



Anchorage Vineyard Family Resource Center (AVFRC)
2511 Sentry Drive
Anchorage, AK 99507
mfritz@avfrc.org
907-223-6068

March 28, 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 Honorable Senator Jessi Bjorkman:

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 State Training and Employment Program grantee, AVFRC has relied on State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant funding to help our State of Alaska keep millions of federal grant dollars with the Head Start Preschool Program, to help our residents obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA) teaching credential. This credential is a grant compliance requirement in order for Alaskan programs to keep their grant funding. Achieving this credential keeps Alaskans in their jobs and prevents outside hires for teacher credentialing requirements.

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. Additionally, costs have grown exponentially since Covid19; the cost to deliver services statewide has nearly doubled and in some Alaskan villages, tripled due to the cost of internet and access to training modules.

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 and our Alaska residents greatly need training programs to keep their jobs and provide for their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MaryEllen Fritz', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

MaryEllen Fritz M.Ed

President and CEO

Anchorage Vineyard Family Resource Center