



## ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

# Representative Genevieve Mina

Chair, House Health and Social Services Committee

Member, House Transportation Committee

Member, House Judiciary Committee

*Serving House District 19: Airport Heights, Mountain View, & Russian Jack*

### **HB 188 Sectional Analysis – Version A**

*"An Act establishing the welcoming Alaska office; establishing the welcoming Alaska center; establishing the Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee; repealing the office of citizenship assistance; and providing for an effective date."*

#### **Section 1. Adds new sections to AS 23.05**

##### ***Sec.23.05.131 Welcoming Alaska office***

**Subsection (a)** establishes the Welcoming Alaska office in the office of the commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). The office must support the economic and social integration of new immigrants and newcomers through: providing employment services; researching government barriers, best practices, and policy recommendations; coordinating with stakeholders such as local governments, community-based organizations, and businesses. The office also advises DOLWD's commissioner. Subject to appropriation, the office can offer grants, establish the welcoming Alaska center under AS 25.05.134, and financially support local government, on costs related to new immigrants and newcomers.

**Subsection (b)** allows the office to consult with stakeholders, including state agencies and local governments.

**Subsection (c)** states that the governor appoints the office's executive director as a partially exempt service position.

**Subsection (d)** provides the authority for the DOLWD to adopt the necessary regulations to implement this section.

##### ***Sec.23.05.132 Welcoming Alaska liaison***

**Subsection (a)** specifies that each principal department in the executive branch will have one designated staff to serve as a liaison to the welcoming Alaska office.

**Subsection (b)** outlines the welcoming Alaska liaisons' responsibilities as coordinating with the office and their respective department to support new immigrants and newcomers.

##### ***Sec.23.05.133 Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee***

**Subsection (a)** creates the Welcoming Alaska Advisory Committee, which is staffed and administered through the office. The nine-member committee includes two nonvoting

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legislators representing the House and Senate, and seven voting members appointed by the governor representing nonprofits, tribes, education, business, legal services, criminal justice, and the public.

**Subsection (b)** outlines the committee's responsibilities towards supporting new immigrants and newcomers, including: advising the state on policy recommendations, working with the office to monitor state agencies, conducting public meetings and studies upon request of the governor or the office, advising the office, and reviewing budget requests.

**Subsection (c) - (g)** describes the members, quorum, meetings, and expenses of the committee. Voting members serve staggered four-year terms, elect a member to serve as chair, and may receive per diem and travel expenses, but not salary. The committee must meet at least twice a year, and meetings may be held by the call of the chair, the majority of the committee, or upon request of the office's executive director.

### *Sec.23.05.134 Welcoming Alaska center*

**Section (a)** allows the office to establish a welcoming Alaska center, subject to appropriation. The center must provide virtual and in-person information in one or more communities to assist new immigrants and newcomers. The office must prioritize the centers being accessible and conveniently located within an existing state office facility or on a University of Alaska campus.

**Section (b)** lists the services at a welcoming Alaska center, including: language instruction, employment services, and service navigation.

### **Sec.23.05.135 Definitions**

Creates definitions for "newcomer," "new immigrant," and "office."

### **Section 2. Amends AS 39.25.120(c)**

This section adds the executive director of the Welcoming Alaska office to the list of partially exempt State executive branch positions.

### **Section 3. Repeals AS 23.05.125.**

Section 1 replaces AS 23.05.125, the statute for the office of citizenship assistance.

### **Section 4. Amends uncodified law by adding a new section:**

The office shall provide a report to the Legislature studying immigration opportunities in Alaska. The report must set goals for the office, create performance measures to track progress, and

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include input from Alaska employers. The office must submit a report on its findings by July 1, 2027.

**Section 5. Provides for an effective date of July 1, 2026.**

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