

Alaska State Legislature

House Education Committee

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House Bill 387

“An Act establishing the Joint Legislative Alaska Native Languages Academic Task Force” Sponsor Statement

HB 387 establishes the Joint Legislative Alaska Native Languages Academic Task Force to address an urgent and escalating crisis: the rapid loss of Alaska Native languages and the academic infrastructure that supports their preservation. Decades of research, documentation, and teacher training—much of it centered at the Alaska Native Language Center—are at risk due to staffing shortages, unstable funding, and declining institutional capacity.

Recognizing the critical importance of research, preservation, and the continuation of Alaska Native languages, the state legislature established the Alaska Native Language Center in 1972. Now, more than fifty years later, HB 387 creates a bicameral task force to conduct a comprehensive review of Alaska’s academic efforts in language preservation and revitalization.

The Joint Legislative Alaska Native Languages Academic Task Force will engage directly with Alaska Native communities, educators, and subject-matter experts to assess current challenges, identify risks to existing research, and recommend strategies to strengthen teacher training, expand research capacity, and ensure long-term sustainability.

HB 387 lays the groundwork for a coordinated, forward-looking statewide strategy that respects Indigenous knowledge systems, supports community priorities, and ensures that Alaska Native languages—and the knowledge they carry—remain preserved and accessible for future generations.

