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Alaska State Legislature

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President of the Senate

Sponsor Statement

SB 185

Version I

"An Act relating to exemptions from minimum wage."

Senate Bill 185 repeals a demeaning, antiquated and unfair minimum wage exemption in AS 23.10.070 which allows anyone who "is impaired by physical or mental deficiency, age, or injury" to be paid less than minimum wage. SB 185 retains the requirement that minimum wage exemptions be approved by the commissioner.

Many Alaskans with disabilities are actively and productively employed in workplaces throughout Alaska. They are not second-class citizens, or "bargain employees." It is unfair for people to be discriminated against for positions where their performance is most often equal or superior to their counterparts not experiencing disability. They should earn what they are worth, with minimum wage as a baseline instead of a wage scale based upon their disability. Employers should not have the option of choosing employees based on a second-class, bargain, below minimum wage rate.

As stated by the Chair of the Governor's Council of Disabilities and Special Education, Heidi Lieb-Williams, "We all have gifts and talents to offer, and our work is just as valuable as what others bring to the table. We should be paid fairly for our time and knowledge. It is demeaning that someone could just look at a person and judge them on the basis of their disability and offer them less than they are worth." As Alaskans we are better than that, and this repeal will help us acknowledge the value of all Alaskans in the workplace, whether or not they experience disability.

I urge your support of this bill. Please contact my staff, Madison Govin at 465-8181 for any additional information.