

April 6, 2025

17025 Glacier Highway

Juneau, AK 99801

TO: Alaska State House Finance Committee

FROM: Roberta Stell, Ed.D. Retired Educator

My support for House Bill 28 is based on both personal and professional experience with teachers and with state employees who benefitted from the Student Loan Forgiveness program from past years and the financial benefits that heavily influenced their decisions to stay in Alaska to work and to teach in Alaska. Earning the credentials to become a teacher/faculty member in our schools and colleges is an expensive decision to make. Loan Forgiveness/Grants are the reward for successful working and teaching prior to getting any relief from the heavy debt of a college education.

I retired from the University of Alaska over 10 years ago, and having the loan forgiveness program available made the difference between making a career in Alaska or leaving for less expensive place to live and work. Two of my adult children are educators in Alaska schools enabled by loan forgiveness for staying in Alaska. I have witnessed dozens of young people leave this state because they had little reason to return financially and many of those who left for their college degrees ended up marrying someone from that "outside" college and stayed in those States. It is the "Brain Drain" that the University of Alaska Performance Scholarships are designed to stop (or at least slow) the stream of young talent leaving Alaska.

Please pass this important legislation and do your part to slow the "Brain Drain" for Alaskans who are not high school students with scholarship options. The back-to-school adult population needs financial incentives to remain Alaskans. This bill would go a long way toward that need.