

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28(L&C)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/10/26

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A RESOLUTION

1 **Recognizing the vital role of workers serving in the state under the J-1 Exchange Visitor**
2 **Program, the H-1B Program for specialty occupations, and the H-2B Program for**
3 **temporary nonagricultural workers in supporting the state's economic security and**
4 **continuity of critical services.**

5 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 **WHEREAS** the state's economic security depends on maintaining a lawful, reliable
7 workforce pipeline that can meet sharp seasonal peaks and specialized staffing needs across a
8 vast geography with many small and remote labor markets; and

9 **WHEREAS** the state experiences the nation's largest seasonal employment swing,
10 with the gap between the lowest and highest employment months reaching about 14 percent,
11 or roughly 43,900 jobs, primarily driven by tourism, seafood processing, and construction;
12 and

13 **WHEREAS** the Department of Labor and Workforce Development reports that
14 visitor-related industries employed 68,386 workers in 2024, reflecting staffing needs that
15 surge during the summer tourism season and require timely access to lawful temporary work

1 authorizations; and

2 **WHEREAS** within the tourism industry, accommodations and scenic and sightseeing
3 transportation are among the most seasonal components of the industry, and the department
4 reports that these industries draw a large share of workers from outside the state during peak
5 season; and

6 **WHEREAS** seafood processing is one of the state's most seasonal and geographically
7 dispersed industries and employed 18,841 in 2024, including 9,541 seafood processing
8 workers and 3,818 meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers; and

9 **WHEREAS** the department estimates that in 2024 workers from outside the state
10 made up 49 percent of the state's fish harvesting workforce and received 57 percent of gross
11 harvesting earnings, demonstrating the scale of labor mobility required to support the state's
12 fisheries economy and its associated support industries; and

13 **WHEREAS** the state's health care sector is a foundational part of the state's economy,
14 supporting more than 46,000 annual average jobs in 2024, representing about 11 percent of
15 statewide employment, and generating about \$3,700,000,000 in direct wages, accounting for
16 about 13 percent of total workforce earnings, with a total economic footprint of roughly
17 78,400 jobs and \$5,400,000,000 in income when multiplier effects are included; and

18 **WHEREAS** the state's current supply of health care workers does not meet demand,
19 and employers must hire approximately 9,943 new health care workers statewide each year to
20 address turnover and support growth; and

21 **WHEREAS** federal law provides targeted, regulated, temporary visa pathways that
22 support employers and institutions in the state that conduct good-faith domestic recruitment
23 and yet continue to face vacancies, including the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, the H-1B
24 program for specialty occupations, and the H-2B program for temporary nonagricultural
25 workers; and

26 **WHEREAS** these programs serve distinct public purposes, including cultural
27 exchange and training under the J-1 program and specialized, degree-related occupations
28 under the H-1B program, and employers in the state rely on these pathways to maintain
29 continuity of critical services and meet seasonal staffing needs consistent with federal
30 safeguards; and

31 **WHEREAS**, on September 19, 2025, President Trump issued a proclamation

1 restricting entry of certain H-1B nonimmigrants unless the petition is accompanied or
2 supplemented by a payment of \$100,000; and

3 **WHEREAS** a \$100,000 per-worker payment requirement effectively prohibits most
4 employers in the state from hiring H-1B workers, including rural hospitals and clinics,
5 seafood processors, tourism businesses, local governments, schools, and contractors, by
6 imposing a cost that cannot be realistically absorbed;

7 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes and supports the
8 lawful contributions of workers serving in the state under the J-1, H-1B, and H-2B visa
9 programs and the role these programs play in the state's economic security and the continuity
10 of critical services and seasonal industries; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages employers,
12 health systems, educational institutions, and community partners in tourism-related industries,
13 seafood processing and fishing support, health care, education, transportation, engineering,
14 and other critical sectors to continue using available federal programs to recruit and retain
15 qualified workers when positions remain vacant after conducting good-faith domestic
16 recruitment and using those programs in full compliance with applicable wage, worker-
17 protection, and program-integrity requirements; and be it

18 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the members of the
19 Alaska delegation in Congress and other federal policymakers to preserve and strengthen
20 workable J-1, H-1B, and H-2B pathways that support the state's unique workforce needs,
21 including improvements to processing times, reductions in avoidable administrative
22 disruptions, support for predictable season-to-season staffing continuity where permitted by
23 law, and prioritization of national-interest considerations for critical and rural services; and be
24 it

25 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature reaffirms its commitment
26 to fostering an economy and public service system that enable qualified workers who are
27 legally authorized to work are able to contribute to communities in the state and to the state's
28 long-term prosperity.

29 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
30 of the United States; the Honorable JD Vance, Vice President of the United States and
31 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Markwayne Mullin, United States Secretary of

1 Homeland Security; the Honorable Marco Rubio, United States Secretary of State; and the
2 Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the
3 Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
4 Congress.



Senate Joint Resolution 28: Supporting J-1, H-1B, and H-2B Visa Programs Sponsor Statement – Version N

Alaska's economy depends on a workforce that can respond to sharp seasonal demands and the realities of serving communities with distinct cultural identities. In key economic sectors such as tourism, seafood processing, health care, education, transportation, engineering, and other essential services, employers often face serious challenges filling positions quickly and at the scale needed to maintain operations.

Senate Joint Resolution 28 recognizes the important role that workers serving in Alaska under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, the H-1B Specialty Occupation Visa Program, and the H-2B Temporary Non-Agricultural Workers Program play in supporting the state's economic security and the continuity of critical services. These programs serve different purposes, but both help meet real workforce needs when employers and institutions cannot fill positions through the available labor pool alone.

Alaska has the largest seasonal employment swing in the nation. Visitor-related industries and fisheries depend on a reliable workforce during narrow peak seasons, while health care and other critical sectors continue to face staffing shortages that affect communities across the state, especially in rural Alaska.

SJR 28 affirms that lawful, regulated federal visa pathways remain necessary tools for employers facing legitimate staffing shortages, and that those pathways should remain workable and responsive to Alaska's unique conditions.

The resolution also expresses concern about federal actions that make these pathways unworkable in practice. When legal workforce programs become too costly or unpredictable, the consequences fall on Alaska employers, public services, and communities.



March 30, 2026

The Honorable Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Chair Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: NEA-Alaska Support for SJR 28 (J-1 and H-1B Program Support)

Dear Chair Tobin and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of educators represented by NEA-Alaska, I am writing to share our strong support for Senate Joint Resolution 28. Our students and school districts value and rely on the educators who utilize the J-1 and H-1B visa programs to live and work in Alaska.

We specifically want to thank and recognize the work of Senator Lisa Murkowski on this front in the US Congress. We are grateful that she has introduced legislation to address the unnecessary and harmful challenges posed by the arbitrary fees proposed by the federal administration.

The recent federal policy imposing a \$100,000 per-worker fee for H-1B petitions is an insurmountable barrier for Alaska educators and school districts. For our rural school districts in particular, such a cost would be impossible to absorb. If these visa programs become financially untenable, districts will experience even greater educator shortages and growing class sizes.

SJR 28 is a necessary stand against one-size-fits-all federal policies that ignore Alaska's unique education workforce needs. By passing this resolution, the Legislature reinforces the work being done by our congressional delegation to preserve predictable, workable, and vital visa programs that serve our Alaska communities.

We urge the Committee to move SJR 28 forward to help protect the professional education workforce that our students and families depend on.

Sincerely,

Laura Capelle, President, NEA-Alaska

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www.neaalaska.org

March 21, 2026

Senator Loki Tobin
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Via email: senator.loki.tobin@akleg.gov

RE: Support for SJR 28

Dear Senator Tobin and Members of the Committee:

My family and I have owned and operated Black Diamond Resort Company in Healy, Alaska since 1995. Black Diamond provides seasonal access to a beautiful full-service restaurant, 9-hole golf course, back country ATV adventures, and horse drawn carriage rides into the wilderness. Additionally, we operate the Aurora Denali Lodge year-round.

I write in support of Senate Joint Resolution 28, which recognizes the essential role that J-1 Exchange Visitor Program participants play in sustaining Alaska's seasonal industries. The Denali region experiences some of the most dramatic seasonal workforce swings in the nation. For businesses like ours, which must scale up rapidly each summer to serve visitors from around the world, access to lawful, reliable temporary worker programs is not optional—it is foundational to our ability to operate.

Despite extensive local recruitment, the small year-round population in the Denali Borough simply cannot meet the seasonal demand. J-1 participants fill critical roles

that allow us to maintain safe, high-quality operations, support other local businesses, and contribute to the broader Denali-area economy.

I would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the importance of the H-2B visa program which allows US employers to hire foreign nationals for temporary, non-agricultural, seasonal, or peak-load work when local workers are unavailable. The program is capped at approximately 66,000 nationwide and is extremely difficult to obtain.

We urge the Legislature to advance SJR 28 and continue advocating for predictable, functional federal workforce pathways that allow seasonal communities like Healy to thrive.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Usibelli

Black Diamond Resort Co.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Education Committee Chair

EDUCATION
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

April 21, 2026

To: Representative Zack Fields, Co-Chair
House Labor and Commerce Committee

Representative Carolyn Hall, Co-Chair
House Labor and Commerce Committee

From: Senator Löki Gale Tobin

RE: Hearing Request for Senate Joint Resolution 28: Supporting J-1 and H-1B Visa Programs

I respectfully request a hearing for Senate Joint Resolution 28: Supporting J-1 and H-1B Visa Programs at your earliest convenience.

With this request I am providing the following:

- Senate Joint Resolution 28 Version N
- Senate Joint Resolution 28 Sponsor Statement Version N
- Senate Joint Resolution 28 Explanation of Changes, Version L to Version N
- Senate Joint Resolution 28 Supporting Document: Senator Murkowski Press Release

Please contact Mike Mason at 465-3704 or michael.mason@akleg.gov with any questions.

With gratitude,

Senator Löki Gale Tobin

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2026 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SJR 28
 Fiscal Note Number: _____
 () Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SJR28-LEG-SESS-03-26-2026
 Title: SUPPORTING J-1 & H-1B VISA PROGRAMS
 Sponsor: EDUCATION
 Requester: (S) LABOR & COMMERCE

Department:
 Appropriation:
 Allocation:
 OMB Component Number: 0

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2027	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2027 Request	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2027	FY 2027					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2026) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2027) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account? No
(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No
 If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Not applicable; initial version. One page, zero fiscal note.

Prepared By: Sabrina Javier, Administrative Operations Manager	Phone: (907)465-4824
Division: Legislative Affairs Agency	Date: 03/26/2026 08:00 PM
Approved By: Jessica Geary, Executive Director	Date: 03/26/2026
Agency: Legislative Affairs Agency	



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Löki Gale Tobin
Education Committee Chair

EDUCATION
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION

Senate Joint Resolution 28: Supporting J-1, H-1B, and H-2B Visa Programs
Explanation of Changes – *Version L to Version N*

The resolution was amended to include H-2B visa programs. Specific reference to the previous Department of Homeland Security Secretary is removed, and is updated to reflect the current Secretary.

**Alaska Educator
Retention &
Recruitment Center**

Vacancy to Vitality

**Supporting
International
Hiring in Alaska**

Jennifer Schmitz, Director
AERRC

jschmitz@alaskaacsa.org



Multi-Industry Workforce Challenge

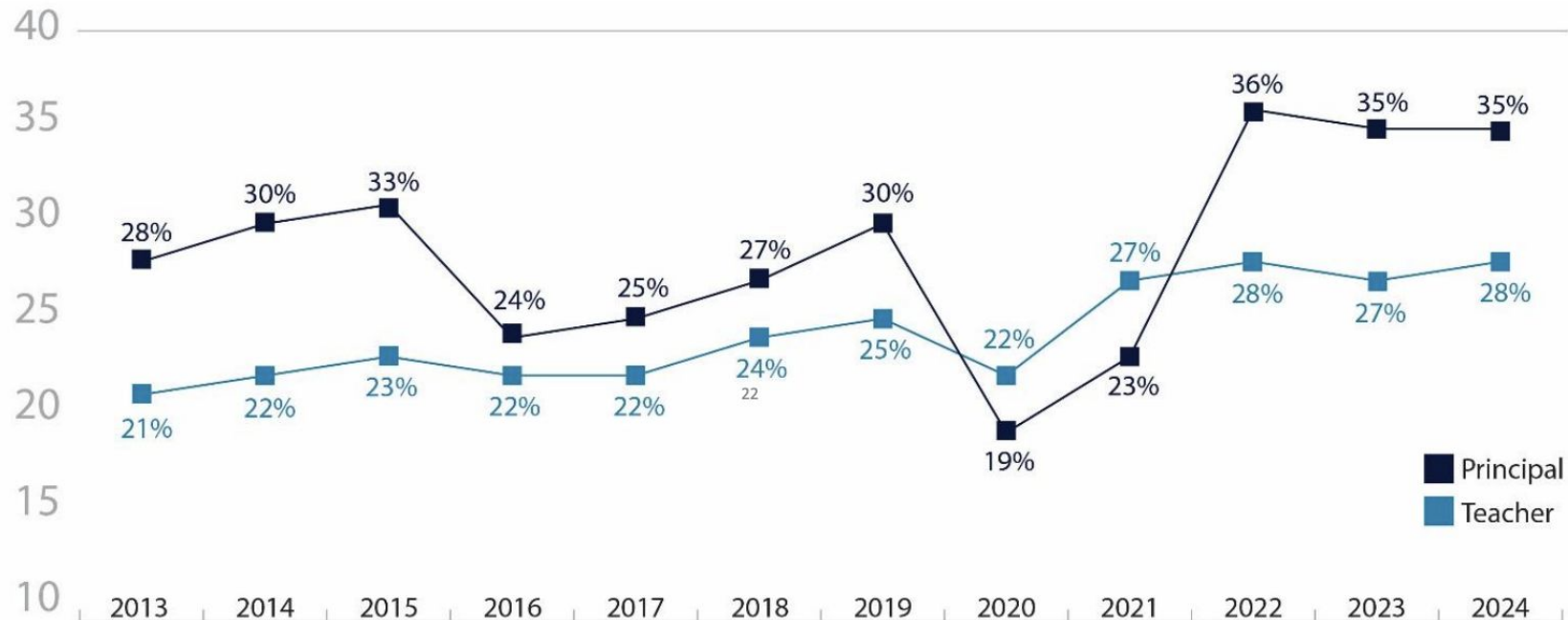
- Seafood, agriculture, tourism, healthcare and other industries in Alaska are reliant on visa workers to fill needed workforce
- Alaska already relies on thousands of visa workers outside education
- AERRC is tracking visa education workforce



The Reality: Alaska's Vacancy Challenge

Updated Alaska Teacher Turnover & Data Trends

Trends in Teacher and Principal Turnover | 2013-2024

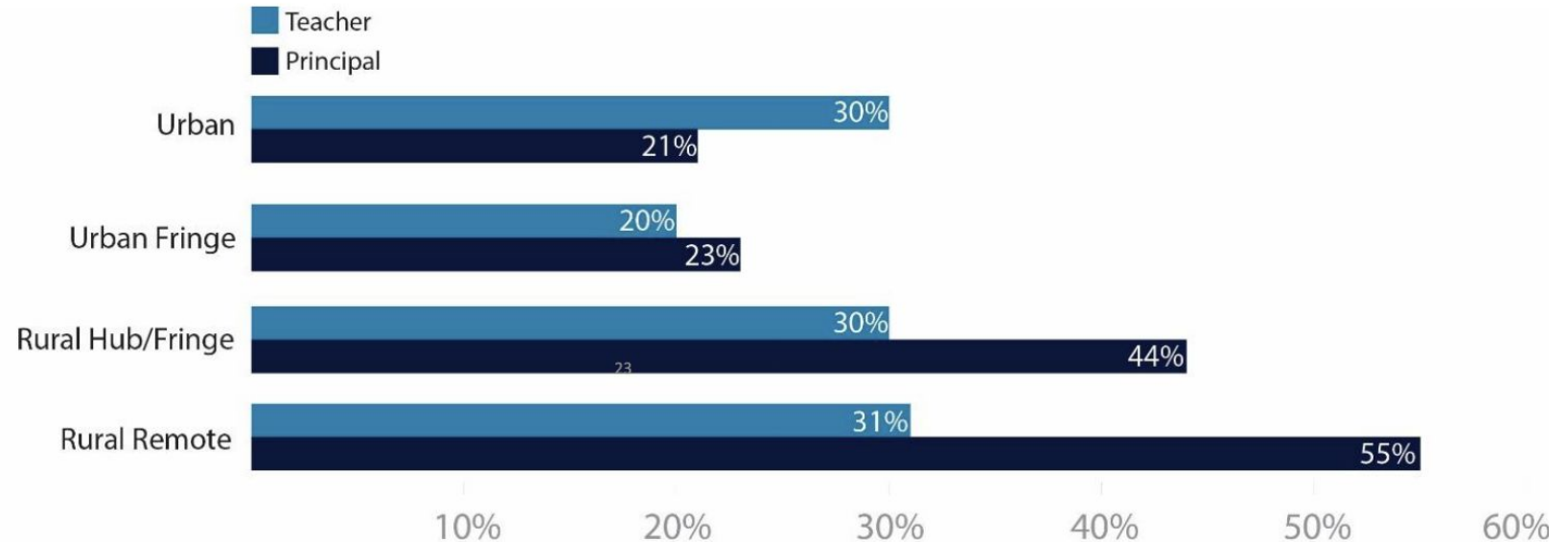


Source: *Teacher & Principal Turnover in Alaska*, presentation to the State Board of Education & Early Development, University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), December 3, 2025.

The Reality: Alaska's Vacancy Challenge

Updated Alaska Teacher Turnover & Data Trends

Teacher and Principal Turnover by School Locale | 2024



Source: *Teacher & Principal Turnover in Alaska*, presentation to the State Board of Education & Early Development, University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), December 3, 2025.

National Teacher Supply and Demand

2005

~10,000 Shortage

2020

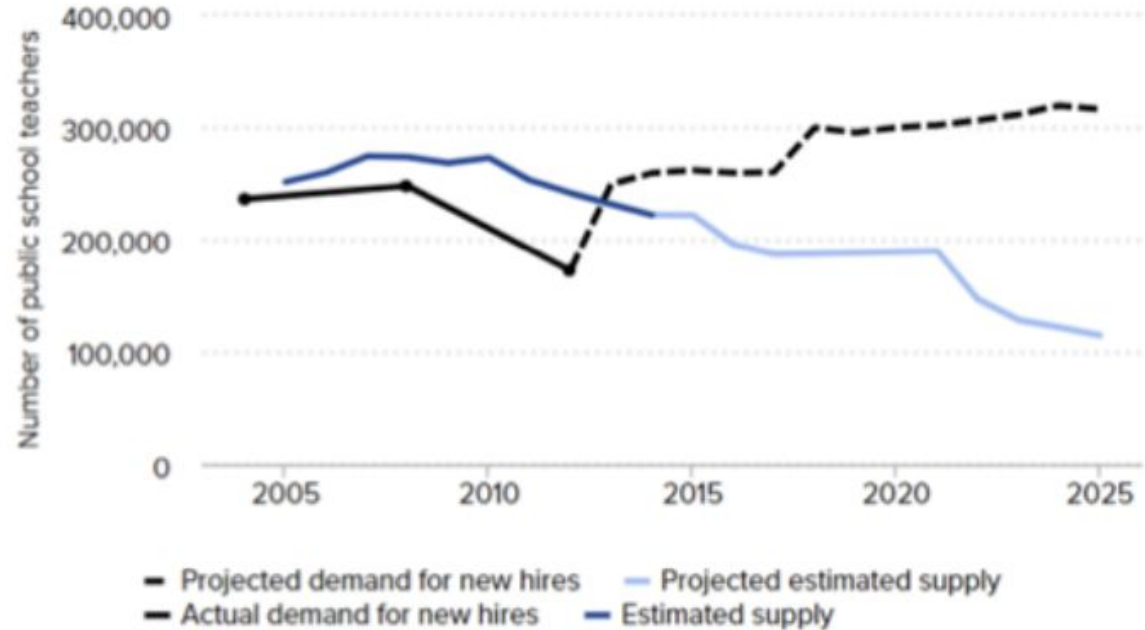
~100,000 Shortage

Projected 2025

~200,000 Shortage

Teacher shortage as estimated by Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas

Projected teacher supply and demand for new teachers, 2003–2004 through 2024–2025 school years



Note: The supply line represents the midpoints of upper- and lower-bound teacher supply estimates. Years on the horizontal axis represent the latter annual year in the school year.

Source: Recreated with permission from Figure 1 in Leib Sutchter, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Desiree Carver-Thomas, *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.*, Learning Policy Institute, September 2016. See the report for full analysis of the shortage and for the methodology.

The Reality: Alaska's Educator Workforce is Fractured



345+

Unfilled first day teaching vacancies disrupting classrooms.

573

Teachers currently relying on visas to keep schools open.

285

Emergency certificates issued to cover critical shortages.

We are experiencing the worst educator shortage in Alaska's history. This is no longer a localized issue and it is requiring a systemic policy response

ALASKA COUNCIL



OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Going Global: International Recruitment

2025 Visa Data for Alaska Educators



Alaska H-1B Visa Facts and Figures

- 2024: 20 Alaska school districts employed teachers on H-1B visas.
- 134 teachers received initial H-1B approvals; 63 received continuation approvals.
- 2025: At least 5 additional districts hired H-1B teachers.
- Past five years: 521 H-1B teachers placed statewide.
- 2025–26 school year: 183 H-1B teachers arrived in Alaska.
- 2026-2027 Districts are worried- the exemption is needed **now**.

Historical Use and Decline of J-1 Visas

- During the 2022–23 school year, 153 teachers on J-1 visas were employed across 20 Alaska school districts. However, recent federal interpretations of placement and oversight rules have significantly restricted the ability to place J-1 teachers in rural and remote Alaska communities.
- This makes having access to H1B's even more crucial for our schools today.

ALASKA COUNCIL



OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Our Teachers



Thank you! Questions?

Contact:

Jennifer Schmitz

AERRC Director

jschmitz@alaskaacsa.org

*Alaska Educator Retention and
Recruitment Center*

