



REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN

Serving Alaska House District 14
Anchorage: Roger's Park, Midtown, Tudor, and Spenard

HJR 39: Waive Visa Fees For Teachers **Sponsor Statement**

"Urging the federal government to waive the new H-1B Visa fees for teachers in the state."

HJR 39 supports the recruitment and retention of educators on H-1B visas in Alaska schools and addresses the increased fees through a waiver.

The H-1B visa program has facilitated the employment of skilled professionals in valuable subject areas such as science, mathematics, and special education in Alaska. Teachers on an H-1B visa must meet certain requirements, such as having a bachelor's degree and special training. Employers must also fulfill obligations, including committing to pay foreign workers a fair wage and not displace U.S. employees. This process allows qualified international candidates to respond to the needs of understaffed schools and fill unoccupied positions.

Alaska faces persistent difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers, especially in rural and remote communities. Many school districts across Alaska use international recruitment to fill school vacancies, with cases of international hires filling 60% of total teaching staff in western Alaska, Kodiak, and the North Slope. As the state works to grow our own educators and recruit teachers from out-of-state, H-1B educators work to help bridge gaps in critical teacher shortages that would not be filled otherwise. Alaska's schools have come to rely on the H-1B visa program, but the administration's recent proclamation greatly reduces their ability to hire full staff by imposing a \$100,000 fee on all employers for H-1B applications occurring after September 22nd, 2025.

This obstacle threatens the stability of our schools and jeopardizes the state's ability to provide consistent, high-quality education in the long-term. Some school districts are looking at using H-1B visas as an option to employ foreign teachers beyond five years, which would allow for the long-term retention of highly skilled professionals and a stable high-quality education. Taxing districts for hiring foreign teachers hinders the schools' capacity to meet student needs in the foreseeable future. These workers supplement local Alaskan and American educators in underserved communities, yet are unable to be hired by the schools that need them the most.

A waiver for the visa fee supports invaluable investments in the future of Alaska's children and the strength of our educational workforce. I urge all members to join me in sending a strong message to the federal delegation that these workers are critical to Alaska.