



Alaska Operating Engineers/Employers Training Trust
Apprenticeship and Training
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March 9, 2026

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senate Bill 217 and House Bill 267 - Employer Contributions for Workforce Training Programs

Dear Senator Bjorkman and Members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

We are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 217 and House Bill 267. This legislation represents a practical and timely investment in Alaska's workforce training system.

As a **[workforce training provider/employer/community organization]**, **[Insert Name of Organization]** has relied on State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant funding to **[briefly describe impact: provide industry training, operate apprenticeships, upskill incumbent workers, connect job seekers to high-demand careers, etc]**. STEP dollars go directly into training Alaskans for real jobs that employers need filled now.

Demand for workforce training across the state continues to exceed available funding. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board has seen nearly double the amount of STEP requests compared to available grant funds. At the same time, training costs have increased, making existing resources stretch further each year. The current funding structure simply does not meet statewide demand.

SB 217 and HB 267 strengthen the long-term sustainability of workforce training by increasing available STEP funding when the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund is solvent. This approach supports businesses, reduces future unemployment claims, and helps more Alaskans gain the skills needed to fill high-demand jobs, including positions currently filled by nonresident workers.

This legislation is a high-return investment in Alaska's workforce and economy. We respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,

Kyle Virgin
Administrator
Alaska Operating Engineers Employer's Training Trust