



ALASKA STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 52

March 2, 2026

Representative Carrick
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Carrick and Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the Alaska State Employees Association (ASEA/AFSCME Local 52), representing over 8,700 dedicated public employees across our state and in every department, we write in strong support of House Bill 300.

HB 300 addresses a long-overdue adjustment to the state employee per diem rate for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). The current short-term per diem rate of \$60 (for travel less than 30 days) and long-term rate of \$33 (for travel more than 30 days) have not been adjusted since 2010. In the sixteen years since those rates were set, the cost of living in Alaska—particularly the cost of food and everyday necessities—has risen dramatically. Yet the reimbursement rate for employees traveling on behalf of the State has remained stagnant.

State employees travel to serve Alaskans in every corner of our vast and often remote state. They conduct inspections, deliver public health services, maintain infrastructure, protect public safety, and ensure that critical programs operate effectively. When they travel for work, they do so at the direction of their employer and in service to the public.

Employees are often left to cover the gap between actual meal and incidental costs and the outdated reimbursement rate with their personal funds. This burden is especially acute in rural, high-cost communities. We've heard this story several times from our members and for many of them, it is the norm. It is neither fair nor sustainable to require them to subsidize the State's operations out of their own pockets.

HB 300's proposed new rates, \$82 for short-term and \$45 for long-term per diem rates, is a reasonable, necessary, and long overdue adjustment. Equally important is the bill's forward-looking mechanism to prevent this issue from recurring. Beginning in 2029, the per diem rates will be adjusted every three years based on a rolling three-year average of the Consumer Price Index for urban Alaska. This measured, data-driven approach provides predictability and fiscal responsibility while ensuring that reimbursement rates remain aligned with actual costs over time.

ASEA members are proud to serve the people of Alaska. They are committed to professionalism, integrity, and excellence in public service. Supporting HB 300 is a practical step toward recognizing that commitment and ensuring that employees are treated fairly when carrying out their duties.

We respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 300. Updating the per diem rate is not a luxury—it is a matter of fairness, equity, and responsible workforce policy.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Heidi Drygas
Executive Director
ASEA/AFSCME Local 52