
From: Susan Urig [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2026 1:40 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 193 support addendum to previous email Niskanen Center report

To the Committee:

Apologies. I failed to include this supporting analysis of HB 193 by the Niskanen Center in my previous email:

<https://www.niskanencenter.org/how-alaskas-unemployment-insurance-system-can-pave-the-path-to-paid-parental-leave/>

Thanks,
Susan Urig
[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99517
[REDACTED]

From: Janice Banta [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2026 6:37 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 193

I am writing in support of HB 193, which will create a mechanism for new parents to receive partial salary when they have a new baby and are assured 12 weeks of leave without losing their job. This is such an important benefit for young families, which frankly, we are losing in droves to lower 48 locations that have significantly more options for child care and financial support for families.

My understanding is that there is already a funding source through an overfunded unemployment insurance trust fund so we can ensure this vital resource without significantly impacting the current state budget, so there is no question that passing this bill is the right move for Alaskan families.

Thank you for your consideration,

Janice Banta
[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99516

From: Melissa Kulack (Cannell) [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:22 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall
Subject: HB 193

Hello,

I am writing in support of HB 193. I was lucky that my partner and I were federal employees when I gave birth to our daughter. This allowed both of us three months of paid Parental leave. This felt like the bare minimum amount of time to heal, bond and figure out how to survive with our first born. The post partum condition is hard on our bodies and minds. I could not have worked during those first three months post partum. My body was broken from a long birth and healing slowly from post partum complications. I am so grateful for the leave that I had and to not have had to worry about our finances. More people should be so fortunate.

I strongly believe that we will build bigger and better families in Alaska, who stay here and thrive here if we better support these crucial first months of life. Please help us give families, mothers, father's, newborns, brothers and sisters this little bit of added security. Paid Parental leave will boost moral, retention, help solve outmigration, and build healthier families and therefore a better economy too.

Thank you,
Melissa Kulack

From: Brandi Tolsma [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2026 10:39 AM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall
Subject: Subject: Support for HB 193 – Paid Family Leave in Alaska

Dear Members of the House Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB 193 and the establishment of a Paid Family Leave program in Alaska.

For many families, the postpartum period is not simply time off, it is a physically and emotionally demanding transition. Even in the best-case scenario, it involves recovery from childbirth, feeding challenges, severe sleep deprivation, and navigating postpartum mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. At the same time, parents are managing medical appointments, caring for older children, and adjusting to a completely new family dynamic. This is not a vacation—it is essential, intensive care for both parent and child.

In today's economy, most households rely on two incomes. When a child is born, families are often forced into an impossible decision: return to work too early or take extended unpaid leave under FMLA/AFLA and face significant financial hardship. Many simply cannot afford to go without income, especially given the high cost of living in Alaska and the limited availability of infant childcare. In reality, parents will take this leave regardless, HB 193 ensures they can do so without risking financial instability.

It is also important to recognize that many families are not in a position to “save up” paid leave ahead of time. Pregnancy often requires time off due to medical needs, illness, or frequent appointments. Additionally, in a state like Alaska—with a highly mobile population and families often far from extended support networks—leave is frequently used for travel to access family support. By the time a child arrives, many parents have already exhausted their available leave.

HB 193 represents a smart investment in Alaska's workforce. It supports employee retention, reduces turnover costs, and allows businesses to remain competitive in recruiting talent. Employers already contribute to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system, and this program builds on that existing structure without requiring additional Unrestricted General Funds or increasing UI taxes. In fact, due to the overfunded UI trust, it may even result in a small tax reduction for employers. This makes the program both practical and fiscally responsible.

I also urge the committee to consider the following recommendations:

- Maintain a benefit duration aligned with FMLA/AFLA, with a minimum of 8–18 weeks. Shortening this period would undermine the purpose of the program.
- If exemptions or employee thresholds are established, include an opt-in option for small businesses so they can still participate and offer this benefit to their workforce.
- Do not reduce the maximum taxable wage base or weekly benefit amount. Proposed reductions would make the benefit insufficient to cover basic living costs such as housing, food, childcare, and medical expenses.

Finally, if Alaska is committed to supporting families and children, policies like HB 193 are essential. Paid family leave is a meaningful step toward aligning our values with real, tangible support for working families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brandi Tolsma

From: Hillary Landers [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 10:01 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall
Subject: HB 193

Dear House Finance Committee,

I wanted to express my strong support of HB 193. I had my daughter last March, and I was lucky enough to have accrued enough paid time off to stay home with her for several months before returning to work. My husband is a federal worker and thankfully got 12 weeks of paid time off. Even with both of us home, keeping my daughter happy, nourished and healthy was full-time, two-person job as we navigated the ins and outs of parenthood, as well as feeding difficulties. I needed the support of my partner during this time as I recovered from delivering my baby. We were both so sleep-deprived that I would have been completely useless at work. Having 3 months off enabled us to pour our love into our baby and develop a strong foundation of trust and attunement before having to return to work. Babies need to be near their parents in the first months of life in order to thrive. It is cruel to make a parent choose between spending time with their infant and paying their bills by going to work in a sleep-deprived stupor.

Thank you for your consideration,
Hillary Landers, Juneau, AK

From: Flynn Casey [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:30 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Calvin Schrage; Rep. Carolyn Hall
Subject: Support for HB 193

Dear House Finance Committee,

I am writing as a constituent to express my strong support for House Bill 193, which would establish a paid parental leave program for Alaska families.

Welcoming a new child—whether by birth, adoption, or foster placement—is one of the most important and demanding times in a family’s life. Yet many Alaskans are forced to return to work too soon because they cannot afford to take unpaid leave. It has become commonplace that an employee’s announcement of a new addition to the family is followed by requests and gifts of hundreds of hours in donated leave. These donations are often made by coworkers that recognize the insufficiency of the State’s existing leave programs for supporting its employees through this time. Those programs leave a gap, and putting an extra burden on employees is not a valid plan for filling the hole.

HB 193 offers a practical and balanced solution by creating a paid leave program connected to the existing unemployment insurance system, helping working families maintain financial stability during this critical period. This policy would benefit not only families, but also employers and the broader Alaska economy. Paid parental leave has been shown to improve employee retention, reduce turnover costs, and support healthier outcomes for both parents and children. It allows workers to stay attached to the workforce while meeting essential caregiving responsibilities.

In Juneau, where the public sector provides over 40% of jobs and where resident retention and family stability are ongoing challenges, this legislation represents a meaningful investment in our communities. It reflects the values of supporting families, strengthening our workforce, and ensuring that children have the best possible start in life.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 193 as it moves through the legislature. Thank you for your service and for considering the needs of working families across our state.

Sincerely,
Flynn Casey
SOA Employee and Constituent of House District 3 with dreams of a bright future

From: Tara Thornton [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:24 PM
To: House Finance; Rep. Carolyn Hall; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: Support for HB193

Hello Representatives,

I live in Juneau Alaska and two work full-time jobs to make ends meet.

Having access to paid parental leave would make a meaningful difference for families in our community. It would give my husband and I the potential of starting a family.

I've seen friends struggle to balance income and caregiving, and I support HB 193.

All the best,
Tara Thornton

[REDACTED]

From: Matthew Shrum [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:17 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: Support for HB193

Hello, I wanted to express my last minute support for HB193.

Living in Juneau, it is increasingly difficult to keep young, working age people year round. There are many reasons - affordability, lack of childcare, etc. I believe HB193 is a step in the right direction to keep this important demographic, which would in-turn help Alaska economically. I've also heard similar frustrations from many friends that are not Juneau based. This state needs to keep young working people, which makes it important to make Alaska attractive. Paid parental leave is a great way to do that. Please support Alaskan families and HB193!

Matthew Shrum
Juneau, AK

From: Michelle Dutro [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 9:08 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: [Support for] HB 193

To whom it may concern,

I am emailing in strong support of HB193, establishing a paid parental leave program.

My husband and I work hard for our communities. I work for the State of Alaska, while my husband works for the city and borough of Juneau. We have invested in this state, and yet so frequently are reminded that our legislation and statutes often give us reason to move elsewhere. The lack of paid parental leave in Alaska is one of those reasons.

We have numerous friends who have gone through extensive struggles due to the lack of paid parental leave in Alaska. We know young parents who both work for the state who have had to go down to one income at a crucial time in the child's life, and in their careers. Having run out of leave days they saved up prior to the baby, they have had to alternate which parent had to go on LWOP. I have friends who were unable to secure childcare for over 6 months, and unable to secure permanent child care for 10 months. My husband and I are taking the lack of paid parental leave into consideration when deciding whether and when to start a family here in Alaska.

This is ridiculous. The United States is unique among industrialized nations for not having paid parental leave and this is not something to be proud of. I implore the Alaska legislature to vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely,

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Michelle Dutro
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Brendan Jackson [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 8:59 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Carolyn Hall; Rep. Sara Hannan; Rep. Andi Story
Subject: [Support For] HB 193

To whom it may concern,

I am emailing in strong support of HB193, establishing a paid parental leave program.

I have numerous friends who have gone through extensive struggles due to the lack of paid parental leave in Alaska. I know young parents who both work for the state who have had to go down to one income at a crucial time in the child's life, and in their careers. Having run out of leave days they saved up prior to the baby, they have had to alternate which parent had to go on LWOP. I have friends who were unable to secure childcare for over 6 months, and unable to secure permanent child care for 10 months. My wife and I are taking the lack of paid parental leave into consideration when deciding whether to start a family here in Alaska.

This is ridiculous. The United States is unique among industrialized nations for not having paid parental leave and this is not something to be proud of. I implore the Alaska legislature to vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely,

Brendan Jackson
Juneau, AK

From: Stephanie Warpinski [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 4:30 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB193 Support

Hello,

I am a federal employee married to a state of Alaska employee and we are having our second child this fall. I would not have considered a second kid if I did not have paid maternity leave through my federal service. I use extra leave right now to take care of my first child when she is sick or the daycare is closed and it is challenging to save up leave to cover what I would need for maternity leave. Since my husband does not get paid for the time he does not have saved up through the state, we rely on my benefit and I think we would be considered luckier than most.

Since you're in House Finance, I'm sure you're aware that inflation (and other factors) have greatly driven up the cost of living in Alaska. In the last ten years, inflation has increased almost 40%. In my lifetime, it has almost increased 200% and is an entirely different financial landscape. Parents want to be here raising a generation of new Alaskans but the costs of Costco, daycare, and housing are prove to be a weekly challenge.

Please consider this house bill and realize this policy will have a positive effect on the population of this State and the emotional and financial wellbeing of Alaskan parents.

Stephanie Warpinski

[REDACTED]

From: Hope O'Neill [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 3:49 PM
To: House Finance; Rep. Carolyn Hall; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Sara Hannan
Subject: Support for HB193

Hello,

I am writing to support HB193, regarding paid parental leave.

As a parent with no immediate family in Juneau (like so many people here!), the paid time off I received for my parental leave was critical for so many reasons.

My medical bills for the birth of **each** of my (2) children totalled over \$12,000. Our monthly mortgage, car payment, (poor) medical insurance premiums, gas, and groceries on top of that were/are simply unaffordable on one income in Juneau (and most places). It is unreasonable for our society to expect workers to save up personal leave, especially for parents who already have one child at home. Daycare availability and closures, illnesses, and public school holidays and in-service days account for more than a typical annual leave allowance.

Any support our state can provide to working families will be a benefit to all.

Thank you,

Hope O'Neill
Juneau, AK
[REDACTED]

From: Flannery Ballard [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 11:15 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Public Testimony HB 193: Paid Paternal Leave Program

Dear House Finance Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 193 because supporting families is not controversial.

Every time paid parental leave comes up, someone inevitably says, “Well, I raised my kids without government help, so no one else should get it either.” But if that’s the standard we apply to public policy, we’d never improve anything. Our great-grandparents raised children without labor laws, modern medicine, or weekends. Should we bring back child labor in the mines while we’re at it?

The reality is that the United States is the only developed country that does not provide paid parental leave at the national level. Other countries have looked at the same situation (parents needing time to recover from childbirth and care for a newborn) and concluded that supporting families is common sense. Alaska now has the opportunity to join the thirteen states and the District of Columbia that already provide paid family leave and help set the standard for what responsible policy looks like. Let us herald in new days where Alaska is a trendsetter - not an entrenched, regressive neophobe.

Critics sometimes dismiss policies like this as part of a “welfare state.” But that framing misunderstands the basic role of government. Governments exist to provide stability and ensure the conditions that allow people and economies to thrive. That includes stepping in when markets alone don’t solve a problem. Paid family leave, like unemployment insurance or retirement security, helps people stay connected to the workforce and continue contributing to the economy.

The private sector simply doesn’t provide paid parental leave consistently, especially for lower- and middle-income workers. As a result, many parents return to work almost immediately after the birth of a child because they cannot afford *not* to. That’s difficult for families and difficult for workplaces. Exhausted new parents are more likely to get sick, fall behind, or leave their jobs entirely. In practice, refusing to support parental leave doesn’t eliminate the burden -it just spreads it around in a less organized and less effective way.

Governments routinely invest in things that strengthen the state over the long term: infrastructure, education, and economic development. Supporting families should be viewed the same way. Today’s children are tomorrow’s workforce, taxpayers, and community members.

House Bill 193 isn’t radical. It’s a modest recognition that when families welcome a new child, they need time and stability. With reasonable carve-outs for small businesses, Alaska can take a practical step toward supporting families and strengthening the state’s future.

Regards,
Flannery Ballard
[REDACTED]
Juneau, AK 99801

From: Christie and Nick Hinz [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2026 12:48 PM
To: House Finance; Rep. Carolyn Hall
Subject: HB 193

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 193, which seeks to establish paid parental leave. This legislation represents a critical investment in the health and long-term wellbeing of Alaska families, children, and communities.

The postpartum period is one of the most vulnerable and formative times for both parents and infants. Access to paid parental leave allows mothers the time necessary to physically recover from childbirth and significantly reduces the risk of postpartum mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. Just as importantly, it enables fathers and partners to be present during this critical transition, supporting maternal recovery while also fostering their own emotional connection with their child and mental wellbeing.

Research consistently shows that when parents are given adequate time to bond with their newborns, children experience stronger emotional security, improved cognitive development, and better long-term mental health outcomes. Early attachment is foundational—it shapes how a child relates to others, manages stress, and develops resilience over a lifetime. Paid parental leave makes this essential bonding period possible without forcing families to choose between financial stability and their child’s wellbeing.

The benefits extend far beyond the immediate postpartum period. Families who are supported during this critical window are more stable, more secure, and better equipped to thrive. Children raised in these environments are more likely to succeed academically, maintain healthier relationships, and contribute positively to society. In this way, paid parental leave is not just a short-term policy—it is a long-term investment in the strength and health of future generations.

House Bill 193 acknowledges what families already know: that the earliest moments of life matter profoundly, and that supporting parents during this time has lifelong impacts. By passing this bill, we affirm our commitment to healthier families, stronger communities, and a more compassionate and sustainable future.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Christina Hinz
Juneau, AK