



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Education Committee Chair

EDUCATION
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

SJR 28: Supporting J-1 and H-1B Visa Programs

Sponsor Statement – Version A

Alaska's economy depends on a workforce that can respond to sharp seasonal demands and the realities of serving communities with distinct cultural identities. In key economic sectors such as tourism, seafood processing, health care, education, transportation, engineering, and other essential services, employers often face serious challenges filling positions quickly and at the scale needed to maintain operations.

Senate Joint Resolution 28 recognizes the important role that workers serving in Alaska under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and the H-1B Specialty Occupation Visa Program play in supporting the state's economic security and the continuity of critical services. These programs serve different purposes, but both help meet real workforce needs when employers and institutions cannot fill positions through the available labor pool alone.

Alaska has the largest seasonal employment swing in the nation. Visitor-related industries and fisheries depend on a reliable workforce during narrow peak seasons, while health care and other critical sectors continue to face staffing shortages that affect communities across the state, especially in rural Alaska.

SJR 28 affirms that lawful, regulated federal visa pathways remain necessary tools for employers facing legitimate staffing shortages, and that those pathways should remain workable and responsive to Alaska's unique conditions.

The resolution also expresses concern about federal actions that make these pathways unworkable in practice. When legal workforce programs become too costly or unpredictable, the consequences fall on Alaska employers, public services, and communities.