

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Representative Bill Elam

DISTRICT 8

House Bill 358

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION GRANTS

Sponsor Statement

Across Alaska, we hear the same thing from employers: they need skilled workers. At the same time, many students want hands-on training that leads directly to a career, not just a diploma. The problem is that not every school district can offer every type of career and technical education program. In a state as large and diverse as Alaska, that means opportunity often depends on geography instead of student interest or workforce need.

HB 358 is a practical solution to that problem. It creates a statewide Career and Technical Education Mobility Grant Program, helping students attend high-quality CTE programs in other districts when those opportunities aren't available at home. It also helps the districts that host those students cover the real costs of training.

This bill is not about building a new bureaucracy or funding programs without results. It is built around outcomes. Districts are rewarded when students earn certifications, participate in apprenticeships, earn dual credit, or move directly into jobs. The focus is on training that leads somewhere—training that supports Alaska's workforce and gives students a clear path to employment.

The bill also recognizes Alaska's unique challenges. Rural and remote communities face higher costs, longer distances, and fewer options. HB 358 prioritizes those areas and encourages shared use of facilities and equipment, so we get more value out of the investments we already make.

Just as importantly, this bill strengthens coordination between education and workforce development. It connects what students are learning in school to what Alaska employers actually need, using existing programs and data wherever possible to keep the system efficient and accountable.

At its core, House Bill 358 is about aligning education with real-world opportunity. It helps students build skills that matter, helps employers find trained workers, and helps communities grow their own workforce instead of losing young people to out-of-state opportunities. It's a common-sense, results-focused step toward a stronger, more self-sustaining Alaska workforce.