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“WELL-INTENTIONED BUT POORLY-EXECUTED”: LAW FIRM FINDS SERIOUS FLAWS IN EDUCATION BALLOT INITIATIVE

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The Alaska Students’ Educational Bill of Rights ballot initiative contains “a number of potential legal flaws” according to the law firm Holland & Knight. The initiative proposes a law that would give expanded powers and responsibilities to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and the University of Alaska Board of Regents. These responsibilities range from ensuring a quality, affordable education to providing modern facilities and competitive salaries.

After completing a preliminary legal opinion, the law firm found, “The Initiative is a well-intentioned but poorly-executed effort to address perceived problems with Alaska’s public education system.” Additionally, “The Initiative uses vague, aspirational language rather than any sort of discernable, measurable benchmark.” Without defining terms such as “high quality” or “highly qualified,” no concrete standards are set.

“We all want Alaska students to receive outstanding educations that set them up for future success. But vague language and undefined goals won’t improve educational outcomes.”

— Melodie Bowler, Associate Director at Alaska Policy Forum

Due to its vague language, the ballot initiative could result in legal disputes if enacted, as it is unclear which entities are responsible for funding and implementing the ambiguous goals. The full legal opinion is available at www.AlaskaPolicyForum.org.

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