UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS

Alaska Native Language Center

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express the support of the Alaska Native Language Center for HB 216, which would make all Alaska Native languages official languages of the State of Alaska, along with English, which already has official status.

Our twenty Native languages are an important cultural resource for our state, linking us to our past and to the populations of other Arctic nations, including Russia, Canada, and Greenland. The state of endangerment of Alaska's Native languages is profound and ever increasing as speaker populations age. A number of our languages have only a handful of elderly speakers remaining, and only one, Yup'ik, has child speakers who learn the language at home as their primary language.

The Alaska Native Language Center, founded by state legislation in 1972, continues to provide support for Alaska Native languages through research, teaching, and service. The publications, writing systems, and archival documentation developed at ANLC provide a strong foundation for official language status.

The preservation and maintenance of Alaska Native languages are of great importance to Alaskans, both the Native population whose heritage is closely tied to cultural and linguistic knowledge, as well as the non-Native population who benefit from this extraordinarily rich cultural landscape.

For these reasons, I urge you to work to pass HB 216 and show support for Alaska's Native languages by granting them official status.

On behalf of the Alaska Native Language Center,

L D Kaplan

Lawrence D. Kaplan, PhD

Director