



3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Resource & Navigation Center

Alaska Office for Refugees

Brother Francis Shelter

Clare House

Complex Care

Family Disability Services

Homeless Family Services

Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services

St. Francis House Food Pantry

Supportive Family Services

Dear Senator Wilson,

I am writing on behalf of Catholic Social Services to express our support for Senate Bill 233, which seeks to remove the GED requirement for childcare providers under the childcare assistance program. Our organization recognizes the barriers posed by this requirement for individuals with childcare competencies, and its contribution to the persistent childcare shortage in Anchorage.

Within Catholic Social Services, particularly in our Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS) program, we work closely with numerous mothers and individuals with childcare experience who aspire to work in childcare but are unable to due to the GED requirement.

As these skilled individuals are unable to work in childcare, Anchorage contends with a shortage of childcare providers. Removing the GED requirement allows more new arrivals and existing residents to work in childcare, while simultaneously increasing the supply of culturally competent childcare, since more childcare providers from various backgrounds will be working in our community. This benefits parents from culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as our entire state.

Increased childcare accessibility empowers more parents to participate in the workforce, contributing to overall community well-being. According to the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services' staff-to-child ratio, each additional childcare provider can accommodate up to 8 children during the workday. This means that every additional childcare provider enables up to 8 parents to rejoin the workforce, earn income, and generate tax revenue.

Eliminating the GED requirement is not just about breaking down barriers; it strategically builds a more skilled, diverse, and culturally competent childcare force, aligning with our shared goal of creating a more inclusive community. Thank you for your dedication to this issue, and your continued work to meet the evolving needs of our ever-growing community.

Best,

Robin Dempsey, CEO  
Catholic Social Services