

Sponsor Statement for HB 99

School Discipline and Safety

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HB 99, "An Act relating to school discipline and safety programs; and providing for an effective date," seeks to address ways to mitigate violence in Alaska's schools.

Violence in Alaska's schools has recently been brought into the community spotlight as a result of serious physical altercations between students. These particular fights have been extremely violent resulting in severe bodily harm and even leaving one student comatose. These cannot be considered isolated incidents from those that are never reported. Education requires our children to learn how to live in society through the acceptance of rules and community values. Those values need to be taught by parents, teachers and peers. But somewhere we lost that process in our schools.

HB 99 will be another tool available to schools to help confront both violent and non-violent conflicts. It amends Title 14 of Alaska Statutes to include policies that will seek to initiate a student conflict-resolution curriculum that will provide to teachers, staff, and students ways of nonviolent resolution and mediations of conflicts. HB 99 seeks to recognize and enforce existing behavior standards by giving students alternatives for solving problems besides the use of violence. Students will learn valuable lessons that will hopefully result in a safer education environment for all of our children. By integrating this program into schools' core curriculum these policies are targeted at helping students resolve problems before they escalate. Students will be required to come to school and learn. The lesson will be different, the classroom environment will be isolated and no grade will be awarded but the student should walk away with knowledge that is directly applicable to life.

It is also the intent of this legislation to give students other possible means for dealing with conflict in general, outside of the school.