



Irish Club of Alaska

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Mia Costello
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street, Room 515
Juneau, Alaska, 99801

RE: Support for HB 278

Dear Representative Costello:

On behalf of the Irish Club of Alaska, I am writing to express our strong support for the bill you have introduced, HB 278, which will establish an Alaska-Ireland Trade Commission. We will be happy to advocate for it with other members of the Legislature.

We are Alaska residents and members of an organization with the mission “to celebrate Irish culture and traditions and share with the world all that is uniquely Irish-Alaskan.” An Alaska-Ireland Trade Commission will build on one of the world’s most dynamic economic relationships, create jobs, drive innovation, and build opportunity for people on both sides of the Atlantic. As the Consul General for Ireland in the Western United States, Micheál Smith has noted, “We are supportive and I’m happy to appear in front of any committees to speak about the relationship. I’ve done this in California, Montana and Oregon.”

The Consulate General website provides extensive background information for the Irish Club of Alaska’s support of HB 278.

The US is Ireland’s largest trading and investment partner. American companies have long recognized Ireland as a trusted partner in Europe and a place where global businesses can thrive, innovate, and connect to EU and international markets. Today, Ireland hosts a vibrant ecosystem of US companies that create high-quality jobs, support local communities, and drive growth in key sectors. Ireland is the 5th largest source of foreign direct investment into the US, with investment by Irish companies worth \$390 billion. Irish businesses are part of the fabric of American life, employing over 200,000 people across the country and bringing skills, entrepreneurship, and a global outlook to local economies.

In addition to these economic, cultural, and social ties, Alaska and Ireland have a rich shared history, as people immigrated to work the gold fields, fish, trap fur, and help build the Alaska

Irish Club of Alaska
P.O. Box 241854
Anchorage, AK 99524-1854
www.irishalaska.org
irishclubak@gmail.com

Highway. Indeed, at one point in Alaska's history, the state's population included more people with Irish surnames than any other state in the U, S,

Irish music, literary, and visual arts have long been a vibrant thread in Alaskan's lives. The Athabascan fiddlers are Interior Alaskan Indigenous musicians who developed a distinct, community-centered, old-time dance music tradition, emerging from 19th-century cultural exchanges with Scottish, Irish, and Métis fur traders. A young man who trained with the Irish Dance Academy of Alaska went on to win the World Championship in step dancing, tour with the *Riverdance* company, and found a dance school of his own. The Irish Club of Alaska has been instrumental in fostering Irish arts, culture, and educational heritage since its founding in 1987, and we are enthusiastic about doing so in collaboration with the Alaska-Ireland Trade Commission.

The members of the Irish Club of Alaska thank you for introducing HB 278 and support its advancement through committee and on the floor. Alaska will benefit from thoughtful action on this issue.

Thank you for your time and service to our state.

Sincerely,

Kate O'Dell, President

kodell@irishalaska.org

907-570-7391

Irish Club of Alaska
P.O. Box 241854
Anchorage, AK 99524-1854
www.irishalaska.org
irishclubak@gmail.com