



## Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center

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To: The Honorable Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair, House Finance Committee  
The Honorable Representative Jennifer Johnston, Co-Chair, House Finance Committee

RE: HB235 – Technical and Vocational Education Program (TVEP) Re-Authorization

The Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) supports the reauthorization of TVEP at the original allocation percentages. NACTEC supports the UI percentage increase of HB235 Version M with a five-year extension. We are not in favor of new University of Alaska program recipient at the expense of Regional Training Centers allocation cuts.

Since 2000 TVEP funding has provided essential funding support to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) Regional Training Center (RTC) network, providing autonomy and flexibility to meet the unique needs of each region's priority industries. The RTC's provide workforce development training that otherwise would need to occur out of region, and at a much greater expense to the State.

As NACTEC works closely with all local partners who have a hand with employment in the Nome Census Area, we know and feel the pulse of workforce development training in our region. Norton Sound Health Corporation, the largest regional employer, has identified Personal Care Attendant (PCA) training needs as a new training program to address elder care in outlying villages. Along with NACTEC's Certified Nursing Assistant and Health Aide training programs, the PCA certificate will provide a third health care provider entry-level position for young adults, and with ever important village-based employment potential.

In the near future we are also preparing for the potential of a deep draft port in Nome and a graphite mine that will necessitate new workforce development training programs. Currently the United States has no domestic natural graphite production and is 100% reliant on imports. China produces 70% of the world's supply. In October 2019 Governor Dunleavy submitted a letter to President Trump requesting a Graphite Creek Project, 40 miles north of Nome, as a high-priority infrastructure project. This would lead to 250+ new local jobs and rely on maritime transport of graphite concentrate for refining. As natural resource development extraction outside Nome and increased maritime needs in the narrow Bering Straits corridor bring more jobs to the Nome Census Area, TVEP will be increasingly important to assist our region's residents in attaining the technical skillsets to enter a growing local workforce.

I appreciate the forward thinking evident in HB 235 Sponsor Version M with an increase in the UI contribution from .16 to .18 percent. As the COVID-19 global pandemic is apt to create an economic downturn, such action demonstrates a proactive vision when all other action seems reactionary and sudden.

One concern I share, that would counter the impact of a UI increase, is the addition of a new UA program. HB235 Version M holds the University harmless while distributing the burden across the RTC network. The UA system has many fine programs, of which NACTEC proudly partners with programs such as: Aviation Maintenance, Early Childhood Education, Nursing, and Wildland Firefighting to name just a few. Selecting any given UA program as a TVEP recipient would set a precedent for legislative review of more in the future.

I would contend that the DOLWD and Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) are better situated to review and recommend to the Alaska Legislature future TVEP recipients, as there are guidelines for a basis of

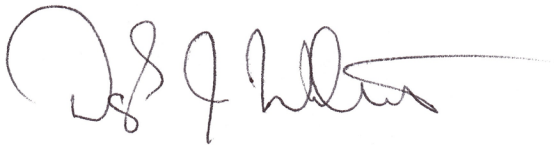
review from past action. Included with this testimony will be an *Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) resource*. On January 25, 2012 ACPE approved an institutional authorization exempt status for Alaska's DOLWD Regional Training Centers. Common characteristics of DOLWD-recognized RTC's present a framework for future AWIB review, while providing opportunity for new RTC's to form.

The ACPE maintains a listing of Alaska Postsecondary Institutions at <https://acpe.alaska.gov/Alaska-Postsecondary-Institutions>. University of Alaska programs are designated as "UA", while the DOLWD recognized class of Regional Training Centers, such as AVTEC and NACTEC, are designated as "E" for their exempt status. As it would present an inequitable basis for new and future UA programs as TVEP recipients, at the expense of the smaller regional class of exempt "E" status RTC's, I recommend to strike the addition of the UA program identified in HB235 Version M.

During the 2017 TVEP reauthorization process, the Alaska Legislature directed the DOLWD/AWIB to review TVEP reporting measures and then recommend improvements. AWIB actively sought input from TVEP recipient programs to update and improve outcome measures. On May 11, 2018 the Alaska Workforce Investment Board approved the TVEP reporting requirements recommendations. Additional TVEP reporting recommendations such as regional population census data, average unemployment rates, and basic regional employment forecast have potential to guide benchmarking and quantitative analysis with regard to equitable TVEP distribution concerns. The AWIB-approved *TVEP Reporting Requirements Recommendations* are included with this testimony.

TVEP is a solid program putting Alaskans to work across a broad expanse of our large State. I encourage your action to reauthorize TVEP in 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. J. Walrath", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas J. Walrath, Ph.D.  
Director, Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center