



Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant, and Retailers Association
1503 W. 31st Avenue, Suite 102
Anchorage, AK 99503
Office (907) 274-8133
www.alaskacharr.com

January 23, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the 34th Alaska State Legislature:

I have served as President & CEO of the Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant, and Retailers Association (commonly known as Alaska CHARR) since 2018. Alaska CHARR has over 700 members and represents over 2000 hospitality establishments that employ over 36,000 workers across Alaska communities.

Alaska's hospitality industry continues to face significant ongoing challenges to business operations, the greatest of which being ongoing and increasing labor shortages.

Currently, Alaska is one of only three states (along with Utah and Nevada) that requires a person to be 21 years of age or older to serve alcohol. Employers struggle to promote or retain quality employees who are 18-20 years of age because they are prohibited from serving alcohol or supervising other employees who serve or sell alcohol. Alaska is not competitive in this space, and our industry is experiencing an outmigration of young workers.

When I was in my late teens and early twenties, I attended college while serving and bartending in the Pacific Northwest. During summer breaks, I stayed in the Pacific Northwest rather than returning home to Alaska because I could make significantly more money as a server or manager – positions that I was prohibited by law from working in in my home state. In multiple years, I earned six figures by serving and bartending as a young adult outside of Alaska; if I had returned to Alaska, I would have been limited under current statute to positions that paid 25-30% what I was able to make outside. Many young people are making the same choice in today's labor market which is having a significant impact on Alaska hospitality businesses.

Senate Bill 15 will help hundreds of Alaskan-owned establishments around the state that collectively represent Alaska's largest private employer and second largest industry.

As the voice of Alaska's hospitality industry, I respectfully request that you support thousands of workers and businesses around the state by voting in support of Senate Bill 15.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Sarah Oates Harlow
President & CEO
sharlow@alaskacharr.com