



# Representative Andi Story

## Alaska State Legislature

### Sponsor Statement House Bill 28 Version A February 14, 2025

***“An Act establishing a student loan repayment pilot program;  
and providing for an effective date.”***

Alaska continues to experience an out-migration of its young, working-age adults. Among the 34% of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education following high school graduation, 16% attend college out of state, with only 18% enrolling at in-state institutions. Statistics show that of those who go out of state, only 35% return to Alaska with their earned skills. Additionally, analysis of student loan information from a national student loan lender report shows Alaskans have an average balance of \$35,821 of federal and private student loan debt upon graduation.

Teacher and state employee positions are at an all-time high vacancy rate. Multiple efforts on different fronts will be needed to attract Alaskans back home to participate in our economy.

House Bill 28 creates a student loan repayment program for Alaska residents who travel south for their higher education degree or technical certificate or who complete their degree or certification through the University of Alaska system and have been out of the state for a year or more. This three-year program would encourage them to return to Alaska to work as teachers or state employees by reimbursing their student loan lender up to \$8,000 per year. This grant would be administered by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and funded through the Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF).

This program is one solution to increase in-migration. It provides these students an incentive to return to Alaska to after completing their postsecondary education. By investing three years to work as a public employee or teacher, they can be reimbursed for up to \$24,000 on their student loans while also contributing to the state's economy. Many of these students have family and community roots here in Alaska and are familiar with its unique environment, meaning they are more likely to remain in these positions than new arrivals from out of state.

Please join me in supporting House Bill 28 to bring these skilled individuals back to Alaska and reduce the vacancies in our schools and state services.

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