



Representative Andi Story

Alaska State Legislature

Sponsor Statement
House Bill 28, Version N.A
(34-LS0303\N.A)
March 25, 2026

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

Alaska continues to experience an outmigration of its young, working-age adults. Per the 2026 Alaska Economic Trends magazine article titled “Nonresident workers on the rise”, the number of Alaskans aged 18-64 in the state (the most recent data available) was at 449,171 its lowest level since 2008.

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 positions are at an all-time high vacancy rate. There were roughly 350 teacher vacancies on the first day of the current school year. There are also 573 teachers in Alaska who are here on J-1 and H-1B visas. Furthermore, 285 emergency teaching certificates were issued to cover critical teacher shortages. Multiple efforts on different fronts will be needed to keep Alaskans at home to participate in our economy’s teaching needs. In addition, Alaska has a high workforce shortage which contributes to a significant state employee vacancy rate.

House Bill 28 creates a student loan repayment program for people who have a higher education degree or technical certificate and who choose to work as teachers or state employees in our state and help fill these critical gaps. This three-year pilot program would encourage Alaskans to stay in Alaska while also encouraging those outside of Alaska to come to our state to work as teachers or state employees by reimbursing their student loan lender \$4,000 the first year, \$8,000 the second year, and \$12,000 the third 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 decrease outmigration and increase in-migration. By investing three years to work as a teacher or state employee, participants’ student loan lender can be reimbursed for up to \$24,000 on their student loans while also contributing to the state’s economy and workforce needs.

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

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