



Alaska Statewide Mentor Project

Supporting Teachers Across Rural/Remote Regions



Date: March 31, 2022

To: Senator Mia Costello, Chair; Members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
From: Steve Atwater, Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project
Re: Support for CSSB 225

What problem does the bill address? Alaska school districts are experiencing a teacher shortage. The bill addressed this problem by establishing or supporting activity that will increase the number of teachers (recruitment) and activity that will help to keep teachers and administrators in the profession (retention). The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project supports early career teachers (teachers in their first or second year of the profession) and has been shown as a positive influence to help these teachers remain in the profession.

Relevant Data

1. Unfilled teaching vacancies in Alaska. This year the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reported to the U.S. Department of Education that 22 of Alaska's districts are experiencing a teacher shortage (see [Teacher Shortage Report](#)). According to 34 CFR 682.210(q)(8)(vii), "teacher shortage area" means "an area of specific grade, subject matter or discipline classification, or a geographic area in which the Secretary determines that there is an inadequate supply of elementary or secondary school teachers."
2. The number of University of Alaska prepared teachers constitute about 30% of the annual teacher hires by Alaska's school districts. Note that not all teachers who complete teacher preparation programs are hired to teach in classrooms.
3. Nationally, the number of students enrolling in teacher preparation programs peaked in 2009 at 725,518 and is now below 500,000. This is significant because 2/3 of the hired teachers in Alaska are from the lower-48.

CSSB 225 Addresses the state's teacher shortage by supporting teacher recruitment and retention

1. Recruit More Teachers. CSSB 225 provides assistance for pre-service teachers (limited teacher resident certificate, teacher residency program), and incentive for paraprofessionals to become teachers (teacher registered apprenticeship program)
2. Retain More Teachers. CSSB 225 proposes to establish a teacher recruitment and retention fund to be distributed through grants. Non-profits and districts can apply for these grants for recruitment and retention activities listed in the bill.

Mentoring early career teachers helps to retain them in the profession. With the support of the bill's teacher recruitment and retention fund, the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project can increase the number of mentored early career teachers and in turn, help to retain early career teachers.

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