

34TH ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Session

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Joint Armed Services Committee,
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House Health and Social Services
Committee

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

House Bill 110 (34-0258\N.A)

Sponsor Statement

February 25, 2026

House Bill 110 seeks to increase the number of social workers in Alaska by having Alaska join a multi-state social worker licensing compact. This effort aims to address the urgent and growing need for qualified social workers in Alaska as quickly as possible.

Alaska is currently experiencing a critical shortage of social workers across various sectors, including mental health, education, and services for vulnerable populations. We face significant challenges in retaining qualified professionals, with high turnover rates and increasing demand exacerbating the problem.

In response, the University of Alaska has launched targeted training programs, such as the school-based Social Work Education and Network Development initiative. This program prepares school-based social workers to meet urgent mental health needs in high-poverty areas. However, despite these efforts, the demand for social workers in Alaska continues to rise. In fact, the state projects a 13% increase in demand over the next three years.

Low wages, burnout, and limited opportunities for professional advancement contribute to ongoing recruitment and retention challenges. As a result, public assistance programs have experienced processing delays and growing case backlogs. Addressing the shortage of social workers is essential to strengthening Alaska's health, education, and protective services. This legislation can be part of the solution.

I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 110.

