

Alaska State Senate
Senator Forrest Dunbar

Session:

Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 465-6944



Interim:

1500 W. Benson Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 269-0246

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 233: CHILD CARE PROVIDER EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

Senate Bill 233 will allow childcare workers to become licensed providers in the day care assistance program without being required to pass a high school equivalency test or gain a high school diploma. This will increase childcare availability in Alaska and provide employment opportunities, particularly for otherwise qualified refugee and immigrant communities who are ready to work and contribute in this vital industry.

Alaska has a lack of childcare services and workers, which has a profound effect on the state's economy. New arrivals come to the U.S. with varying backgrounds. Some must flee at a moment's notice and don't have time to grab documents, such as diplomas. New arrivals may have spent decades in a refugee camp where education is not readily available; others may be coming from countries that lack educational systems due to political arrest. Many of these new arrivals have children. While they may not have formally participated in the field of childcare, they have the experience needed to thrive in this profession.

Currently, the Childcare Assistance regulation 7 AAC 41.200 requires that Approved Relative Providers or Approved In-Home Providers must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma, general educational development (GED) diploma, or an equivalent. This provides a barrier to some individuals who are attempting to become licensed childcare providers in Alaska.

SB 233 would allow more people to enter the childcare workforce who would still be subject to all other regulations and requirements of the profession. This would not only benefit immigrants and refugees, but also longtime residents who have childcare experience and do not have a high school diploma or GED. Increasing childcare in Alaska will allow more parents to return to the workforce, earn income and support the state economy. I urge you to support SB 233.