

Doniece Gott

From: jamie shearer <jagshearer@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 11:48 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Budget testimony - education

To the esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Jamie Shearer. I am a parent of two students in Anchorage, a former ASD teacher, current Court Appointed Special Advocate, and active community member who believes in the value of a vibrant public education system. As you consider the FY 2026 supplemental and FY 2027 operating and capital budgets, I strongly urge you to prioritize a meaningful increase to education funding.

I have a junior and freshman this year. My eldest is about to present his final project for his Gifted Mentorship with HDR through the Anchorage School District. It's been an awesome experience for him to gain real life work exposure in his area of interest as he explores future college and career decisions. My youngest just finished another orchestra concert at West and is excited to continue in the symphonic orchestra next year. He chose the upright bass in 6th grade and has thrived - neither his dad nor I are musical so I don't think he would have ever played an instrument if they didn't offer band/orchestra to all 6th graders in ASD. They both play multiple sports, participate in extracurriculars through school, and maintain full class loads. They are products of their neighborhood elementary school, the IGNITE and Highly Gifted programs, and all the wonderful teachers and staff they've met along the way. The opportunities created for our youth through schools is hard to match.

After I left teaching, I started a role working with kids in foster care. Through this work I see that schools provide so much more than education. For many kids schools are a safe place for stability and connection. Sometimes school is a reliable meal, a wellness check, or a path to a secure future. Public schools are crucial to fostering an engaged, empathetic, and connected community.

Last year the legislature stood tall against our Governor's vetoes, but the modest increases did not make up for over a decade of under-investment in our schools. Across the state, districts are facing shortfalls resulting in increased class sizes, program cuts, school closures, and staff layoffs. These decisions erode our communities and harm our future. Please invest in our children and their education. Strong public schools benefit everyone.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jamie Shearer
3115 Princeton Way
Anchorage, AK
99508



Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance

1008 Fish Creek Rd

Juneau, AK 99801

Email: kathy@seafa.org

Cell Phone: 907-465-7666

Fax: 907-917-5470

Website: <http://www.seafa.org>

February 26, 2026

Senate Finance Committee
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Finance Committee Chairs and members,

We are writing today in support of Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission budget and request that \$211.0 be returned to 3000-Services so it is at a sustainable level of \$508.2 and \$500.0 funding for the IT modernization program. CFEC brings in sufficient funds to adequately fund the agency and program as long as the funding isn't siphoned off for to reduce ADF&G commercial fishing divisions reliance on general funds.

The IT modernization program is necessary and long overdue. While they have started on the modernization, they did not have a clear idea of the cost and stated that going into this modernization process. In addition to the work that has been done already an additional increment of \$500.0 for the next three years they can keep the current system functioning as they begin the process of moving to a newer and more supportable platform that would include automated permit renewals while not disrupting current operation of the agency.

Sincerely,

Kathy Hansen
Executive Director

Doniece Gott

From: mikayla.parker@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Kayla Parker
<mikayla.parker@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 9:13 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support For Infant Learning Program - FY27 Budget

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Kayla, and I am writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program (ILP) expansion within the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services, by \$5.72 million. I was pleased to see the Legislature include this long-requested increment in FY26, and I respectfully ask that you take the same step again for FY27.

I am a Developmental Therapist providing early intervention services to children from birth to age three in Anchorage. In this role, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that early intervention has on families in my community. I am hopeful that with additional funding and updated eligibility criteria, we can further strengthen this support for Alaska's children.

Expanding ILP eligibility from a 50% to a 25% developmental delay allows more families to access critical services and promotes better long-term outcomes.

Thank you for your support of expanding ILP eligibility from a 50% to a 25% developmental delay. I encourage you to maintain this commitment in FY27.

Sincerely,
Kayla Parker
5406 Cape Seville Dr Anchorage, AK 99516-7531 mikayla.parker@yahoo.com

Doniece Gott

From: aiko.ranchoff@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Aiko Ranchoff
<aiko.ranchoff@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 9:25 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support For Infant Learning Program - FY27 Budget

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Aiko Ranchoff, and I'm writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again.

I am a speech-language pathologist who provides ILP services in Anchorage. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community. ILP providers support families in connecting to community resources and support community providers in connecting with families as ILP providers visit families' homes. Families reported that ILP empowered the caregivers to advocate for their children. It is more than just receiving services; it also supports their caregiver-child relationships in the long term.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up to support expanding ILP programs from a 50% to a 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Sincerely,
Aiko Ranchoff
1011 Oceanview Dr Anchorage, AK 99515-3766 aiko.ranchoff@gmail.com
(907) 738-8512

Doniece Gott

From: willio73@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Will Parker <willio73@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 9:56 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support For Infant Learning Program - FY27 Budget

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is ___ and I'm writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again.

I am a [role] who [provides/receives] in [community]. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community. [Share more about your experience with ILP]

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Sincerely,
Will Parker
5406 Cape Seville Dr Anchorage, AK 99516-7531 willio73@yahoo.com
(425) 289-8044

Doniece Gott

From: Amber turner <amberaverette@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 7:18 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support of increasing FY27 funding

My name is Amber Turner and I'm writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million.

Living in such a small town (to me) we run into challenges often! When I learned my daughter had a disability- I was overwhelmed! Learning I could get her the help I needed without having to get a second job, made us extremely happy and very appreciative. We are able to get my daughter the help she needed with amazing people who care about her well being and care about helping her succeed. Without the services I am not sure we would have been able to get where we are today with her progress.

We were overjoyed to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again.

I am a parent who receives services in Juneau. Not just for one child but two children. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Sincerely a very thankful parent who very much supports and appreciates these programs.

Amber Turner
(907) 723-1031

Doniece Gott

From: Stephanie Tucker <chloe.malcolm@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 3:34 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: FY27 Budget - ILP support

Dear Senators,

My name is Stephanie Tucker and I am the Director of the Infant Learning Program (ILP) at Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults, serving children and families in the Mat-Su Borough. Thank you for making the ILP a top priority in the FY26 Budget. Today, I am writing to request that you continue to support a \$5.72 million increase in funding for ILP expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services. I was thrilled to see the Legislature include this long overdue increment in th FY26 and terribly disappointed when it was vetoed.

MSSCA's ILP has witnessed the impact early intervention has on our community. I know first-hand that eligibility expansion from 50% to 25% developmental delay is vital for helping Alaskan families. I also know that the cost savings are vital for Alaska's economic future. 46% of children who receive ILP services avoid the need for more costly Special Education services by Kindergarten. The resulting savings is up to \$229,000 per child per year. And this is without considering the additional savings possible when the need for additional services (such as child welfare, medical, and mental health) are mitigated by intervention at the most crucial point of development (birth to 3-years-old).

Thank you again for recognizing the importance of and supporting expansion of ILP eligibility and service in Alaska. Please continue to stand for children and families.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Tucker
Wasilla, Alaska

Doniece Gott

From: Kathe Baker <kathewb@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:21 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Infant Learning FY2027

My name is Katharine Weber-Baker and I was very pleased to see the funds, 5.72 million, allocated for the Infant Learning Program for 2026 and I implore you to do the same for the FY27 budget. I have a granddaughter who has Autism. She is in her early 20's now and a working, community involved young lady due to very early interventions when she was a toddler and diagnosed. Everything that could be utilized in town through non-profit programs as well as private pay options was available to her and this strong, consistent, professional exposure provided a path for her to thrive. As a retired elementary teacher, I can attest to the tremendous growth of children with disabilities and delays who have been fortunate to receive specialized, focused instruction tailored to individual needs in Elementary school. So going even earlier with interventions, the Early Infant Learning program allows for even more success, supporting growing children at the earliest possible level before they reach school age. **Reaching infants with a 25% developmental delay instead of a 50% delay is vital to early growth and development and it benefits even more of these impacted children to lead productive lives, here in Alaska.**

Thank you for reading this and for your serious consideration to make Alaska a better place for raising and protecting children.

Most Sincerely,
Katharine Weber-Baker
907-388-4992
kathewb@gmail.com

Doniece Gott

From: tamar@everyactioncustom.com on behalf of Tamar Ben-Yosef
<tamar@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 11:54 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support For Infant Learning Program - FY27 Budget

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Tamar Ben-Yosef, Executive Director of the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (A2P2) and I'm writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. I was happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again.

I am a [role] who [provides/receives] in [community]. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community. [Share more about your experience with ILP]

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money.

Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Sincerely,
Tamar Ben-Yosef
4141 B St Ste 409 Anchorage, AK 99503-5944 tamar@a2p2.org
(907) 903-6770

Doniece Gott

From: Katelyn R. Fox <krfox@bartletthospital.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:58 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: infant learning program

As the mother of three littles, I cannot thank the infant learning program enough for the positive impact they have made for our family. We are involved in the infant learning program due to my middle son having a speech delay. It has been such a fun experience watching him work with another caring adult and see his progress. Our provider, Jennifer Jenkins, has provided us with new, alternative ways to best support our children and foster their growth. I believe my son is getting the services and help he needs to ensure a brighter, healthier future. I am forever thankful for the infant learning program.

If you would like further information or have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me!

Katie Fox
907-957-1695

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Doniece Gott

From: Savannah Bayley Kennedy <kennedykutie17@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:40 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Support ILP

My name is Savannah Kennedy and I'm writing/calling in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. We were overjoyed to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again. I am a [role] who provides/receives services in [community]. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Doniece Gott

From: Anna Marie Mattox <annamariemattox@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 9:38 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Early intervention saves money

My name is Anna Marie Mattox and I'm emailing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. We were overjoyed to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to take that same step again.

I am an Occupational Therapist who provides services and treatment in Juneau, along with Wrangell, Petersburg, Haines, Skagway, and Yakutat. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on my home community and the surrounding communities we fly/ferry to.

There are countless times that I have worked with children who have spent 2+ months in the Nicu, developing a developmental delay, but through early intervention we were able to provide developmental support to help these kids close their developmental delay gap as they got closer to the school age.

Two years ago I worked with a family who didn't qualify for the program with a 50% delay, he was showing a 40%. Just missing the requirements, however through clinical opinion I enrolled due to his atypical motor developmental. Two years later, I supported the family through getting a medical diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. He was then transitioned to the school district with an IEP and supportive devices already in place. This child was ready to immediately access his education due to having been recognized at a very young age, through early intervention, that he would need support. And this was a young man who did not qualify with the 50% delay requirements. The numbers and statistics show early intervention works and saves money! Changing the 50% delay requirements to a 25% delay will broaden the children defected and supported early to school services.

Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money. Thank you for stepping up in support of expanding ILP programs from a 50% to 25% developmental delay! Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Support the next generation!

Doniece Gott

From: Jackie Bell <akbelles@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:02 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: ILP

My name is Jackie Bell and I'm writing in support of increasing FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health, Division of Senior & Disabilities Services by \$5.72 million. We were overjoyed to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in FY26, and we are asking you to pass this funding this year. Funding to the Infant Learning Program has been flat for over 10 years but the needs of infants and young children has increased.

I am a Developmental Specialist who provides services in Juneau and Hoonah. In my role, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on the families and communities I serve. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay helps more Alaskan families and saves the state money in the long run. Thank you for supporting expanding ILP program from serving children with 50% delay to 25% delay in development. Please maintain this commitment in FY 27.

Doniece Gott

From: Tess Olympia <tolympia@childhoodcollective.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:14 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Fund Early Childhood

Dear Finance Committee,

I am writing today to ask you to fund early childhood for Alaska. Children are our future and if we don't put the funding towards them, it costs us more later.

- Fund Alaska ILP at \$5.72 million to respond to inflation and expanded eligibility.
- Use the full \$5.9 million FY26 Child Care Benefits appropriation for its intended purpose, delivering direct support through the Child Care Grant Program for families and providers.
- Fully fund the ROOTS awards retention stipend to recruit, retain, and stabilize Alaska's early educator workforce.

Thank you!

Gunalchéesh, Háw'aa, Nt'oyaxsn!

Tess Olympia (she/they)

Success Coordinator, Southeast Childhood Collective

Formerly SEA AEYC

Phone: 907-419-1081 (text or email is best)

3200 Hospital Drive, Suite 204 | Juneau, AK 99801

www.childhoodcollective.org



Doniece Gott

From: Ray Romberg <rromberg.ak@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:20 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Alaska State Budget: please invest in Early Childhood Education and support

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

I called in for public testimony on the Alaska State Budget on Feb 26th and wanted to follow up with my written testimony.

My name is Ray Romberg (legal name Rachel) and I'm a resident of Juneau, a parent and an early childhood professional. I'd like to urge you all to prioritize early childhood education in this year's budget, not just because it supports children and families, but because it's in the best interest of our communities and state. Investing in early childhood education pays off in the long run, saving money on costly interventions later in a child's life and promoting family well-being and stability, which benefits everyone. In particular, I'd urge the Alaska Legislature to fund Alaska's ILP program at \$5.72 million, and to use the full \$5.9 million FY26 Child Care Benefits for its intended purpose, supporting the essential work of the Child Care Grant Program for families and providers.

As a parent with a child who has special needs, the expansion of the ILP program would have made a difference for my family in helping to identify and provide support for her challenges at a younger age. As it is currently funded, ILP can only serve those with 50% delays, which misses a huge number of children and families. Early detection of special needs saves our state money as soon as those kids who need more support enter public schools in pre-k or kindergarten. This allows children and families who may be struggling like mine was to get help so all our children can thrive.

I'd also like to add something I didn't say in my verbal testimony, which is that as someone who has worked in the field of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, we know that supporting families with young children represents an amazing opportunity to prevent this kind of violence, and other Adverse Childhood Experiences, which has enormous social and economic benefits for our state, not to mention reducing harm for many.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

-Ray Romberg

Doniece Gott

From: Andrea Marthinsen <andrea.marthinsen@k21schools.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:52 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: School Based PT Sees the impact from EI transitions

My name is Dr. Andrea Marthinsen and I am a Physical Therapist of 17 years and school based PT in Ketchikan for 12 years. I am writing in support of increasing **FY27 funding for the Infant Learning Program expansion in the Department of Health.**, Division of Senior and Disability Services by **\$5.72 Million**. We were happy to see the Legislature include this long-sought increment in **FY26** and are **again** asking you to take the same step again.

I am a PT in Ketchikan. In my role as a school based PT here for over a decade, I have seen the impact early intervention has had on the community and its aid in a smooth transition to the schools. Expanding ILP eligibility from 50% to 25% developmental delay will help more Alaska families and a smoother transition and better align with school requirements for eligibility at the age of 3. I am seeing many students start at age 3 without qualifying for ILPs prior (previously requiring the now 50% delay) that would then qualify with the transition at 3 with a required 25-20% delay per the state requirements in schools. This is resulting in delays in services in a population that research has shown benefits from early intervention as well as further stress and load on the schools districts already low funded SpEd programs. By intervening early and educating/empowering families in their role for their child's development early, we can reach more Alaskans and provide more meaningful services for the cost earlier in their development rather than waiting for the transition at age 3 resulting in a further burden on the school and less connections with families, saving money in the end for the state.

Thank you for stepping up in **support** of expanding ILP programs from a **50% to 25% Developmental Delay!** Please maintain this commitment in FY27.

Dr. Andrea Marthinsen, PT, DPT

Andrea Marthinsen, PT, DPT
KGBSD SPED Physical Therapist
Office Phone (907) 228-0426

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Doniece Gott

From: Lena Merrell <alaskanlena@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:53 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Please continue prioritizing education

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am sorry I cannot be there in person today to testify, I hope many folks were able to brave the blizzard and speak their minds- hopefully in favor of continued priority for investing in our youth through education funding.

My name is Lena Merrell and I have lived in Alaska since I was 4- my single mother moved us to Dillingham where she worked as a womens' health nurse practitioner for a 400 square mile area in Bristol Bay. We flew to outlying communities and were picked up by snow machine or 3 wheeler (I'm aging myself). It was the 1980s and commercial fishing was booming in Bristol Bay. My mother set-netted in the summers and I lived at fish camp, and she'd come home with her hip waders full of cash from the tender. We moved to Juneau when I was 9, and when I left for college on the east coast, I planned to never live here again. I wanted the city and excitement. I was wrong. I missed the wildness that Alaska has to offer. I moved back and married a lifelong Alaskan and commercial fisherman. We have 2 boys that attend public school in Juneau. Our school was forced to move during the consolidation the district went through due to lack of adequate funding 2 years ago. Our schools have been starving for money for over a decade. The increase last year in the BSA was necessary and I am so grateful for the work that went into that bill and overriding the Governor. But it isn't enough. Teachers are suffering and leaving the profession in droves for the private sector. We are likely to see our teachers strike in April due to the lack of a contract and last best offer declining retroactive pay for this year. The lack of a retirement plan is a slap in the face to our educators. Being the only state in the union without a defined retirement plan in arguably the most expensive state to live in, for a career where they have to yearly beg for money to do their jobs is not a good way to 'do business.' Prior to this change in 2006, there was still a healthy hiring pool, teaching brought many of my family's friends to the state in the 1980s, families that remain here today and brought much to our state. Now, positions remain open for multiple years. The JSD started the year with a 7% vacancy rate, and now it is 8% (and that is with decades of cuts to positions) and that is before folks who decide they can't take it anymore choose early retirement or quit. Our students suffer- they suffer the loss of great teachers who know their worth, they suffer at the hands of teachers and staff who otherwise would not be hired, but are because a school needs a 'warm body', they suffer due to staff shortages, meaning they aren't getting their IEP, or other needs met. Families with young children are leaving the state in droves.

I have friends that grew up here that live in New York and California, and when we talk about them moving back here, one thing that comes up is the quality of education. And for the first time I really thought about all that my children are missing out on by being in a school district that is so woefully underfunded, and my heart hurt.

Where should we get the money from, you ask? FROM EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES and non-residents. For far too long Alaskans have rolled over and let the oil, gas, mining and tourism industries take and take, far more than their fare share. Stop giving away our resources for pennies on the dollar. Start taxing folks who make their money in our state, and don't live here or spend it here. Stop letting companies making billions leave our communities in ruins.

Thank you for your time, and good luck this session,
Lena Merrell

Doniece Gott

From: Lena Merrell <alaskanlena@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:53 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Please continue prioritizing education

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am sorry I cannot be there in person today to testify, I hope many folks were able to brave the blizzard and speak their minds- hopefully in favor of continued priority for investing in our youth through education funding.

My name is Lena Merrell and I have lived in Alaska since I was 4- my single mother moved us to Dillingham where she worked as a womens' health nurse practitioner for a 400 square mile area in Bristol Bay. We flew to outlying communities and were picked up by snow machine or 3 wheeler (I'm aging myself). It was the 1980s and commercial fishing was booming in Bristol Bay. My mother set-netted in the summers and I lived at fish camp, and she'd come home with her hip waders full of cash from the tender. We moved to Juneau when I was 9, and when I left for college on the east coast, I planned to never live here again. I wanted the city and excitement. I was wrong. I missed the wildness that Alaska has to offer. I moved back and married a lifelong Alaskan and commercial fisherman. We have 2 boys that attend public school in Juneau. Our school was forced to move during the consolidation the district went through due to lack of adequate funding 2 years ago. Our schools have been starving for money for over a decade. The increase last year in the BSA was necessary and I am so grateful for the work that went into that bill and overriding the Governor. But it isn't enough. Teachers are suffering and leaving the profession in droves for the private sector. We are likely to see our teachers strike in April due to the lack of a contract and last best offer declining retroactive pay for this year. The lack of a retirement plan is a slap in the face to our educators. Being the only state in the union without a defined retirement plan in arguably the most expensive state to live in, for a career where they have to yearly beg for money to do their jobs is not a good way to 'do business.' Prior to this change in 2006, there was still a healthy hiring pool, teaching brought many of my family's friends to the state in the 1980s, families that remain here today and brought much to our state. Now, positions remain open for multiple years. The JSD started the year with a 7% vacancy rate, and now it is 8% (and that is with decades of cuts to positions) and that is before folks who decide they can't take it anymore choose early retirement or quit. Our students suffer- they suffer the loss of great teachers who know their worth, they suffer at the hands of teachers and staff who otherwise would not be hired, but are because a school needs a 'warm body', they suffer due to staff shortages, meaning they aren't getting their IEP, or other needs met. Families with young children are leaving the state in droves.

I have friends that grew up here that live in New York and California, and when we talk about them moving back here, one thing that comes up is the quality of education. And for the first time I really thought about all that my children are missing out on by being in a school district that is so woefully underfunded, and my heart hurt.

Where should we get the money from, you ask? FROM EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES and non-residents. For far too long Alaskans have rolled over and let the oil, gas, mining and tourism industries take and take, far more than their fare share. Stop giving away our resources for pennies on the dollar. Start taxing folks who make their money in our state, and don't live here or spend it here. Stop letting companies making billions leave our communities in ruins.

Thank you for your time, and good luck this session,
Lena Merrell

300 Maple Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Doniece Gott

From: Keri Baker <kbaker@sacredvalleyhealth.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 11:42 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Public School Funding

Hello,

I live in Anchorage, my husband is a school teacher in the Anchorage School District. Funding for ASD and public schools throughout the state is essential. Closing schools, cutting programs, reducing teaching staff, and reducing school nurses communicates to Anchorage and other communities a lack of investment in the future of Alaska. For the majority of the state who are not able to pay for private schools this sends the message that we as a state, do not care about education or the future of Alaska. It also sends the message that if you, as a citizen of Alaska don't have money, you don't matter. Quality education is a right - don't take this away.

Remember who elected you- it wasn't just the wealthy.

Thank you,
Keri Baker

--

Keri Baker Ph.D, MSc, MSN, ENP, FNP-C
Co-Founder, Board member
Sacred Valley Health
www.sacredvalleyhealth.org
Kbaker@sacredvalleyhealth.org

Doniece Gott

From: McBride, Will <WEMcBride@conamco.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:02 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: FW: Invest in public education

Folks,

Please invest in Public Education.
The children are our future.

Thanks for your understanding.

Will E. McBride, PE

Electrical Administrator

CONAM Construction Company

Main (907) 278-6600 | Cell (907) 830-6022 | Fax (907) 278-4401 | WEMcBride@conamco.com

301 W. Northern Lights Blvd., Suite 300 Anchorage, AK 99503 | www.conamco.com

Doniece Gott

From: Courtney Moore <courtneymoore907@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 7:37 PM
To: House State Affairs; House Finance; Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Education funding and oil taxes

Hello Legislators, thank you for reading this and putting it on the record.

This is a blanket support email for upcoming committees and testimony opportunities to raise oil taxes, get rid of the per barrel tax credits, tax S corps, close all loopholes and fund our children's educations and other opportunities to make Alaska better for working class families and people.

I support HB152, SB92, the changes made to 289, the \$150 tax per Alaskan, taxing out of state workers, seasonal sales tax- the whole kit and kaboodle. I appreciate the 17% oil tax that Wilicowski presented, and hb152 that Galvin presented. I do not support corporate oil taxes sunsetting in 2031 like Dunleavy proposed. I do not support DOC getting anymore money, I support cuts to their spending.

I have three children, their class sizes are already 30-35 kids, I'm still renting because I can't afford an overpriced home, my rents been raised 5 times in 2 years, the most recent was another \$170 hike. I never could afford daycare, \$2700 is what it would cost me PER month to have afterschool care from Camp Fire for 2.5 hours a day for 3 kids, I was quoted \$1700 a month with a 10g deductible for ACA in November, I live basically paycheck to paycheck- I'm exactly who you worry about raising taxes for. Please raise them. I believe everyone will be fine and figure it out. The people that protest the most about funding social services, public services, education are for the most part oil boomers that came up and were able to raise a family on one income and buy a home for 180g. Their homes are paid off, their retirements- funded, their children- grown. Working class Alaskans are slowly drowning year after year.

I'm still deeply in love with Alaska, I was born here, raised here, have birthed 3 children here. I would like to stay here and have our future be here. We have to start fully investing in education, child care, affordable housing or we are going to go down with the ship.

Thank you for letting me provide written testimony.

Courtney Moore
99501

Doniece Gott

From: Nikki Love <nikkisylvan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 9:26 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Fund Early Childhood Supports

Dear Policy Makers,

Alaska's children need you to continue and increase funding for early childhood support programs.

Please fund the Infant Learning Program at \$5.72M to respond to inflation and expanded eligibility. ILP support often means children will not need support when they enter the school system, thereby saving state resources over the long term

Please use the \$5.9 million FY26 Childcare Benefit Appropriations funding for its intended purpose, delivering direct support for the Child Care Grant program for families and providers.

Fully fund the ROOTS award to recruit and retain Alaska's early childhood workforce.

These measures help keep Alaskan families IN Alaska.

Thank you for the challenging work you are doing on behalf of us. Please let me know if you have any questions about these requests.

Kindly,
Mrs. Nikki Love
6740 Marguerite St
Juneau, AK 99801

Doniece Gott

From: melissa@kwrcc.org
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 1:27 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Melissa Austin
Subject: Funding Counsel of Domestic Violence

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee

My name is Melissa Austin

I am from Kodiak Alaska

I am representing the Kodiak Women's Resource and Crises Center

I want to thank you all for the hard work and the hard discussions you have had to make for our entire state.

I am asking that you help find the funding of 2.5 million dollars for the Counsel of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for victim services and 500,000 of that for legal services.

Our organization has been flat funded and has not had an increase in funding since 2017.

Kodiak community and it's 7 surrounding villages depend on the Kodiak Women's Resource Center for their safety.

We are a safe place for victims and their children to come stay while they are able to work on their goals for moving forward in a safer environment.

We have a warm bed, food, clothing and advocate support for victims when they come in.

We help all our victims with paper work, public assistance, housing vouchers, housing applications, counseling appointments, doctor appointments, Restraining Orders, court appearance, Grand Jury Support, Sexual Assault interviews with Law Enforcement, Sexual Assaults Exams with the victim and our forensic nurse, and there is so much more that we do.

We have partner agencies that we work with that will help with some of our client needs that our grants do not cover.

This is to assist our victims and their families find some empowerment and independency to move forward in their lives into their own homes and jobs.

Alaska is rated one of the top 5 in the United States for Domestic Violence.

We are at bare minimum staff right now. We have nowhere else we can make cuts in our staff.

This is why we need you to find the funding for CDVSA, so we can help all the victims that need us.

Thank you again for your time!

Melissa Austin

Lead Advocate & Case Management
Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center
422 Hillside Drive
Kodiak, Alaska 99615
907-486-6171
907-486-4264 fax
melissa@kwrcc.org
www.kwrcc.org

To whom it may concern;

My name is Dixie St. John and I am a parent of a seventeen year old daughter who has ADD and auditory processing struggles. As a parent, I have seen a powerful shift in my daughter's confidence. After attending the Youth Leadership Program at UAF this summer, she returned with a deeper understanding of who she is, how she learns, and—most importantly—how to advocate for herself. That experience didn't just teach skills; it helped her recognize her own value and voice. Because of that growth, she has stepped into independence and leadership in ways I had not seen before. She accepted a calling within our church as a youth leader and now attends weekly Sunday meetings, confidently representing and advocating for youth perspectives in the room.

Programs like those supported by the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) are essential because they provide youth with real-life experiences that schools alone cannot always offer. These programs create safe, empowering spaces where young people learn self-advocacy, leadership, and confidence—skills that carry into education, employment, and community involvement. SILC helps youth discover not just what they can do, but who they are capable of becoming.

Also attached is the list of accomplishments that the SILC program has had over the last 5 years, the SILC Funding Quick Reference Guide, as well as my daughter's testimony of her experience with SILC. Please reach out with any questions.

Dixie St John

907-953-2523

dstjohn@kpbsd.k12.ak.us

Doniece Gott

From: Adrienne Gaines <adrienne.g@wishak.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:25 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony - Women in Safe Homes, Ketchikan

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Adrienne Gaines, I am from Ketchikan and am representing Women in Safe Homes (known as WISH).

As a provider of domestic violence and sexual assault programs in the state of Alaska, WISH is serving more survivors each year with funding that has not kept pace with rising costs.

Since 2017, programs have received flat-rate funding each year, without adjustments for growing costs or service demand. This has impacted our ability to meet the needs of survivors in Southeast Alaska. We cannot staff our emergency shelter at levels to meet these growing needs which impacts both survivors and employees, leading to increased burnout and turnover which push experienced program staff out of our SE Alaska community and reduce our ability to serve.

When survivors cannot access safe housing and immediate support, they remain in unsafe situations, increasing the risk of injury or being killed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee

My name is Penny Lampl

I am from Kodiak Alaska

I am representing the Kodiak Women's Resource and Crises Center

I want to thank you for all the hard work and all the discussions you have had to make for our state.

I am asking that you help find the funding of 2.5 million dollars for the Counsel of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault grant line in Department of Public Safety for victim services and 500,000 of that for legal services.

We have been flat funded and have not had an increase in funding since 2017

Kodiak community and it's 7 surrounding villages depend on us here at the Kodiak Women's Resource Center for their safety.

We are a safe place for victims and their children to come stay while they are able to work on moving forward.

We have a warm bed, food, clothing bank and advocate personal support for victims.

We help all our victims with paper work, public assistance, housing vouchers, housing applications, counseling appointments, doctor appointments, Restraining Orders, court appearance, Grand Jury Support, Sexual Assault interviews, Sexual Assaults Exams – and there is so much more that we do.

This is to assist our victims and their families find some empowerment and independency to move forward in their lives.

Alaska is rated one of the top 5 in the United States for Domestic Violence.

We are at bare minimum staff right now. We have nowhere else we can make cuts in our staff.

This is why we need you to find the funding for CDVSA, so we can help all the victims that need us.

Thank you again for your time!

Doniece Gott

From: Angelina Fraize <ajfraize@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 10:26 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Cc: Lisa Bass
Subject: SILC

Dear Senate Finance Committee

My name is Angie Salvato and I live in Anchorage. My daughter Gianna is 16 years old and has Down syndrome. She is turning 17 next month and preparing for her senior year in high school this fall. SILC has come into her life in the last year and has been teaching her independent living skills and self advocacy. Gianna is on a non-degree track in high school due to her disability. She is smart, amazing and high functioning but people still often treat her like a baby! She is not! She can be a productive member of our society, have a job, and live independently with some minimal support. Last year she went to the SILC summer camp in Fairbanks and still talks about it all the time. Living in the dorms with a roommate, learning CPR, life skills, and self advocacy! This is what she needs! Please fund SILC so they can continue to do their good work and keep kids and young adults like Gianna out of institutions and overly restrictive and expensive group homes and hospitals. Thank you for your consideration!

Angie.
907-952-2476.

Doniece Gott

From: Lisa Bass <innerheartcoaching@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 3:55 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Senate Finance Committee Written Testimony

Please include the following email in tomorrow's senate finance committee testimony.

My name is Lisa Bass. I live in Soldotna. In this email, I am representing myself. I have disabilities, and I am the mother of two children with disabilities.

I want to tell you what it looks like when the system fails early — and what it looks like when it finally shows up.

When my son first needed help, there were almost no options in Alaska. So, the system sent him out of state — to a for-profit facility — away from his family, into an environment that didn't meet his needs and wasn't good for him. When he came home, he struggled. He developed substance use issues, became justice involved, and ended up in youth detention.

I have thought about that trajectory a thousand times. And I keep coming back to one question: what if he'd had access to disability-informed supports earlier? What if someone had connected our family to independent living concepts before crisis hit?

I can't answer that for him. But I can tell you what has changed. With the help of Statewide Independent Living Center (SILC) and the Independent Living Center (ILC), my son has found his footing. He has gained an understanding of his disability and the knowledge that he is not alone. Those connections have supported him in his recovery and his continuing education, including helping him find adult learning supports and a job experience placement by connecting him with Kenai Peninsula College. The system finally showed up for him, and it has made a real difference.

Now, I can tell you what I'm watching happen for my younger child because the supports exist now that didn't exist then. Through programs connected to SILC, my child has developed real disability identity and self-awareness. She has connected to ILC summer work programs. She is building skills, confidence, and self-advocacy. She has been able to set personal goals and find a completely different path than the one that was chosen for her brother.

The difference is SILC.

And here is what I need this committee to understand: SILC is federally mandated. Alaska is required to have it to receive any federal Independent Living funds at all. But SILC's budget has been frozen at \$200,000 since 2020 — while their responsibilities have grown. One staff person cannot do what federal law requires.

The state increment being requested is \$403,000. That is not a cost — that is a savings. Every dollar invested here protects over \$1.4 million in federal funding. But beyond the math, these numbers represent real turning points in real people's lives. A young man in recovery and back in school. A younger child building a future she can believe in. The payoff is human — and it's also fiscal. This committee has a rare opportunity to spend \$403,000 to save over a million. My family is proof of what that investment prevents and what it makes possible.

My family learned the hard way what late intervention costs.

I strongly support fully funding the Statewide Independent Living Council which protects funding for the Centers for Independent Living.

Thank you for your time. What you decide in rooms like this one shapes the trajectory of children like my son and like my younger child, who is finally on a better path. I know this committee carries enormous responsibility, and I am grateful you are willing to hear from families like mine.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bass

Soldotna, Alaska

907-414-7443

Doniece Gott

From: Katie Archer Olson <o2kctechnologies@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:54 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Letter of Support for SILC

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing today in strong support of continued and full funding for the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). I respectfully ask that this message be entered into the record.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand how vital independent living and supportive programs are for families navigating disability. My daughter was diagnosed with ADD and anxiety disorders at a young age. There were seasons when school felt overwhelming for her, when daily tasks that seemed simple to others required immense emotional energy, and when our family felt unsure of how to best support her growing independence.

Programs connected to independent living services provided not just practical tools, but dignity. They helped her build executive functioning skills, self-advocacy, and confidence. She learned how to articulate her needs, manage her anxiety in real-world settings, and gradually take ownership of her goals. For our family, these services were not abstract line items in a budget. They were lifelines that strengthened her ability to participate fully in school, work, and community life.

Independent living programs do more than offer services. They foster autonomy, resilience, and long-term cost savings by equipping individuals with disabilities to live, work, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The return on investment is human, social, and economic.

As both a mother and an educator in Alaska, I urge you to protect and sustain SILC funding. Families like mine depend on these supports to ensure our children grow into capable, confident adults.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Alaskans with disabilities.

Hello, my name is Monica St. John. I am from Kenai, Alaska, and I am here today on behalf of myself and the Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska. I live with ADD and auditory processing challenges. These do not limit my ability to succeed; they simply mean that I learn differently. I learn best through hands-on, real-life experiences. SILC recognized this and provided support that allowed me to grow in meaningful, measurable ways.

Before participating in SILC, I was very introverted and hesitant to speak up, especially because of how I process information. Often being overlooked in school. Through SILC, I gained confidence and strong self-advocacy skills. I have spoken at youth forums, learned how to clearly express my needs, and now communicate directly with state leaders—something I never believed I could do.

SILC also pushed me to step outside my comfort zone and develop independence. One significant example was joining my school's wrestling team. At first, the physical closeness and teamwork were extremely challenging. Over time, wrestling became a therapeutic experience that helped me build resilience, trust, and confidence. It taught me how to work collaboratively, push through discomfort, and believe in my own abilities.

These skills transferred into leadership roles beyond school. I accepted a calling to serve on my church's Young Women's leadership council and attend weekly council meetings as a youth voice. I also independently stood before my congregation and shared my testimony of Christ—an experience that required confidence, self-expression, and courage I developed through SILC-supported growth.

Because of these experiences, I am more independent, more confident, and more capable of advocating for myself and others. I communicate more effectively, participate in leadership settings, and make informed decisions about my future. SILC helped me understand that the way my brain works is not a barrier, but a strength—and that experiential learning is essential for my success.

I want legislators and funders to know that programs like SILC create real outcomes. They help young people develop confidence, independence, and leadership skills that carry into education, community involvement, and civic life. Continued funding for SILC ensures that youth across Alaska have access to the support they need to reach their full potential.

SILC FUNDING Quick Reference Guide

We're requesting an increase in SILC's annual funding from \$200,000 to approximately \$603,000 to maintain federal compliance and fulfill our state and federal obligations.

WHY THIS MATTERS - THE BIG PICTURE

- SILC (Statewide Independent Living Council) is federally required for Alaska to receive ANY Independent Living funds from the federal government
- Without adequate SILC funding, Alaska risks losing ALL federal Independent Living funding
- SILC serves ALL disabled Alaskans across the entire lifespan - not just one disability group and develops the State Plan for Independent Living that guides services for thousands of Alaskans with disabilities

THE FUNDING PROBLEM - IN PLAIN TERMS

What we used to have:

- In 2015, SILC received \$348,670

What we have now:

- Since 2020, we've been stuck at \$200,000 per year
- That's a 43% CUT while our responsibilities INCREASED

What we should have:

- If funding kept pace with federal cost-of-living and inflation, we'd be at \$603,000 today
- This would put us on par with similar state councils like the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

WHAT \$200,000 ACTUALLY BUYS

Reality check - here's what we can afford on \$200k:

- ONE full-time staff member
- Basic bookkeeping and tax filing
- A phone line and email domain
- TWO in-person board meetings per year (if only half our seats are filled)

What we CAN'T afford:

- Filling all 15 board seats (current meeting costs would double)
- Proper training for board members and staff as federally required
- Pursuing additional and diverse funding streams, as AK statute recommends
- Meeting with underserved populations across the state as federally required

WHY ONE PERSON CAN'T DO IT ALL

Federal law requires SILC to:

- Develop and monitor the State Plan with extensive public input
- Maintain a board with members from across Alaska
- Engage with unserved and underserved populations statewide
- Coordinate with other disability service organizations
- Keep members trained on current independent living best practices
- Track and respond to changes in state laws and policies
- Maintain detailed records and federal reporting
- Seek diverse funding sources

One employee simply cannot accomplish all of this.

THE FEDERAL COMPLIANCE RISK

- The federal Administration for Community Living (ACL) sets minimum compliance standards
- These standards increased in 2017 - our funding decreased
- If we fail to meet these standards, Alaska loses ALL federal Independent Living funds
- This isn't just about SILC - it's about protecting federal funding that serves thousands of Alaskans with disabilities

WHAT PROPER FUNDING WOULD ENABLE

With adequate funding, SILC could:

- Fill all board seats with representatives from across Alaska
- Hold meetings in rural and remote communities
- Properly engage with Alaska Native communities and other underserved populations
- Maintain trained, professional staff
- Travel to Juneau regularly for legislative education and engagement
- Meet all federal compliance standards
- Develop a robust State Plan with meaningful public input throughout the state
- Pursue additional grant funding to further support independent living initiatives
- Protect Alaska's federal funding stream of Independent Living funds

THE BOTTOM LINE

SILC isn't asking for luxury funding - we're asking for enough resources to:

- Do what federal and state law requires
- Protect Alaska's federal Independent Living funding
- Serve ALL disabled Alaskans effectively
- Match the funding levels of comparable state councils

The choice is simple: Invest \$603,000 in SILC, or risk losing all federal Independent Living funds that serve thousands of Alaskans with disabilities. (Over 1.4M)

QUICK FACTS TO REMEMBER

- SILC funding has been flat or declining for 10+ years
- Current funding: \$200,000 (since 2020)
- Adequate funding: \$603,000 (based on inflation adjustments)
- SILC serves: ALL disabled Alaskans, all ages, statewide
- **Risk: Loss of ALL federal Independent Living funds**

KEY MESSAGE

"SILC protects federal funding for disabled Alaskans, but we can't meet federal requirements on a budget that's been cut by 43% since 2015 and been flat funded since 2020. We're not asking for more than we need - we're asking for what it actually takes to do the job Alaska and federal law requires."



Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska
104 S Binkley, Suite B
Soldotna, AK 99669
907-263-2011

Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska (SILC) Major Accomplishments (2020–Present)

- **2020–2021:** Implemented the Rural Ramp Project, introducing a new and cost-effective model for providing safe and accessible home and community access in remote and rural Alaska, serving communities historically underserved by Alaska’s home modification programs.
- **2020:** Partnered with Kasilof Wood and Metal to develop and deliver a prototype ADA accessible aircraft ramp to the Nome airport in response to reports of injuries and inappropriate handling of people with disabilities transferring in and out of small bush aircraft.
- **2022:** In partnership with Centers for Independent Living (CILs), led statewide advocacy for a self-directed service option under Alaska’s Medicaid Waivers, which resulted in a commitment from Senior and Disability Services to implement self-direction, though not on the same timeline as what the SILC and CILs would prefer.
- **2023:** Launched the Alaska Youth Leadership Forum for youth and young adults ages 14–24 with disabilities.
- **2023:** Alongside SILC partners, brought \$10 million to Alaska in federal Pathways to Partnerships Disability Innovation Fund grant funding to build statewide capacity for youth transition to Competitive Integrated Employment.
- **2020–present:** Expanded leadership in emergency management, serving in the role of Access and Functional Needs Coordinator during disasters to ensure inclusion of people with disabilities and other disproportionately affected populations, including support during the 2025 Typhoon Halong response.

- **2024–present:** Developed artificial intelligence tools to promote independence and self-determination, including a Person-Centered Planning Assistant and tools supporting Supported Decision-Making as an alternative or companion to guardianship, with other tools on the way.
- **Ongoing:** Advances disability employment as a priority statewide through leadership on the Alaska Work Matters Task Force, Employment Champions Workgroup, State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee, and re-establishment of Alaska’s chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment-First.
- **Ongoing and Recent:** Supports partner initiatives that require independent nonprofit leadership and grant funding not easily accessed by partners in state agencies or the university system, including the Alaska Commission on Aging’s upcoming Aging Summit and the creation of a statewide brain injury resource hub with the Brain Injury Council of Alaska.
- **2025:** Provided technical assistance and specialized training to Alaska’s Centers for Independent Living on reentry and reducing recidivism, engaging national and state experts to strengthen services for justice-involved individuals.
- **Current:** Intends to apply for funding under the Rural Health Transformation Program to continue some of the work listed above, including home modifications, ADA accessible airport ramps for small bush aircraft, AI tools for Independent Living, and creating a more effective system of service delivery for justice-involved individuals.

For more information on the SILC and its many accomplishments, contact SILC Executive Director, Michael Christian at michael@alaskasilc.org.

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Donny Olson, and Bert Stedman
Co-Chairs of the Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801



Dear Co-Chairs Hoffman, Olson, and Stedman,

The Nature Conservancy in Alaska (TNC-AK) supports robust funding for the Renewable Energy Fund (REF) in the FY27 budget. For nearly two decades, REF has been the State's most effective tool available to lower energy costs, strengthen energy security, and reduce dependence on imported diesel. As Alaskans face some of the highest energy costs in the country, it is more critical than ever that our State invests in programs that reduce and stabilize the cost of energy with sustainable and long-term solutions.

The REF enjoys broad, bipartisan respect across Alaska. Nearly every utility has utilized the program, and virtually every community — along with schools, families, and businesses — has benefited from it. Through objective, data-driven evaluation criteria administered by the Alaska Energy Authority, the REF ensures that funded projects are technically sound, financially responsible, and deliver strong public returns. REF-funded projects currently offset an estimated 13 million gallons of diesel each year. Valued at a conservative \$4 per gallon, that equates to approximately \$52 million in annual fuel savings statewide. Over the past three years, the Legislature has invested an average of \$14.2 million annually in this highly successful program, and we support similar funding levels this session — while also acknowledging the very real fiscal circumstances facing the state right now. These investments are critical for the affordability and quality of life we all strive for as Alaskans, and sustaining this program at historical average funding levels will protect its effectiveness and momentum.

As supporting material, we are also submitting [*Alaska's Renewable Energy Economy: Progress and Possibility*](#) as an attachment to this letter. This report, prepared in July 2021 by McKinley Research Group for TNC-AK, reviews the excellent work of programs like the REF. Notable impacts from investing in these opportunities include reduced energy costs for consumers, job creation at a comparable rate for construction, and increased community financial sustainability in rural areas.

Thank you for your service to the State of Alaska and for your consideration of this request to continue to invest in Alaska's energy future. We encourage the Legislature to robustly fund the REF as a means to investing in the energy security of our State, as has been done since 2008 when the REF was created.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caitlin Hedberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caitlin Hedberg
Alaska State Director
The Nature Conservancy in Alaska



Alaska Power Association

703 West Tudor Road, Suite 200
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6650
(907) 771-5700
Fax: (907) 561-5547
www.alaskapower.org

February 26, 2026

Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Re: Alaska Power Association testimony in support of Renewable Energy Grant Fund Round 18 Funding

Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Alaska Power Association supports full funding for the Renewable Energy Grant Fund (REF) in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. While APA is fully cognizant of the budget pressures that exist, the association contends that the \$41,164,051 required to fund the REF Round 18 project list is a worthwhile investment in the future of Alaska's energy systems.

APA is the statewide trade association for electric utilities in Alaska. Our members provide power from Utqiagvik to Unalaska, throughout the Interior and Southcentral, and down the Inside Passage. Many of APA's electric utility members have received crucial funding from the REF that has helped them advance and develop clean energy projects while lowering the financial burden on consumers.

Alaska's electric utilities are working toward diversification of generation sources to increase energy security and lower reliance on often unstably priced fuels. The REF has played a critical role in advancing these goals while lowering the project cost burden on ratepayers throughout the state.

According to the Alaska Energy Authority (AEA) the REF project funding has displaced 120 million gallons of diesel fuel since its inception in 2008. The displacement of that fuel means less volatility in prices, leading to more stable rates and less reliance on fuel shipped in from outside the community.

It is the people of Alaska who reap the benefits of REF funding. Safe, reliable, and affordable power is the cornerstone of the economy, and with increased electrification, the benefits to Alaskans from REF funding will continue to grow.

Alaska's small and widely dispersed ratepayer base, compared to the Lower 48, often makes it difficult to spread the costs of energy projects without creating undue burden on consumers. That's why it's essential for the legislature to fund the REF Round 18 projects—to help deliver cost-saving, long-term infrastructure for the benefit of Alaskans now and in the future.

Although Alaska has many competing issues and needs, we all benefit from more affordable energy – from schools to small businesses, to mining, timber, and seafood processing, among many others.

APA respectfully urges the Senate Finance Committee and the legislature to fully fund the Round 18 Renewable Energy Fund projects.

Sincerely,

Crystal Enkvist
Executive Director

Doniece Gott

From: michal <michal_1939@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2026 6:03 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee; Sen. Matt Claman; Rep. Mia Costello
Subject: Please increase funding for public schools

Dear Legislators:

I'm writing again about the issue most important to me, funding for public schools. ASD is struggling. We are failing our kids by inadequately funding our schools. Have the courage to impose taxes on us. It is no longer feasible to run this state without additional revenues. I would gladly pay a state personal income tax to fund our schools and other state services. Use our PFDs to fund schools. It is delusional to think that in our current situation we can rely on oil revenues alone if we want to flourish as a state. Our schools are failing. Families with kids who care about their education will not want to move here, while some already here are going to leave.

As a parent volunteer, I have personally seen the effects of having as many as 34 kids in a classroom. It is difficult for teachers to do their job when they have so many kids in chaotic classrooms. I'm not surprised we rank last or next to last in standardized test scores.

Because of the collective failure of the legislative and executive branches over the last decade to create adequate state revenues, you have contributed to the current dismal state of our public schools. You are presiding over the slow decline of this state because of your lack of agreement on how to create revenues. Tax us, like most other states tax their residents. Change the laws so that local governments have the authority to fund their schools. Please address this problem before the damage to our schools and our state is even more severe.

I hope you read this opinion piece from a long-time educator.

[Opinion: We were honored as Alaska Teachers of the Year. Now we can no longer stay.](#)



Opinion: We were honored as Alaska Teachers of the Year. Now we can no l...

A broken retirement system, relentless vetoes and anti-public education rhetoric have pushed even the state's mo...

Thank you for your time.
Michal Stryszak, dad of two ASD students,
Anchorage AK 99517

July 2021

Alaska's Renewable Energy Economy

Progress and Possibility

PREPARED FOR

The Nature
Conservancy 

PREPARED BY

 **McKINLEY RESEARCH**
GROUP, LLC

Formerly McDowell Group

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Executive Summary

This briefing paper summarizes the opportunity in Alaska for investment in renewable energy infrastructure. This issue is timely and especially important for Alaska for several compelling reasons:

- Transition to renewables is imperative for Alaska. As the nation's only arctic state, Alaska is on the front lines of climate change. High northern latitudes are warming much faster than more temperate zones. Alaska has warmed at more than twice the rate as the rest of the nation and the cost of addressing damage in Alaska caused by climate change is expected to cost hundreds of millions of dollars annually.
- Alaska's energy needs are intensive. Alaska ranks fourth on a per-capita basis in energy use, yet extremely high costs in rural Alaska require public subsidies (such as the Power Cost Equalization program) to bring consumer costs down to manageable levels. Reducing the cost of energy would increase community financial sustainability, particularly for the remote, rural, and often majority Alaska Native villages which face the highest cost burdens.
- Timely, near-term investment in Alaska renewable energy infrastructure can spur economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Alaska was hit harder, economically, than the rest of the nation, losing 8.1% of wage and salary jobs in 2020, while employment in the United States overall was down 6.2%.

Renewable Energy Adoption

Recent decades have seen a steady march of renewable energy infrastructure installed across Alaska's more than 150 energy grids. In most cases renewables components have been added to existing diesel grids, and Alaska has become a leader in hybrid systems that augment diesel fuel generation with wind, solar, hydroelectric, and other renewable resources.

More than \$690 million in public and private investments were made in renewable energy projects throughout the last decade across Alaska, from small rural villages to Anchorage. Of all renewable energy investments between 2010 and 2020, more than 80% funded construction activities, with the remaining investment funding feasibility, design, permitting, and planning work.

Investment in Alaska Renewable Energy Projects, 2010-2020



Opportunities

Alaska has significant and varied renewable resources that present opportunity for further development, including:

- Some of the highest **hydroelectric** power potential in the United States.
- An established **wind** energy sector, with potential for additional large-scale and micro-level development.
- Increasing opportunities in **solar** generation as hardware costs decline and benefits of Alaska's climate, such as low ambient temperatures, are recognized.
- The nation's greatest potential for seaweed production for **biomass energy**.
- 90% of U.S. **tidal** energy resources for use in hydrokinetic electricity production.
- **Geothermal** potential that has been the subject of several feasibility assessments and is now being developed in Unalaska.

In addition, Alaska has several opportunities to further develop the state's renewable energy landscape:

- With abundant resources, Alaska may capitalize on the emerging global appetite for renewable energy. Capturing excess renewable energy as **hydrogen**, which can be stored and transported in fuel cells, is one way to meet this global demand.
- Upgrading the **Railbelt Transmission System** would unlock renewable electricity generation potential. Current capacity constraints mean variable renewable energy generation is near capacity along the Railbelt; system upgrades would increase the potential market for new renewable generation.
- Implementing **beneficial electrification** using electricity to displace heating and transportation energy use would increase the scale of projects in rural Alaska, which often improves project financial feasibility. Consortia such as the Chaninik Wind Group, with excess wind generation used for home heating, illustrate the success of this design in remote Alaska.
- Growing an Alaska **resident renewable energy workforce** will be key to harnessing economic benefits of renewable energy projects. With no in-state training programs or apprenticeships in emerging occupations such as wind technician, utilities must make significant investment in training employees for these roles. Industry growth can be supported by promotion of renewable energy courses currently offered through the University of Alaska and Alaska Vocational Technical Center, along with development of new course offerings.

With well proven technology and a track record of integrating renewable energy with existing systems, the state is poised for investment in transmission capacity and energy projects to unlock Alaska's significant renewable resource potential.

Introduction

Alaska's energy system is unique in the United States. The state stretches across a landmass of 665,000 square miles, with significant regional variation in geology, hydrology, and regional energy resources such as water, wind, and solar. Outside the state's Railbelt region, energy infrastructure is characterized by islanded micro-grids that have been built on a backbone of diesel power generation. This type of power is costly and resource-intensive, particularly in remote communities that rely on long logistical supply chains and limited local resources. Most of these communities are off the road system, rural, and predominantly Alaska Native populations. In addition, diesel generation is carbon-intensive – not only in the fuel source itself, but also along the supply chain that is required to bring fuel to remote communities. Even in the state's urban areas, power generation is relatively expensive and reliant on natural gas, with limited transmission capacity.

Against this backdrop communities throughout Alaska have been looking to renewable energy resources and mobilizing the concepts, partnerships, and funding needed to integrate renewable energy sources into local power grids. While the primary driver for these efforts is the high cost of diesel-based energy production, secondary benefits of energy security and reduced greenhouse gas emissions also contribute to the trend. The availability of public and other funds, either in the form of grants or credits, or through special financing programs, also supports the transition.

This paper describes the investments made in renewable electricity generation across Alaska over the past decade and presents opportunities for new renewable energy projects across the state.

Special thanks to the following organizations, which participated in this research:

- Alaska Energy Authority
- Denali Commission
- Kodiak Electric Association
- Launch Alaska
- Puvurnaq Power Company
- Renewable Energy Alaska Project
- Renewable IPP

Alaska's Energy Landscape

Alaska's total energy demand is among the lowest in the country. Yet factors such as the state's harsh climate and energy-intensive industries contribute to Alaska's place as the state with the fourth highest per capita energy consumption in the nation.¹

On average, retail electricity consumers in Alaska pay nearly double the U.S. average price per kilowatt hour (kWh) at 20.22 cents/kWh, the second highest average in the nation and following only Hawaii.² Costs remain high due to the high cost of transporting fuel to remote communities for use in diesel-generated power plants and limited interties, among other factors. High electricity prices contribute to an overall high cost of living for residents and deter potential industrial development in the state.

Energy Infrastructure

Alaska's energy infrastructure is spread over a vast area: the state's landmass represents more than 17% of the U.S. total. Because of the great distances between communities, the state's energy infrastructure is characterized by only one major transmission system and more than 150 standalone microgrids.

The largest transmission grid in Alaska runs from Fairbanks in the north through Anchorage and to the Kenai Peninsula. Known as the "Railbelt," this electrical grid provides about 79% of the state's electrical energy.³ While about 73% of Railbelt electricity is generated using natural gas, hydroelectric resources are also tapped along the Railbelt, including the Bradley Lake plant near Homer and the Eklutna plant near Anchorage. Wind farms, such as Golden Valley Electric Association's Healy wind farm (the largest in the state) and the Fire Island wind farm near Anchorage, are also included in the Railbelt's energy profile, as are solar resources in Willow.

Outside of the Railbelt, Alaska communities are generally served by standalone electrical grids. Rural standalone grids often rely on diesel fuel for electricity generation. High transportation costs contribute to high diesel fuel prices across Alaska. Lacking road access, these communities rely on water or air transportation of fuel. Communities that can receive fuel by barge often have fuel tank farms for winter storage. However, when demand is high and/or storage capacity low, these communities too must rely on costly air transportation of fuel. Across rural Alaska, many

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration. *State Energy Data System 1960-2018*.

² U.S. Energy Information Administration. *State Electricity Profiles*. 2019.

³ Alaska Energy Authority. *Renewable Energy Atlas 2019*.

communities have integrated renewable energy resources with traditional diesel generators to reduce reliance on diesel.

While Southeast Alaska also has some electrical interties serving more than one community, most communities in that region are served by standalone electrical grids.

Power Cost Equalization

Given the high cost of electricity generation in rural Alaska, the State of Alaska's Power Cost Equalization (PCE) program is vital to Alaska communities, specifically for those communities that are rural, remote, and lack transportation access; many of these communities are also traditional Alaska Native villages. The PCE program was established in 1985 to equalize rural electricity rates with those of more urban areas that benefit from infrastructure such as the State-funded Alaska Intertie. Under this program, ratepayers in eligible communities receive a per kWh subsidy on electricity rates. PCE-eligible communities range in size from Lime Village (population 15) to Bethel (population 6,200) and many have majority Alaska Native populations.

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2020, more than 30,000 ratepayers, representing nearly 82,000 Alaskans, received PCE credits on their electricity bills. Over the past decade, cumulative PCE disbursements totaled nearly \$360 million, including \$29 million disbursed in SFY2020..⁴

Table 1. Weighted Average Electricity Rate in Alaska, SFY2020

	\$/kWh
Residential rate before PCE credit	\$0.4630
Residential PCE rate	\$0.2226
Effective residential rate	\$0.2404

Source: Alaska Energy Authority

The Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) determines utility program eligibility and calculates the per kWh subsidy using a formula accounting for fuel expenses (including transportation) and non-fuel expenses such as salaries, insurance, parts and supplies, interest, and other reasonable costs.

Added costs paid by the utility to integrate renewable energy sources or purchase electricity from an independent power producer are included in the non-fuel costs for eligible expense categories. However, depreciation expenses for grant-funded equipment such as generators are not included in eligible costs under this formula.

Decreases in total fuel expense, which may be the result of integrating renewable energy, affect PCE rate calculations. Reduced fuel and nonfuel expenses and ineligible grant-funded costs can result in PCE-eligible ratepayers experiencing no decrease or an *increase* in effective electricity

⁴ Alaska Energy Authority. Power Cost Equalization Program Statistical Report FY2020. March 2021.

rates following integration of renewable energy.⁵ Commercial customers and state and federal government customers, including schools, are not eligible to participate in the PCE program.⁶

Electricity Production

In 2010, nonrenewable resources accounted for nearly 80% of electricity generated in Alaska. More than half (55%) of generation was fueled by natural gas, followed by 21% from conventional hydroelectric energy, and 14% from petroleum liquids. That year, the Alaska Legislature enacted a non-binding goal of generating 50% of the state's electricity from renewable resources by 2025. By 2019, increases in electricity generated from renewable resources and declines at nonrenewable-resource facilities contributed to renewables composing 30% of net electricity generation.

Long a top source of electricity in the state, conventional hydroelectric facilities experienced the largest increase with net generation up 13% over the decade. With significant projects such as Eva Creek (Healy) and Fire Island (Anchorage) added to Alaska's energy profile, electricity generated from wind resources grew tenfold between 2010 and 2019.

Table 2. Net Electricity Generation in Alaska by Energy Source, Thousand Megawatt hours

	2010		2019		% Change 2010 - 2019
	Thousand MWh	% of Total	Thousand MWh	% of Total	
Non-renewable Facilities	5,307	79%	4,271	70%	-20%
Natural Gas	3,750	55%	2,687	44%	-28%
Petroleum Liquids	937	14%	901	15%	-4%
Coal	620	9%	683	11%	10%
Renewable Facilities	1,452	21%	1,808	30%	25%
Hydroelectric (Conventional)	1,433	21%	1,623	27%	13%
Wind	13	0%	143	2%	1,000%
Biomass	6	<1%	38	1%	533%
Solar	0	-	4	<1%	-
Total	6,759	100%	6,079	100%	-10%

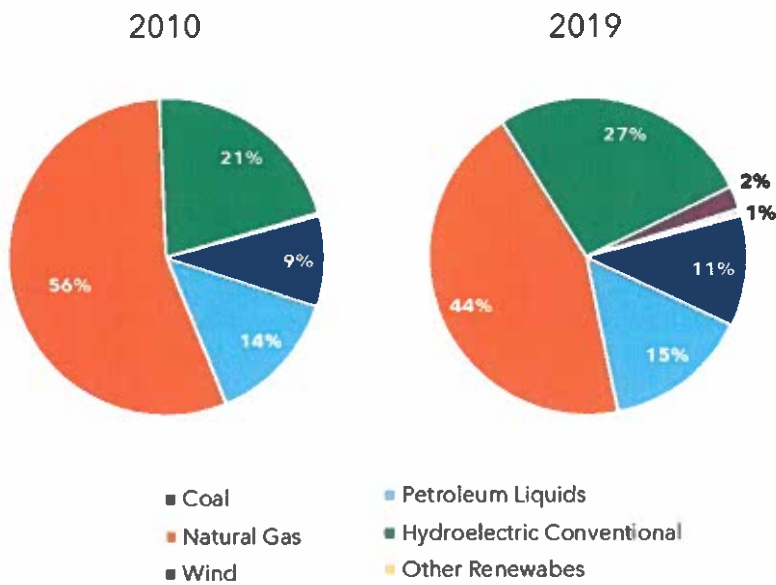
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Electric Power Annual

Note: Net generation refers to electricity generation by utility-scale facilities for all resource types and utility and small-scale facilities for solar photovoltaic plants.

⁵ University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research. Power Cost Equalization Funding Formula Review. March 2012. https://iseralaska.org/static/legacy_publication_links/2012_03_14-NREL_PCEfinal.pdf

⁶ Alaska Energy Authority. Power Cost Equalization Program Guide. September 2019.

Figure 1. Percentage of Total Electricity Generation in Alaska by Energy Source, 2010 and 2019

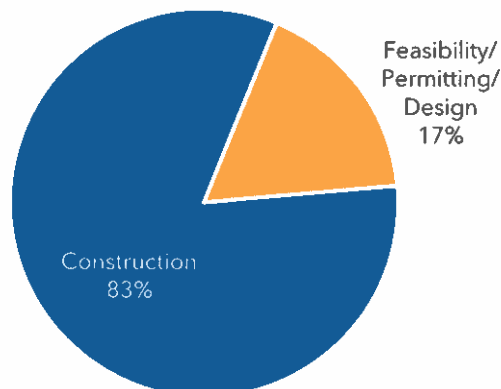


Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Electric Power Annual

Renewable Energy Investment in Alaska

Over the last decade, more than \$690 million in public and private investment was made in renewable energy projects throughout Alaska. More than 260 projects were studied or developed across 160 communities ranging in size from villages with 100 residents up to the state’s largest city, Anchorage. Of investments between 2010 and 2020, more than 80% funded construction activities, with the remaining investment funding feasibility, design, permitting, and planning work.

Figure 2. Renewable Energy Project Funding in Alaska by Project Type, 2010-2020



Source: McKinley Research Group

Resource Adoption

While many energy projects developed in Alaska over the last decade integrate renewable resources with diesel generation, the following sections describe investments by primary renewable energy type.

Table 3. Renewable Energy Investment in Alaska by Energy Source, 2010-2020

Primary Energy Source	Investment (\$millions)	% of Total
Hydroelectric	\$330	48%
Wind	\$240	35%
Biomass	\$30	5%
Geothermal (Testing and Assessment)	\$30	4%
Solar	\$10	2%
Other Renewables	\$50	7%
Total	\$690	100%

Source: McKinley Research Group

HYDROELECTRIC

Between 2010 and 2020, hydroelectric projects represented nearly half of renewable energy project investment in Alaska. Hydroelectric projects such as Blue Lake in Sitka, Allison Creek in Valdez, and expansion of AEA-owned Bradley Lake in Homer were among the largest projects in Alaska in terms of construction cost and generation capacity. "Lake tap" infrastructure requiring no dam and "run-of-river" hydroelectric projects were implemented in the state over this time period.

WIND

Over the past decade, wind projects represented 35% of investment in renewables. Large wind projects developed between 2010 and 2020 include Eva Creek in Healy, Fire Island in Anchorage, Phase II of Kodiak's Pillar Mountain development, and the Snake River project in Nome. Many wind projects developed over the past decade contributed to Alaska's role as a leader in implementing wind-diesel hybrid systems.⁷ Investments in wind-diesel hybrid systems in rural communities included efforts such as Chaninik Wind Group's project, which incorporated thermal stoves for residential heating using excess wind generation. Enhancements in energy storage also provided opportunity for further investment between 2010 and 2020.

⁷ Renewable Energy Alaska Program. <https://alaskarenewableenergy.org/initiatives/alaska-wind-working-group/> Alaska Wind Working Group. Accessed June 2021.

BIOMASS

Biomass facilities across Alaska use renewable resources like wood, sawmill waste, fish byproducts, and municipal waste to generate heat and electricity. Projects such as installation of a chip-fired boiler at the Tok School, the landfill waste project in Anchorage, and the ongoing sawdust and waste wood project in Hoonah represent the range of Alaska regions in which biomass projects were developed over the last decade.

GEOHERMAL TESTING

While no community-scale geothermal projects are yet operating in Alaska, testing and assessment of various geothermal resources are among the renewable energy investments in Alaska between 2010 and 2020. The most expensive of these projects was the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)-funded Southwest Alaska Regional Geothermal Energy Project, which explored geothermal resources around Naknek.

SOLAR

Solar projects accounted for 2% of investment in Alaska in renewable energy between 2010 and 2020, including the state's first utility-scale solar farms constructed in Healy and Willow.

Economic Impacts of Renewables in Alaska

While reducing carbon emissions is an important goal of renewable energy development, these projects come with added economic benefits. New lower-cost diesel technology charts a path toward savings for utilities and ratepayers. Further economic impacts are described below.

Development and Construction Phase Impacts

Renewable energy feasibility studies, design work, permitting, and especially construction activity all support short-term employment in Alaska. This includes high-wage construction and professional and business services jobs. Based on average annual spending on renewable energy projects between 2010 and 2020, renewable energy investment directly supported about 350 jobs in Alaska each year, resulting in an estimated \$30 million in annual labor income (wages, salaries, and employer-paid benefits). Additional spending from construction companies and developers purchasing services and materials in Alaska and employees spending their wages locally supported an additional 200 jobs annually, resulting in an additional \$10 million in labor income.

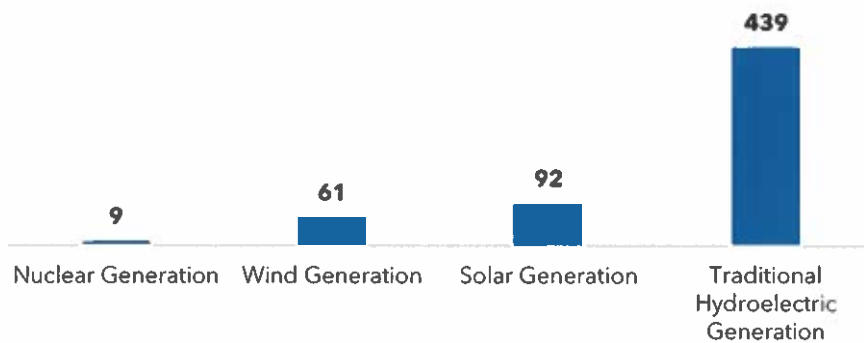
Renewable energy-related construction creates jobs at a rate of 15 to 20 jobs per million dollars invested, typical for construction projects in Alaska, but particularly important when jobs are created in rural areas where employment opportunities are scarce.

Long-term Impacts

The long-term positions required to operate and maintain renewable energy infrastructure depend largely on the type and scale of renewable energy deployed. Positions range from wind turbine technicians, who monitor and maintain systems, to maintenance jobs for clearing snow and vegetation from solar plants. Particularly in rural communities, where employment opportunities are often very limited, the skilled positions needed to support renewable energy projects can be a significant source of income.

By the end of 2019, about 600 people were employed in renewable electric power generation in Alaska across industries such as utilities, construction, professional services, and others. Jobs in renewable power generation represented about 40% of all electric power-generation industry employment in the state.⁸

Figure 3. Renewable Energy Electricity Generation Jobs, 2019



Source: National Association of State Energy Officials

Contractors specializing in renewable energy installation in Alaska illustrate the potential to further develop the renewable energy industry in the state. Alaska Native Renewable Industries, a solar-installation company based in Huslia, is one example of the type of business already operating in Alaska and employing locals in project development.

Community Sustainability

Reducing reliance on expensive diesel-fueled electricity in favor of more cost-effective renewable generation enhances community self-sufficiency and financial sustainability in rural Alaska. While PCE subsidies are vital to rural Alaskans, the program faces the same fiscal constraints impacting the overall state budget. Developing renewable resources to provide more cost-effective electricity can provide a path forward in the face of these financial constraints. In the case of community-owned renewable energy systems, the opportunity to sell

⁸ National Association of State Energy Officials. *U.S. Energy and Employment Report 2020*.

electricity to the utility company can also provide a source of local revenue and keep residents' money in the local economy.

Alaska communities whose fuel storage cannot meet annual demand often need to supplement seasonal barge shipments with high-cost air-delivered fuel, driving up costs for all consumers. Declines in overall fuel consumption can translate to better alignment of demand with communities' diesel fuel storage capacity, eliminating these airborne fuel deliveries and reducing fuel costs.

Any success in reducing the cost of energy in rural Alaska would have the benefit of more sustainable communities, particularly those most remote.

Social Cost of Carbon

The "Social Cost of Carbon" provides a tool to express in dollar terms the value of reduced carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. This cost is designed to account for the long-term, worldwide damage from CO₂ emissions on agricultural productivity, human health, property damages from increased flood risk and changes in energy system costs, and other factors.⁹

Based on the additional electricity generated by renewable energy resources in Alaska in 2019 compared to 2010 and the state's average CO₂ emissions per MWh generated, the renewable energy capacity added over the decade offset an estimated 448 million pounds of CO₂ emissions.¹⁰ Using a standard U.S. federal government social cost of carbon estimate of \$51 per metric ton of CO₂ emissions, the long-term value of the offset emissions from the additional renewable energy generation in Alaska is \$10.4 million.¹¹

⁹ Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases, United States Government. Technical Support Document: Social Cost of Carbon, Methane, and Nitrous Oxide Interim Estimates under Executive Order 13990. February 2021.

¹⁰ U.S. Energy Information Administration. State Electricity Profile: Alaska 2019. November 2020. CO₂ emissions generated per MWh of electricity produced vary by type of fuel and plant efficiency.

¹¹ The \$51 social cost of carbon estimate is based on an emissions year of 2020 and the average 3% discount rate.

Case Studies

The following are case studies that illustrate the diversity of Alaska's renewable energy opportunities.

Kodiak Microgrid

Kodiak has long used hydroelectric energy resources from its Terror Lake facility, but with significant additions to its renewable energy portfolio, Kodiak Electric Association (KEA) has largely gone "diesel off." In 2009, KEA installed three wind turbines at Pillar Mountain, then doubling capacity with another three in 2012. The utility leveraged AEA grants to fund the combined \$28.6 million in projects. The addition of battery storage to stabilize variable wind generation was key in integrating wind turbines with the existing hydroelectric infrastructure. Among KEA's recent renewable energy projects is the 2013 Terror Lake expansion.

The utility now employs four full-time wind technicians. Nearly all the wind technicians hired by KEA had no prior experience in the field, and the association has made a significant investment in training employees for this role.

With cost-effective generation from renewable resources, KEA has enabled new industrial electricity use. A 2015 partnership between KEA, Matson, and the City of Kodiak brought a \$10 million electric crane to Kodiak's port, replacing a diesel-power crane used for loading and unloading shipping containers.

Renewable generation is significantly more cost-effective for KEA than diesel generation. When last estimated, power from the combined hydroelectric and wind resources costs KEA about 7.7 cents per kWh, compared to a previous diesel-generation cost of 28.9 cents/kWh. With cost savings from increased renewable energy use, KEA has capitalized new projects such as the \$81.7 million Upper Hidden Basin project, which diverted water for use at Terror Lake, without raising customer rates.

Combining generation from Terror Lake and Pillar Mountain, renewable energy use offset 899 million gallons of diesel fuel in 2020, avoiding over a million metric tons of CO₂ emissions.

"The economic benefits to our community from developing the Pillar Mountain wind project when compared to diesel are high. By reducing the dependence on fossil fuels, we are able to provide the community of Kodiak a lower cost of power, a cleaner source of power, and maybe the most important is a stable source of power."

- Kodiak Electric Association

Willow Solar Farm and Renewable IPP

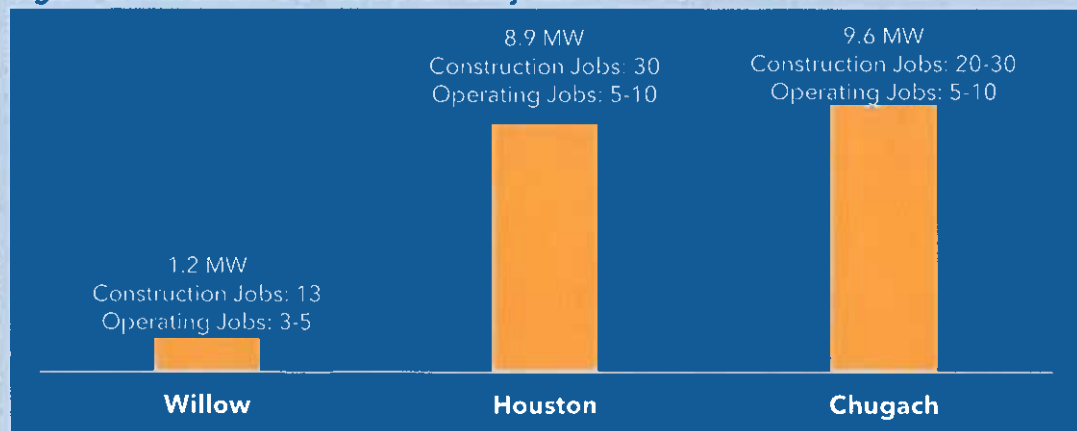
In 2019, with the completion of the Willow Solar Farm (WSF) in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Renewable Independent Power Producers (IPP) became one of Alaska's first utility-scale solar farm operators. The \$1.5 million WSF installation was financed with an AEA Power Project Fund loan and private capital.

WSF construction directly employed about 13 laborers hired by Renewable IPP and supported additional short-term contractors in positions such as engineer, electrician, lineman, and others. Laborers and subcontractors hired for the WSF installation were all Alaska residents and companies. WSF's ongoing economic impacts include new jobs created to maintain the solar farm and new property tax revenue for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. With high solar panel asset value, Renewable IPP has a high assessed property value and paid \$16,400 in property tax to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in 2020.

With the success of WSF, Renewable IPP is developing two additional projects - the Houston Solar Farm (HSF) and Chugach Solar Farm (CSF) - whose capacity would dwarf that of the WSF. Representing more than \$20 million in combined investment, Renewable IPP expects to fully fund the projects through private investment.

As interest grows in reducing carbon emissions, funding renewable energy developments without increasing costs to ratepayers presents a challenge. In the case of Matanuska Electric Association (MEA), which purchases electricity generated by WSF, a 2020 annual member survey found more than 77% of members support the utility developing a carbon reduction goal.¹ Independent power producers such as Renewable IPP assume responsibility of the significant costs of integrating with the existing grid, thereby increasing renewable energy use without burdening ratepayers with the cost of infrastructure development or additional business risk. While electricity from WSF is currently sold to MEA for the same rate it costs the utility to produce its own electricity, Renewable IPP hopes to sell generation from HSF and CSF at a lower rate compared to the utilities' current costs.

Figure 4. Renewable IPP Solar Farm Projects



Source: Renewable IPP

Chaninik Wind Group and Kongiganak

In 2005 Chaninik Wind Group (CWG), a consortium of stand-alone utilities in Southwestern Alaska, was formed to combat the high electricity and home heating prices in many rural communities unconnected to Alaska's road system. Representing Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, and Tuntutuliak, CWG integrated wind resources into diesel-generation systems. By forming this consortium, CWG demonstrated one model for increasing renewable energy projects' economies of scale, which often constrain developments in rural Alaska.

One method employed by CWG to increase the projects' scale was embracing beneficial electrification, designing wind systems with excess capacity diverted to electric thermal stoves installed in village homes. Households with thermal stoves see significantly lower home heating costs compared to the use of heating oil. In Kongiganak, Puvurna Power Company (PPC), charges \$0.10 per kWh for energy used by thermal stoves, equivalent to purchasing heating fuel at about \$3.00 per gallon, a significantly lower cost compared to current heating fuel prices of \$5.05/gallon.¹ For villages with a subsistence-based economy, home heating and energy cost savings can positively impact residents' ability to pay for necessary supplies and fuel to continue traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering subsistence activities.

Even residents without thermal stoves see positive economic benefits from these wind/diesel hybrid systems. Electricity sold for home heating represents an opportunity for utilities to increase sales, spreading costs over more kilowatt hours and keeping residents' money in the local economy. For Kongiganak, reduced diesel demand has also allowed PPC to rely solely on waterborne fuel deliveries and avoid high-cost air deliveries, reducing power costs communitywide.

Wind technician jobs supported by these hybrid systems provide important employment opportunities in communities with few other available positions. In each CWG community, utilities now employ local wind turbine technicians who receive on-the-job training in town. These technicians are trained to maintain and repair the system, avoiding the time and expense which would otherwise be required to bring technicians to the community on an as-needed basis.

"About 90% of residents rely on subsistence for food so more fuel savings for heating their home goes to [pay for] fuel to practice subsistence."

- Roderick Phillip, Plant Manager, Puvurna Power Company

Opportunities for Future Investment

Over the last decade, advances in renewable energy technology and declining hardware costs have contributed to increased adoption of renewables throughout Alaska. Energy storage technology has helped operators integrate renewables with existing infrastructure. While hundreds of millions of dollars have already been invested statewide, further investment will be required to meet or exceed Alaska's informal goal of 50% renewable energy production.

Developed and Emerging Technologies

Alaska's abundant natural resources make the state ripe for further renewable energy development employing existing technology and new methods of generation.

SOLAR

Communities and companies in Alaska are continuing to recognize the state's solar energy generation potential. Even with considerable seasonal variation in sunlight, many parts of Alaska have solar resources comparable to Germany, which is the world leader in installed solar generation capacity.¹² Characteristics such as low ambient temperatures and ability to reflect sunlight off snow cover enhance opportunities throughout the state. A 2016 analysis by the U.S. DOE yielded promising results, showing that solar installations can be economically competitive in rural Alaska even with relatively high hardware costs.¹³ The state's proven record of successful solar installations in communities such as Ambler and Eagle indicate Alaska's potential. Reductions in hardware costs and energy storage to smooth variable generation will increase the financial feasibility of solar projects. Maintaining federal tax incentives such as the Solar Investment Tax Credit will continue to play an important role in developing Alaska's solar potential.

BIOFUELS

With thousands of miles of coastline, marine resources such as kelp present an opportunity to implement new biomass energy systems. The University of Alaska Fairbanks is leading a project to design and develop model kelp farms with the goal of reducing capital and operating costs to produce this marine resource, which may be used in the production of new biofuels.¹⁴ With development of a cost-effective model, kelp biofuel has potential for increasing biomass generation across coastal Alaska.

¹² U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Indian Energy. Solar Energy Prospecting in Remote Alaska: An Economic Analysis of Solar Photovoltaics in the Last Frontier State. February 2016.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ University of Alaska Fairbanks. Could Kelp Be the New Energy Source? April 2021.

TIDAL

With 90% of all U.S. tidal energy resources, Alaska's coastline also provides great potential for further hydrokinetic energy production. Studies of tidal energy potential in Yakutat and Turnagain Arm found sufficient wave energy for tidal generation. In 2021, developers were moving forward with the Turnagain Arm Tidal Electric Generation project which would harness tidal resources in Cook Inlet.

GEOHERMAL

With 97 known thermal springs, Alaska is a geothermally active state and one of only eight in the nation generating electricity from geothermal activities.¹⁵ So far, the state's geothermal resources have only been used in small-scale projects such as the plant at Chena Hot Springs. However, over the last decade several studies have been conducted to determine geothermal feasibility in specific communities such as Nome and Tenakee Springs. The state's significant geothermal potential is starting to be realized in places such as Unalaska, where Ounalashka Corporation and Chena Power LLC have formed a joint venture to develop a geothermal power plant.

HYDROGEN

Alaska's considerable renewable resources offer an opportunity to harness excess energy to produce hydrogen, which can be stored and transported to markets outside of Alaska. Building capacity to participate in this emerging export market could unlock potential from Alaska's stranded resources. This could shift some of the state's renewable energy projects from fuel import-substitution to an export industry.

"We all want to know how to foster economic opportunity for Alaskans. Our economy wasn't built on oil and gas alone - it was built on the backs of Alaskans willing to think big. The legacy of oil and gas in Alaska is our ability to work together to accomplish the seemingly impossible and to build big things. That's why our economic future should be built on clean energy the same way we built our fossil fuel fortune - at scale and for sale. By leveraging our decades of experience as an energy state, our incredible natural resources, and our unique location at the geographic center of global commerce, the energy transition presents an economic opportunity that will ensure prosperity for generations of Alaskans to come."

- Rob Roys, Chief Innovation Officer, Launch Alaska

¹⁵ Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Geological and Geophysical Surveys. *Geothermal Energy*. <https://dggs.alaska.gov/energy/geothermal.html>

Rural Economies of Scale and Risk

In rural Alaska, communities face limited access to private capital due to the small scale of renewable projects and perceived risk of private lending. Standalone systems in small communities often mean projects cannot achieve economies of scale, making projects financially infeasible and contributing to a perceived risk in private lending. The ability to leverage public funding has been important to overcome barriers to project financing. Public funding is also important in overcoming the inherent financial risk of commissioning feasibility studies.

Pooling resources, as in the case of the Chaninik Wind Group, to increase project scale can help counteract these inherent financial challenges. AEA's Regional Energy Planning initiative provides a template for further comprehensive energy planning which could identify these opportunities to combine projects. Continued planning efforts should be supported.

Beneficial electrification initiatives combined with renewable energy projects present an opportunity to increase project scale, which can improve project financial feasibility. Electrification opportunities, ranging from heating rural homes to industrial equipment in Kodiak, provide a record of success in Alaska.

The perceived risk of PCE rate reductions can be a significant barrier to community support for renewable projects. Key to overcoming this barrier is continued consideration of how best to use the PCE program to support energy equity in rural Alaska while incentivizing cost-effective, financially sustainable energy projects. The formation of an Independent Power Producer (IPP) to operate renewable energy projects and sell electricity to the community's utility could provide a model for further renewable energy deployment while preserving PCE subsidies.

Transmission System Upgrades

In urban Alaska, transmission bottlenecks along the Railbelt Transmission System are a barrier to increased renewable energy generation. Current capacity along the transmission system restricts the amount of energy transferred from the site of renewable energy projects to different areas of the Railbelt system, and the current level of variable renewable energy generation is close to reaching the available renewable resource penetration of the system. These capacity constraints restrict the market for new generation from existing infrastructure, such as the Bradley Lake Hydroelectric plant on the Kenai Peninsula, and new project development. Implementing the projects outlined in AEA's Railbelt Transmission Plan to achieve the Railbelt Transmission System Planning Standard would unlock further renewable electricity generation potential along the Railbelt.¹⁶ In addition to expanding the potential market for increased

¹⁶ Alaska Energy Authority, Electric Power Systems Inc. *Alaska Energy Authority Railbelt Transmission Plan*. March 2017.

generation, the \$885 million in proposed projects could support thousands of short-term jobs and millions in wages associated with project development and construction.

Training Needs

While different renewable energy technologies require varying degrees of skilled work, increasing investment in harnessing Alaska's renewable energy could increase demand for local, skilled employees. Wind farm operators are making significant investments in training a skilled labor force in Alaska, "growing their own" by providing training for new wind technicians. Training is provided either by contracting with a provider located in the Lower 48 or on-the-job training by experienced technicians. Currently no specific in-state wind technician training or apprenticeship programs exist outside of employer-provided training.

Operators regularly contract with firms to provide additional maintenance and support, with some functions provided remotely and contracted employees brought in from out of state. As individual operators gain experience with these systems and train staff, they can reduce reliance on these outside firms. Still, as more wind resources are developed throughout the state, a ready labor force and in-state training opportunities will help Alaska harness the economic benefits of renewable energy.

Alaska's public postsecondary institutions offer limited coursework in renewable energy and could play a larger role in training to build a skilled energy labor force. At the University level, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) offers coursework in topics such as solar photovoltaic systems and sustainable energy project development. The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) offers a Sustainable Energy Occupational Endorsement in which students may specialize in a range of topics such as wind, biomass, or photovoltaic systems. The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), located in Seward, provides renewable power generation coursework through the Industrial Electricity and Plumbing & Heating programs. This network serves as a foundation for workforce development, and increased course offerings and promotion of these institutions will be important to further developing the state's renewable energy economy.

Conclusion

Advances in technology, including energy storage, have enabled renewable energy adoption throughout Alaska. Yet significant capital investment will be needed to further transition the state's intensive energy needs. Investment in feasibility studies, project planning and construction, along with workforce development, will all contribute to building Alaska's renewable energy economy. With well proven technology and a track record of integrating renewable energy into existing systems, the state is poised for investment in transmission capacity and energy projects to unlock Alaska's significant renewable resource potential and reduce high energy cost burdens, especially in rural Alaska.