

## Joe Hayes

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**From:** G S [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 25, 2025 12:46 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** SB 40 Hispanic Heritage Month

Dear State Affairs Committee,

My name is Gaby Shelton, I came to the United States from Panama in 2005. I have 3 kids born in Alaska and we considered this beautiful state our home. One of the things that we love the most about Alaska is the diversity of cultures. I believe this diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We celebrate the diverse backgrounds, languages, and traditions that contribute to the success of our community. This celebration fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among all communities.

I want to express my gratitude to Senator Gray-Jackson and all the members of this committee for your time and consideration. Thank you for the opportunity to dedicate a month to honor the contributions that Hispanic and Latino Americans have made to the fabric of our society.

As a mother, I try to keep traditions and pass them on to my children for my descendants to know their heritage. Hispanic Heritage Month offers a platform to educate everyone about the historical and cultural significance of the Hispanic community. Not only do our children learn about Latino culture, but in the process, they are encouraged to embrace their heritage with pride and to pursue their dreams with confidence, knowing that they stand on the shoulders of those who have paved the way.

Dedicating a month to Hispanic Heritage is not merely a symbolic gesture; it is a vital act of recognition and celebration. It is an opportunity to honor the rich cultural heritage of the Hispanic community, to educate and inspire, and to build a more inclusive and united society.

Thank you again for this initiative and for taking the time to hear my testimony. I appreciate your commitment to recognizing the diversity that defines us as a nation by dedicating September 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup> Hispanic Heritage Month.

Sincerely,

*Gaby Shelton, MSW*  
Mental Health Counselor

