

# SENATOR PETER A. MICCICHE

*Alaska State Legislature*

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DISTRICT O

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Governor Bill Walker

Re: Clarifying the Record on HB 156

Dear Governor Walker,

My primary objective for serving in the Alaska Senate was to offer my financial and policy background service toward the betterment of the State of Alaska and somewhat less for the "social issues" that represent a segment of state law. However, often sound policy and social issues intersect and become the part of the job that requires the most careful consideration and steadfast leadership.

In this case and the reason for this letter are my thoughts on the benefits, as well as the widely-distributed misunderstandings of the version of HB156 that passed the Legislature. Initially, late changes to the bill presented somewhat problematic policy in the area of reproductive education. However, I amended the bill while working with bill sponsors to eliminate aspects that could have interrupted the process and complicated the execution of reproductive education at the school district and local school level.

With the exception of the reproductive education sections that I will discuss in a following paragraph, the benefits to the institution of Alaska public education provided by the version of HB 156 that passed the Legislature are significant. Generally, the changes to state law provide increased local control, recognize parental rights, repair the unintended consequences of HB44 from 2015, reduce unfunded and unnecessary mandates and eliminate the unworkable 70/30 provision currently in state law.

Specifically, the benefits are as follows:

- The bill, repeals the expensive and difficult-to-administer “opt out” provision for surveys and questionnaires while still protecting parent’s rights for choosing areas where they feel opting out is the best course of action for their children.
- The bill repeals the 70/30 provision for the proportion of funding that must be spent in the classroom. Considering that half of the State’s district historically operates under a waiver, the policy was clearly not the right choice for the rural-heavy State of Alaska.
- The bill allows the DEED a streamlined path through the state procurement process, allowing efficiency and cost-savings previously difficult to obtain in existing education procurement law.
- HB156 adjusts the unintended consequences of HB44 training requirements to a more practical expectation, allowing Erin and Bree’s Laws, as well as child restraint and de-escalation training to be implemented at a reasonable cost to Alaska’s school districts.

Finally, I believe it is apparent that members of the public focused on previous versions of HB156 that may have proven problematic to execute as they pertained to reproductive education. Again, I personally worked with the sponsors and various educational institutions to arrive at sound, workable policy that I feel is beneficial to all concerned parties and certainly will provide a quality product for our students.

Section 18 that had developed into a widely-distributed, legendary misunderstanding of the actual function of the bill has been amended into sound policy. The bill simply requires the following of reproductive curriculum and course providers:

- It establishes that curriculum and materials for reproductive education classes must be approved by the school board and available for parents to review, much like many other examples of general curriculum and materials established and approved by school boards throughout the state.
- It requires school boards to approve individual providers and to make public the credentials of those individuals that will be delivering the curriculum.
- The Bill also requires that a certified teacher, or a person supervised by a certified teacher, may teach a class in sex education.

What HB156 does not do is create a situation where state overreach defines anything about the curriculum/materials, providers, credential requirements or the local approval process. It does not ban any individual groups or people from providing reproductive education. The local school board retains absolute control to approve anyone to deliver any curriculum or materials they see as being appropriate for their districts. Parents will have the right to review and choose to have their child attend if they approve or opt out if they do not approve of the result.

My vision is that the providers and curriculum will vary somewhat across the various districts, but that the differences between curricula will likely not vary substantially. However, I support this policy simply because I believe that reproductive education is an

important topic that deserves a basic level of objective scrutiny; again, much like the many other topics, coursework and materials delivered within our public education system.

Governor Walker, as a parent and a pragmatic, conservative policy-maker, if I were in your shoes I would either sign HB 156 or allow the bill to become law due to the improvements in sound and responsible educational policy. The changes in HB156 have resulted in a \$0 fiscal note and it provides all of the benefits listed above. Primary opposition is the result of carry-over based on a previous version of the bill that no longer exists in the current law.

Pragmatic leadership must be based on the actual and concrete rather than legendary and rhetorical special interest perception from either side of the aisle. I have co-sponsored and proudly support HB156 and hope we can share in the celebration of its passage to deliver what is ultimately the best educational outcome for the students of our great state.

Thank you for this opportunity to explain my support for HB156 and I am available if I can answer any of your questions or concerns related to the legislation.

Respectfully in Alaska's Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. Micciche", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Peter A. Micciche  
District O – Kenai Peninsula