ric Nelson
Christine King
Kim McNamara
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

Staff:

Patrick Reinhart
Hannah Foreman
Christie Reinhardt

CALL TO ORDER – 1:00 p.m.
ROLL CALL

Announcements and Good News

Patrick Reinhart announced that Key Campaign went very well, and it was a successful week.

Christie Reinhardt announced that she presented on the Safe Students Act at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference, and they had a very positive response. She stated that she was also invited to the Council of Administrators of Special Education to talk about the Safe Students Act, and they are going to be writing a letter of support.

Dean Gates stated that he is pleased to see Michelle Jenkins is back at the Council office, and Michelle Jenkins announced that her son started speaking today.

Dean Gates announced that the Alaska Deaf Council (ADC) had a board meeting last night and discussed some of the legislative bills. There is a bill for a Deaf Children's Bill of Rights, HB 280, which the ADC thinks is a good idea, but the bill needs revisions to be effective. Representative LeDoux's office has agreed to look at revisions.

The Alaska Deaf Council has also reviewed HB 210, the Safe Students Act, and they want to send a letter to the legislators in support of the bill, but also noting that it needs to have some language that ensures protection for deaf students who use sign language to communicate and need to be restrained.

Dean Gates recognized the good work of Hannah Foreman on the legislative updates.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Ric Nelson asked for an amendment to the agenda under Old Business that addresses discussion on current bills of interest to the Council: HB 210, HB 211, and SB 163.

Ric Nelson **MOVED** to approve the agenda as amended. The motion **PASSED**.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Alex Gimarc **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the January 7, 2014 meeting. The motion **PASSED**.

Correspondence

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Council received a report from the U.S. Senate HELP Committee on restraint and seclusion and what they are planning to do in terms of federal legislation. Council staff will review the bill to ensure the Alaska bill parallels this federal bill. Christie Reinhardt added that the Alaska bill appears to be more rigorous than the federal bill, so they feel confident that when they review it, Alaska's bill will fall within the parameters of potential federal legislation.

REPORTS

Report from the Chair

Dean Gates did not have anything additional to report for this meeting.

Report from Staff

January Council Meeting

Patrick Reinhart stated that the staff would like feedback from Council members on the January Council meeting.

Ric Nelson stated that the legislative meeting schedule format was a little confusing and suggested that the format could be the legislator's name at the top and then the Council members listed underneath.

Dean Gates stated that he felt the legislative visits went very well.

Report from Key Campaign

Patrick Reinhart stated that Council members that attended Key Campaign included Anna Attla, Ric Nelson, Justine Sheehan, and Amy Simpson. Staff included Hannah Foreman, Teresa Holt, Rich Sanders, and Patrick Reinhart. The Council also had \$5,000 to offer in scholarships for other people to attend Key Campaign, and the people chosen to attend were excellent participants.

Juneau Youth Advocacy Summit

Patrick Reinhart stated that they were able to get one Project SEARCH youth to attend the summit, and he is waiting for a report from the participant.

Juneau Trust Advocacy Summit

Patrick Reinhart stated that he will be attending that summit on behalf of the Council.

OLD BUSINESS

House Bill 210 – Safe Students Act

Patrick Reinhart reported that there was a hearing in the House Education Committee on this bill, and Akis Gialopsos presented to the committee. Patrick stated that there were many questions they didn't anticipate regarding whether or not the bill covered private schools as well as concerns regarding the use of chemical restraints. The bill did not pass out of committee.

Christie Reinhardt added that one of the conversations was about who dispensed psychotropic medications if there was no school nurse. Legislators also had questions regarding parent notification and exactly what that meant.

Patrick Reinhart stated that the strategies for Representative Millett's office and the Council is to do an op ed piece from a parent who has experienced restraint and seclusion, and Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus may be asked to participate in that.

They are also going to target efforts to members of the House Education Committee, which include Representatives Gattis, Reinbold, LeDoux, Saddler, Seaton, Peggy Wilson, and Drummond, by asking for school personnel from their districts to contact them.

Patrick explained that another strategy may be for Representative Millett to remove the portion about private schools.

Christie Reinhardt stated that DEED Commissioner Hanley, while not coming out in support of the bill, has only attached a \$14,000 fiscal note to it, which is minimal.

Christine King asked if, in light of Representative Millett's publically known health condition, the Council could offer any support to her. Ric Nelson stated that they have had lengthy conversations with Representative Millett and have offered the support of the Council. Patrick Reinhart added that Representative Millett was awarded the Golden Key Award at the Key Campaign Unity Dinner for all of the wonderful work she has done for people with disabilities in the state.

HB 211- Employment First Legislation

Patrick Reinhart reported that there was a hearing on this bill, and once again, Akis Gialopsos presented. It moved out of committee very quickly, and is now in the House Finance Committee, and if it moves out of House Finance, it should move to the floor quickly. Patrick stated that they will continue to provide legislative alerts on this bill.

The fiscal note attached to this bill was approximately \$100,000 for the first year, and then \$45,000 each the second and third years. The cost is associated with the Department of Education and Early Development's

ability to survey former students and gather new and more specific data. Patrick noted that he believes the fiscal note will be decreased.

SB 163 – Employment First Legislation

Patrick Reinhart reported that last week, Senator Lesil McGuire submitted SB 163, an exact language companion bill to HB 211.

NEW BUSINESS

Position and Strategy on HB 220/SB 111 – Repeal of the HSGQE

Committee members engaged in a discussion of the repeal of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination through both the legislative bills and the Governor's bill. The question before the committee is whether or not to forward a recommendation of support to the Executive Committee of the Council.

Ric Nelson felt that because the Council has worked on this and made it a priority for so many years, no vote was necessary.

Alex Gimarc felt that for the benefit of new Council members, additional consideration should be given. He commented that when the HSGQE was put into effect, it was a way to test to ensure school districts were providing the necessary education.

Christie Reinhardt stated that since the inception of the HSGQE, federal standards have been put into place that states have to meet in terms of accountability, which involves testing measures and more stringent teacher standards. The State of Alaska has also realigned their curriculum and made it more stringent, and the Department of Education has worked very hard to make these changes, which now make the \$2 million expense of the HSGQE unnecessary.

Council members also shared that those students who have achieved the credit requirement but were unable to pass the HSGQE and receive a diploma are ineligible for the military, college, and scholarships for other training.

Eric Gebhart **MOVED** to recommend to the Executive Committee that the Council support the bills that eliminate the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. The motion **PASSED**.

HB 232 – Disability Designation on State ID or Driver’s License

In Art Delaune’s absence, Patrick Reinhart summarized that the purpose of the bill is to allow someone to voluntarily designate on their state issued ID that they have a hidden disability so that police officers or first responders can be made aware of the disability.

Patrick stated that there has not been much movement on the bill yet.

Ric Nelson **MOVED** to table the discussion to the February 27th meeting. The motion **PASSED**.

HB 280 – Education for Deaf and Hearing Impaired

Dean Gates stated that Al Berke as an individual was able to work with Representative LeDoux to get this bill introduced. The Alaska Deaf Council got in touch with Representative LeDoux and her aide who said that the Representative would be willing to hold this bill and make revisions with the Alaska Deaf Council, the Deaf Education Advisory Board, and the Governor’s Council within this session or next year to improve the bill if needed.

Again, Dean Gates stated that the Alaska Deaf Council feels this bill needs to be revised in order to be effective.

Alex Gimarc asked if the committee can see the bill and the Alaska Deaf Council’s recommendations before the next Legislative Committee meeting. Dean Gates will provide that information.

The committee took no further action on this issue.

LifeMed Accessible Van Closure

Patrick Reinhart explained that with all the discussions surrounding the Anchorage taxicab ordinance, LifeMed asked whether or not their medical taxi service would be subjected to those same regulations. Upon learning that they would be subject to the same regulations, LifeMed made the business decision to discontinue that aspect of their business.

Ric Nelson stated that another issue was that LifeMed did not want to accept Medicaid vouchers.

The committee did not take any further action on this issue.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

- Every Friday – Trust legislative meetings.
- Juneau based Trust Advocacy Training, February 26 – 27.

Patrick Reinhart stated that Council members are invited to participate in the Trust legislative meetings on Fridays. He also reminded committee members to take action on any legislative alerts they receive.

TIME AND DATE OF NEXT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee members discussed the importance of more frequently scheduled meetings during the legislative session. The next meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2014 from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

By unanimous consent, Dean Gates adjourned the meeting at 2:39 p.m.