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## Representative Fred Dyson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 25, 2001

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## **Rep. Dyson's HB 101 Helps Charter Schools** **Bill Allows More Schools, Longer Contracts, Start-Up Funds**

(JUNEAU) – More Alaskan children will get the opportunity to experience the educational benefits of parent-led charter schools under House Bill 101, which the House passed on Tuesday.

Rep. Fred Dyson (R-Eagle River) sponsored the bill as a way to help Alaska's fledgling charter school movement become an established and successful component of the state's educational system, by providing both financial and structural assistance crucial to helping new and existing charter schools succeed, he said.

"Students, families and educators can all benefit tremendously from the innovation and energy that charter schools bring to the educational system," said Dyson. "This bill honors the energy and enthusiasm of those parents working to make charter schools a success in Alaska by attempting to give them a more even playing field and a fair chance to succeed on their merits."

First established in Alaska under a 1995 state law, charter schools are public schools established by contracts, or charters, between school districts and local parents or organizations. They receive some public funding and employ the same certified teachers as public schools, while offering the benefits of diverse approaches to education. However, tight funding and resistance by some districts in recent years has depressed enrollment and forced several charter schools to close their doors.

HB 101 would take several steps help charter schools remain viable alternatives in Alaska, including:

- Eliminating the current law's 2005 sunset date, which along with the maximum five-year term of charters, has hindered new schools from finding facilities
- Extending the allowable length of a contract from 5 years to 10
- Doubling the allowable number of statewide charters to 60
- Clarifying that charter school students are not exempt from competency testing
- Providing charter schools a \$500 per student start-up grant
- Allowing charter schools with more than 150 students to be treated as a separate school in the state foundation formula, making them eligible for more funding under the formula
- Allowing charter schools to meet in public facilities other than school buildings if the buildings are deemed safe by the district superintendent

While HB 101 is similar in some respects to a charter school bill Dyson sponsored last year, it does not include the previous bill's requirement that local districts fairly share local property tax revenue directly with charter schools.

HB 101 moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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**Broadcasters note:** Comments are available on the Majority Actuality Line 1 (800) 478-6540