



April 29, 2026

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senator Donald Olson, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 532
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senate Bill 217 and House Bill 267 - Employer Contributions for Workforce Training Programs

Dear Senator Hoffman, Senator Olson, Senator Stedman, and Members of the Senator Finance Committee,

Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) is 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 workforce training provider, **SERRC** has relied on State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant funding to support Southeast Alaskans by removing prohibitive financial barriers to high-cost technical certifications. This ensures that high-wage roles in the maritime, welding, and transportation sectors are filled by skilled local residents rather than out-of-state workers.

Additionally, STEP funding provides direct pathways to careers in the trades by financing essential credentials, including Class A and B CDLs; Occupational Endorsement Certificates (OECs) in Welding, Diesel Mechanics, and Construction; and USCG-approved Marine endorsements. This investment is critical to rapidly upskilling local residents for high-wage, in-demand employment as commercial drivers, heavy-duty mechanics, certified fabricators, and maritime vessel operators.

While Juneau serves as the primary training hub, the unique geography of Southeast Alaska often prevents rural residents from accessing these training opportunities. Increased funding would help to decentralize financial support beyond Juneau to outlying communities, effectively broadening the local talent pool and ensuring regional employers have access to a qualified resident workforce.

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.

Sincerely,

Chris Reitan, SERRC Executive Director