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March 4, 2026

House Community and Regional Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

***Re: House Bill 329 – Electric Utility: Certificate of Fitness***

Dear Members of the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

Alaska Power Association (APA), the statewide trade association for electric utilities in Alaska, supports House Bill 329 and urges its swift passage this session. Thank you for filing this bill.

HB 329 clarifies the existing rural exemption from Certificate of Fitness requirements for electric utility workers serving communities with populations under 2,500 (AS 18.62.010).

Earlier this year, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) issued an interpretation of the rural exemption that effectively removed Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) from eligibility due to the community of Bethel, with a population of more than 2,500, being a part of the co-op's vast service territory.

HB 329 resolves this issue by making a simple, clarifying amendment: it ensures that electric utilities serving multiple disconnected communities are not excluded from the rural exemption solely because one of those communities exceeds the population limit.

If left unaddressed, the current interpretation will continue to increase operating costs, heighten the risk of service delays, and undermine system reliability for some of Alaska's most vulnerable rural communities. HB 329 offers a practical, targeted fix that protects local jobs, avoids unnecessary regulatory burdens, and supports the reliable delivery of essential electric service.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Crystal Enkvist  
Executive Director  
Alaska Power Association