

HOUSE BILL NO. 231

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES BURKE, Hall

Introduced: 5/19/25

Referred: Education, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act relating to education; relating to education reports; relating to the duties of the**
2 **Department of Education and Early Development; relating to teacher exit interviews**
3 **conducted by school districts; relating to the teachers' retirement system; relating to the**
4 **public employee retirement system; and providing for an effective date."**

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 * **Section 1.** AS 14.03.078(a) is amended to read:

7 (a) The department shall provide to the legislature and school districts by
8 February 15 of each year by electronic means an annual report regarding the progress
9 of each school and school district toward high academic performance by all students.

10 The report required under this section must include

11 (1) information described under AS 14.03.120;

12 (2) progress of the department

13 (A) toward implementing the school accountability provisions
14 of AS 14.03.123; and

- 1 (B) in assisting high schools to become accredited;
- 2 (3) a description of the resources provided to each school and school
3 district for coordinated school improvement activities and staff training in each school
4 and school district;
- 5 (4) each school district's and each school's progress in aligning
6 curriculum with state education performance standards;
- 7 (5) a description of the efforts by the department to assist a public
8 school or district that receives a low performance designation under AS 14.03.123;
- 9 (6) a description of intervention efforts by each school district and
10 school for students who are not meeting state performance standards;
- 11 (7) the number and percentage of turnover in certificated personnel and
12 superintendents, information regarding working conditions for teachers and
13 paraprofessionals, the availability of local housing, aggregated information
14 compiled through teacher exit interviews conducted under AS 14.20.183, and
15 data-based recommendations to shape teacher retention strategies;
- 16 (8) a summary of the categories of certificated administrative
17 employees employed by each school district that includes the ratio of
- 18 (A) the number of certificated administrative employees in
19 each category employed by each school district compared to the number of
20 students enrolled in the school district on October 1 of the previous year;
- 21 (B) the total number of certificated administrative employees
22 employed by each school district compared to the total number of teachers
23 employed by the school district on October 1 of the previous year; and
- 24 (C) the total number of teachers employed by each school
25 district compared to the total number of students enrolled in the school district
26 on October 1 of the previous year;
- 27 (9) the progress made to implement the reading intervention programs
28 established under AS 14.30.760 - 14.30.780, including data on how school districts are
29 using in-service days for culturally responsive professional development in reading
30 instruction; and
- 31 (10) the effectiveness and participation rates of the parents as teachers

1 program established under AS 14.03.420, including measures of efficiency and
 2 effectiveness that demonstrate the effects of the program on school readiness.

3 * **Sec. 2.** AS 14.03.120(a) is amended to read:

4 (a) A district shall annually file with the department, and make available to the
 5 public, a report that

6 (1) establishes district goals and priorities for improving education in
 7 the district;

8 (2) includes a plan for achieving district goals and priorities; and

9 (3) includes a means of measuring the achievement of district goals
 10 and priorities;

11 **(4) includes the information compiled through teacher exit**
 12 **interviews conducted under AS 14.20.183.**

13 * **Sec. 3.** AS 14.07.020(a) is amended to read:

14 (a) The department shall

15 (1) exercise general supervision over the public schools of the state
 16 except the University of Alaska;

17 (2) study the conditions and needs of the public schools of the state,
 18 adopt or recommend plans, administer and evaluate grants to improve school
 19 performance awarded under AS 14.03.125, and adopt regulations for the improvement
 20 of the public schools; the department may consult with the University of Alaska to
 21 develop secondary education requirements to improve student achievement in college
 22 preparatory courses;

23 (3) provide advisory and consultative services to all public school
 24 governing bodies and personnel;

25 (4) prescribe by regulation a minimum course of study for the public
 26 schools; the regulations must provide that, if a course in American Sign Language is
 27 given, the course shall be given credit as a course in a foreign language;

28 (5) establish, in coordination with the Department of Family and
 29 Community Services, a program for the continuing education of children who are held
 30 in juvenile detention facilities or juvenile treatment facilities, as those terms are
 31 defined in AS 47.12.990, in the state during the period of detention or treatment;

1 (6) accredit those public schools that meet accreditation standards
2 prescribed by regulation by the department; these regulations shall be adopted by the
3 department and presented to the legislature during the first 10 days of any regular
4 session, and become effective 45 days after presentation or at the end of the session,
5 whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of
6 the members of each house;

7 (7) prescribe by regulation, after consultation with the state fire
8 marshal and the state sanitarian, standards that will ensure healthful and safe
9 conditions in the public and private schools of the state, including a requirement of
10 physical examinations and immunizations in pre-elementary schools; the standards for
11 private schools may not be more stringent than those for public schools;

12 (8) exercise general supervision over early education programs that
13 receive direct state or federal funding, including early education programs provided by
14 a school district for students four and five years of age, approve an early education
15 program provided by a school district that complies with the standards adopted by the
16 board under AS 14.07.165(a)(5), and revoke approval of an early education program if
17 the program does not comply with the standards adopted by the board under
18 AS 14.07.165(a)(5);

19 (9) exercise general supervision over elementary and secondary
20 correspondence study programs offered by municipal school districts or regional
21 educational attendance areas; the department may also offer and make available to any
22 Alaskan through a centralized office a correspondence study program;

23 (10) accredit private schools that request accreditation and that meet
24 accreditation standards prescribed by regulation by the department; nothing in this
25 paragraph authorizes the department to require religious or other private schools to be
26 licensed;

27 (11) review plans for construction of new public elementary and
28 secondary schools and for additions to and major rehabilitation of existing public
29 elementary and secondary schools and, in accordance with regulations adopted by the
30 department, determine and approve the extent of eligibility for state aid of a school
31 construction or major maintenance project; for the purposes of this paragraph, "plans"

1 include educational specifications, schematic designs, projected energy consumption
2 and costs, and final contract documents;

3 (12) provide educational opportunities in the areas of vocational
4 education and training, and basic education to individuals over 16 years of age who
5 are no longer attending school; the department may consult with businesses and labor
6 unions to develop a program to prepare students for apprenticeships or internships that
7 will lead to employment opportunities;

8 (13) administer the grants awarded under AS 14.11;

9 (14) establish, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety, a
10 school bus driver training course;

11 (15) require the reporting of information relating to school disciplinary
12 and safety programs under AS 14.33.120 and of incidents of disruptive or violent
13 behavior;

14 (16) establish by regulation criteria, based on low student performance,
15 under which the department may intervene in a school district to improve instructional
16 practices, as described in AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or (15); the regulations must include

17 (A) a notice provision that alerts the district to the deficiencies
18 and the instructional practice changes proposed by the department;

19 (B) an end date for departmental intervention, as described in
20 AS 14.07.030(a)(14)(A) and (B) and (15), after the district demonstrates three
21 consecutive years of improvement consisting of not less than two percent
22 increases in student proficiency on standards-based assessments in language
23 arts and mathematics, as provided in AS 14.03.123(f)(1)(A); and

24 (C) a process for districts to petition the department for
25 continuing or discontinuing the department's intervention;

26 (17) notify the legislative committees having jurisdiction over
27 education before intervening in a school district under AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or
28 redirecting public school funding under AS 14.07.030(a)(15);

29 (18) establish a reading program to provide direct support for and
30 intervention in the reading intervention programs of participating schools as described
31 in AS 14.30.765 and 14.30.770;

(19) annually convene, either in person or electronically, a panel to review and comment on the effectiveness of the programs created by the department and the regulations adopted by the board to implement AS 14.03.410, 14.03.420, AS 14.30.760 - 14.30.770, and 14.30.800; the panel

(A) shall provide recommendations and guidance to the board, the department, and the legislature on how to integrate early education and reading programs created under this title with tribal compacting or programs focused on cultural education within the department;

(B) shall discuss support for reading in Alaska Native languages and other non-English languages;

(C) must collectively represent the regions of the state and include teachers of grades kindergarten through three, school administrators, parents of students in grades kindergarten through three, stakeholders from Indigenous language immersion programs, representatives from early education stakeholder groups, and researchers of best practices for improving literacy performance, including best practices for instruction of Indigenous students and students whose first language is not English;

(20) provide financial planning and retirement training to teachers and paraprofessionals;

(21) support mentoring programs for school principals and district superintendents.

* **Sec. 4.** AS 14.07.020(a), as amended by sec. 16, ch. 40, SLA 2022, is amended to read:

(a) The department shall

(1) exercise general supervision over the public schools of the state except the University of Alaska;

(2) study the conditions and needs of the public schools of the state, adopt or recommend plans, administer and evaluate grants to improve school performance awarded under AS 14.03.125, and adopt regulations for the improvement of the public schools; the department may consult with the University of Alaska to develop secondary education requirements to improve student achievement in college preparatory courses;

1 (3) provide advisory and consultative services to all public school
2 governing bodies and personnel;

3 (4) prescribe by regulation a minimum course of study for the public
4 schools; the regulations must provide that, if a course in American Sign Language is
5 given, the course shall be given credit as a course in a foreign language;

6 (5) establish, in coordination with the Department of Family and
7 Community Services, a program for the continuing education of children who are held
8 in juvenile detention facilities or juvenile treatment facilities, as those terms are
9 defined in AS 47.12.990, in the state during the period of detention or treatment;

10 (6) accredit those public schools that meet accreditation standards
11 prescribed by regulation by the department; these regulations shall be adopted by the
12 department and presented to the legislature during the first 10 days of any regular
13 session, and become effective 45 days after presentation or at the end of the session,
14 whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of
15 the members of each house;

16 (7) prescribe by regulation, after consultation with the state fire
17 marshal and the state sanitarian, standards that will ensure healthful and safe
18 conditions in the public and private schools of the state, including a requirement of
19 physical examinations and immunizations in pre-elementary schools; the standards for
20 private schools may not be more stringent than those for public schools;

21 (8) exercise general supervision over early education programs that
22 receive direct state or federal funding, including early education programs provided by
23 a school district for students four and five years of age;

24 (9) exercise general supervision over elementary and secondary
25 correspondence study programs offered by municipal school districts or regional
26 educational attendance areas; the department may also offer and make available to any
27 Alaskan through a centralized office a correspondence study program;

28 (10) accredit private schools that request accreditation and that meet
29 accreditation standards prescribed by regulation by the department; nothing in this
30 paragraph authorizes the department to require religious or other private schools to be
31 licensed;

1 (11) review plans for construction of new public elementary and
2 secondary schools and for additions to and major rehabilitation of existing public
3 elementary and secondary schools and, in accordance with regulations adopted by the
4 department, determine and approve the extent of eligibility for state aid of a school
5 construction or major maintenance project; for the purposes of this paragraph, "plans"
6 include educational specifications, schematic designs, projected energy consumption
7 and costs, and final contract documents;

8 (12) provide educational opportunities in the areas of vocational
9 education and training, and basic education to individuals over 16 years of age who
10 are no longer attending school; the department may consult with businesses and labor
11 unions to develop a program to prepare students for apprenticeships or internships that
12 will lead to employment opportunities;

13 (13) administer the grants awarded under AS 14.11;

14 (14) establish, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety, a
15 school bus driver training course;

16 (15) require the reporting of information relating to school disciplinary
17 and safety programs under AS 14.33.120 and of incidents of disruptive or violent
18 behavior;

19 (16) establish by regulation criteria, based on low student performance,
20 under which the department may intervene in a school district to improve instructional
21 practices, as described in AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or (15); the regulations must include

22 (A) a notice provision that alerts the district to the deficiencies
23 and the instructional practice changes proposed by the department;

24 (B) an end date for departmental intervention, as described in
25 AS 14.07.030(a)(14)(A) and (B) and (15), after the district demonstrates three
26 consecutive years of improvement consisting of not less than two percent
27 increases in student proficiency on standards-based assessments in language
28 arts and mathematics, as provided in AS 14.03.123(f)(1)(A); and

29 (C) a process for districts to petition the department for
30 continuing or discontinuing the department's intervention;

31 (17) notify the legislative committees having jurisdiction over

education before intervening in a school district under AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or redirecting public school funding under AS 14.07.030(a)(15);

(18) provide financial planning and retirement training to teachers and paraprofessionals;

(19) support mentoring programs for school principals and district superintendents.

* **Sec. 5.** AS 14.20.020(b) is amended to read:

(b) A person is not eligible for a teacher certificate unless that person has received at least a baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education accredited by a recognized regional **or international** accrediting association or approved by the commissioner and, if applicable, has passed the examination or examinations required by (i) of this section. However, this subsection is not applicable to

(1) persons employed in the state public school system on September 1, 1962;

(2) persons issued an emergency certificate during a situation that, in the judgment of the commissioner, requires the temporary issuance of a certificate to a person not otherwise qualified.

* **Sec. 6.** AS 14.20 is amended by adding a new section to read:

Sec. 14.20.183. Exit interviews. A school district shall contract with an independent third party to conduct an exit interview with a teacher when the teacher terminates employment with the school district.

* **Sec. 7.** AS 14.25.009 is amended to read:

Sec. 14.25.009. Applicability of AS 14.25.009 - 14.25.220. The provisions of AS 14.25.009 - 14.25.220 apply only to members first hired before July 1, 2006, **and teachers who are also members of the public employees' defined benefit retirement plan under AS 39.35.095 - 39.35.680 who do not elect under AS 14.25.540 to participate in the defined contribution retirement plan under AS 14.25.310 - 14.25.590.**

* **Sec. 8.** AS 14.25.310 is amended to read:

Sec. 14.25.310. Applicability of AS 14.25.310 - 14.25.590. The provisions of

AS 14.25.310 - 14.25.590 apply only to teachers who first become members on or after July 1, 2006, to members who are employed by employers that do not participate in the defined benefit retirement plan established under AS 14.25.009 - 14.25.220, to teachers who are also members of the defined benefit retirement plan under AS 39.35.095 - 39.35.680 and elect to participate in this plan [TO FORMER MEMBERS UNDER AS 14.25.220], or to members who transfer into the defined contribution retirement plan under AS 14.25.540.

* **Sec. 9.** AS 14.25.330(a) is amended to read:

(a) A teacher who first becomes a member on or after July 1, 2006, and who is not also a member of the defined benefit retirement plan under AS 39.35.095 - 39.35.680 shall participate in the system [PLAN] as a member of the defined contribution retirement plan.

* **Sec. 10.** AS 14.43.700 is amended to read:

Sec. 14.43.700. Definition. In AS 14.43.600 - 14.43.700, "rural" means a community [WITH A POPULATION OF 7,500 OR LESS] that is not connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks or a community with a population of 1,500 or less that is connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks.

* **Sec. 11.** AS 39.35.120(b) is amended to read:

(b) Inclusion in the plan is a condition of employment for an employee except as otherwise provided for

(1) an elected official;

(2) [REPEALED]

(3)] an employee of the university who participates in a university retirement program under AS 14.40.661 - 14.40.799;

(3) an employee who is a member of a defined contribution retirement plan under AS 14.25.310 - 14.25.590 or AS 39.35.700 - 39.35.990.

* **Sec. 12.** AS 39.35.680(22) is amended to read:

(22) "member" or "employee"

(A) means a person eligible to participate in the plan and who is covered by the plan;

(B) includes

- (i) an active member;
- (ii) an inactive member;
- (iii) a vested member;
- (iv) a deferred vested member;
- (v) a nonvested member;
- (vi) a disabled member;
- (vii) a retired member;
- (viii) an elected public officer under AS 39.35.381;

(C) does not include

- (i) former members;
- (ii) persons compensated on a contractual or fee basis;
- (iii) casual or emergency workers or nonpermanent employees as defined in AS 39.25.200;
- (iv) persons covered by the Alaska Teachers' Retirement System except as provided under AS 14.25.009, AS 39.35.131 and 39.35.381, or persons covered by a university retirement program;
- (v) employees of the division of marine transportation engaged in operating the state ferry system who are covered by a union or group retirement system to which the state makes contributions;
- (vi) justices of the supreme court or judges of the court of appeals or of the superior or district courts of Alaska;
- (vii) the administrative director of the Alaska Court System appointed under art. IV, sec. 16 of the state constitution unless the director becomes a member under AS 39.35.158;
- (viii) members of the elected public officers' retirement system (former AS 39.37); and
- (ix) contractual employees of the legislative branch of state government under AS 24.10.060(f);

(D) may include employees of the division of marine transportation excluded under (C)(v) of this paragraph if [PROVIDED THAT]

(i) the State of Alaska formally agrees to their inclusion through the process of collective bargaining; and

(ii) no collective bargaining agreement has the effect of obligating contributions made by the state under AS 39.30.150 in the event the state resumes participation in the federal social security system;

* **Sec. 13.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

LUMP SUM PAYMENT FOR CERTAIN TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS. (a) Subject to appropriation for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2026, June 30, 2027, and June 30, 2028, a certificated full-time teacher occupying a position requiring teaching on a regular basis during the normal work period for each day or week at a classroom teaching assignment in a public elementary or secondary school, excluding a person teaching as an assistant or graduate assistant or teaching on a substitute, temporary, or per diem basis, or a full-time paraprofessional working in a public school is entitled to receive a lump sum payment as a retention and recruitment incentive on or within a reasonable period after July 1, 2026, July 1, 2027, and July 1, 2028, if the teacher was employed in a full-time classroom teaching position or the paraprofessional was employed in a full-time paraprofessional position for the entirety of the school term for the school year immediately preceding the date of payment. The Department of Education and Early Development shall reduce the retention and recruitment incentive by the amount necessary to pay mandatory employee and employer deductions, including a deduction required under AS 14.25.

(b) Subject to the application and certification requirements in (c) of this section, the Department of Education and Early Development shall pay the retention and recruitment incentive identified in (a) of this section as grants to school districts as follows:

(1) \$5,000 for each eligible certificated full-time teacher teaching or full-time paraprofessional working in the following districts:

- (A) Anchorage School District;
- (B) Fairbanks North Star Borough School District;
- (C) Juneau Borough School District;
- (D) Kenai Peninsula Borough School District;

1 (E) Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District;
 2 (2) \$10,000 for each eligible certificated full-time teacher teaching or full-time
 3 paraprofessional working in the following districts:

- 4 (A) Alaska Gateway School District;
- 5 (B) Aleutian Region School District;
- 6 (C) Aleutians East Borough School District;
- 7 (D) Annette Island School District;
- 8 (E) Chugach School District;
- 9 (F) Copper River School District;
- 10 (G) Cordova City School District;
- 11 (H) Delta/Greely School District;
- 12 (I) Denali Borough School District;
- 13 (J) Galena City School District;
- 14 (K) Haines Borough School District;
- 15 (L) Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District;
- 16 (M) Kodiak Island Borough School District;
- 17 (N) Mount Edgecumbe;
- 18 (O) Nenana City School District;
- 19 (P) Nome Public Schools;
- 20 (Q) Petersburg Borough School District;
- 21 (R) Saint Mary's School District;
- 22 (S) Sitka School District;
- 23 (T) Skagway School District;
- 24 (U) Unalaska City School District;
- 25 (V) Valdez City School District;
- 26 (W) Wrangell Public School District;
- 27 (X) Yakutat School District;

28 (3) \$15,000 for each eligible certificated full-time teacher teaching or full-time
 29 paraprofessional working in the following districts:

- 30 (A) Bering Strait School District;
- 31 (B) Bristol Bay Borough School District;

- 1 (C) Chatham School District;
- 2 (D) Craig City School District;
- 3 (E) Dillingham City School District;
- 4 (F) Hoonah City School District;
- 5 (G) Hydaburg City School District;
- 6 (H) Iditarod Area School District;
- 7 (I) Kake City School District;
- 8 (J) Kashunamiut School District;
- 9 (K) Klawock City School District;
- 10 (L) Kuspuk School District;
- 11 (M) Lake and Peninsula Borough School District;
- 12 (N) Lower Kuskokwim School District;
- 13 (O) Lower Yukon School District;
- 14 (P) North Slope Borough School District;
- 15 (Q) Northwest Arctic Borough School District;
- 16 (R) Pelican City School District;
- 17 (S) Pribilof School District;
- 18 (T) Southeast Island School District;
- 19 (U) Southwest Region School District;
- 20 (V) Tanana City School District;
- 21 (W) Yukon Flats School District;
- 22 (X) Yukon-Koyukuk School District;
- 23 (Y) Yupiit School District.

24 (c) To be eligible for the retention and recruitment incentive identified in (a) of this
 25 section, a certificated full-time teacher or a full-time paraprofessional must apply during each
 26 eligible calendar year to the Department of Education and Early Development on a date not
 27 later than the final day the teacher's school is in session for the school term established by the
 28 governing body of that teacher's school district or regional educational attendance area. The
 29 teacher or paraprofessional shall apply for the payment under this section on a form
 30 designated by the commissioner of education and early development. For each teacher or
 31 paraprofessional who applies, the school district or regional educational attendance area shall

1 certify the teacher's or paraprofessional's eligibility for payment under (a) of this section to the
2 Department of Education and Early Development.

3 (d) A payment made under this section is considered compensation for the purposes
4 of AS 14.25.

5 (e) The Department of Education and Early Development may adopt regulations
6 necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

7 * **Sec. 14.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
8 read:

9 TRANSITION: RETIREMENT PLAN ELECTION. A teacher who became a member
10 of the defined contribution retirement plan under AS 14.25.310 - 14.25.590 after June 30,
11 2006, and before the effective date of secs. 7 - 9, 11, and 12 of this Act, and who, on the
12 effective date of secs. 7 - 9, 11, and 12 of this Act, is a member employed by an employer in
13 that defined contribution retirement plan and is also a member of the defined benefit
14 retirement plan under AS 39.35.095 - 39.35.680 may, within 180 days after the effective date
15 of secs. 7 - 9, 11, and 12 of this Act, make a one-time election to participate in the defined
16 benefit retirement plan under AS 14.25.009 - 14.25.220 and to transfer all contributions that
17 have been made or should be made to the defined contribution retirement plan for service the
18 member completes before the effective date of the member's participation in the defined
19 benefit retirement plan. The transferred contributions shall be used to purchase credited
20 service in the defined benefit retirement plan under AS 14.25.009 - 14.25.220 on an actuarial
21 equivalent basis determined by the Alaska Retirement Management Board established under
22 AS 37.10.210. The provisions of AS 14.25.044 apply to an election made under this section.

23 * **Sec. 15.** Section 4 of this Act takes effect on the effective date of sec. 16, ch. 40, SLA
24 2022.

25 * **Sec. 16.** Section 13 of this Act takes effect July 1, 2025.

26 * **Sec. 17.** Sections 7 - 12 and 14 of this Act take effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).