

# ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Contact:**

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Sponsor Statement**

The State Training and Employment Program (STEP) was established as a pilot program in 1989 to increase training opportunities for Alaskans affected by fluctuations in the economy or by technological changes in the workplace. Since its inception the program has been reauthorized by the legislature six times.

Last legislature I introduced HB 226 which would have made the STEP a permanent program without a sunset date. During the debate on the legislation it became apparent there needed to be a closer look at the program before eliminating a sunset. The legislature directed the Department of Labor to work with the "group of entities" that are eligible to participate in the STEP program over the interim and come back to the legislature this year with recommended revisions to the STEP program. HB 105 is the work product of that process.

HB 105 Redefines the powers and duties of the Department of Labor and enacts a working partnership between the Department of Labor and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. HB 105 instructs DOL to adopt regulations to implement the recommendations of the workgroup and gives the Alaska Workforce Investment Board a seat at the table in determining what regulations will be adopted. Current regulations are seen as onerous, discouraging employers from participating in the program and inflating the Department's administrative costs.

Workforce development has never been more important in Alaska's public policy as it is today. The work group, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, and the Department of Labor are committed to making the STEP program accountable, fair and balanced, and user friendly.