

AASB Virtual Leadership & Legislative Academy and Youth Advocacy Institute  
Synopsis-Tegan Retzer  
February 6, 2021

On February 6th, Olivia Davis and I attended the AASB Youth Advocacy Institute.

Joined with young leaders from all around the state, we learned how to use our voices to make change, how to communicate effectively with our legislators, how to write and present a compelling testimony, and how to engage with our board members as student representatives.

Olivia and I were part of a small group of students who chose to share their testimonies with a panel of judges. I spoke in support of House Bill 19 which would grant a limited teaching license to native language speakers. The judges emphasized the importance of speaking with inflection and using eye contact to make connections. Towards the end of the second day, we had like-size district forums where we talked about legislative priorities.

I was impressed with how welcoming everyone was to youth input. Everyone agreed that during Covid times, mental health and SEL are of utmost importance. When all of the districts came together at the end, I spoke on the significance of better funding. That was another one of our top priorities.

Overall, the AASB Youth Advocacy Institute helped improve my understanding of government and leadership, and I was able to form bonds with other students throughout Alaska despite the institute's virtual format.