



To: Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee
From: Alaska AFL-CIO
CC: Members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Date: March 26, 2025
Subject: SB 68 (EMPLOYMENT OF MINORS)

The Alaska AFL-CIO opposes SB 68 on the following grounds:

It threatens workers health, safety, and well-being: As a result of 12-hour shifts, workers have been shown to suffer physiological strain, fatigue, and burn-out. If workers are performing an inherently dangerous job, this can have negative impacts for public safety. Workers can agree to work 12 hours now, but they are entitled to earn overtime pay. 12 hours of straight time should not be a new standard. We oppose this roll back of a basic provision of our wage and hour laws.

Child labor is on the rise and it is unacceptable: Organized labor is outraged at the recent rise in corporate exploitation of children in dangerous workplaces around the country - there is no shortage of heart-breaking and infuriating incidents from recent years.¹ Additionally, when applied to minors, the long-term impacts of young people subject to physiological strain, fatigue, and burn-out will put a strain on public health and impact our future workforce. Our young people should be focused on their education, maturation, and development, rather than being overworked at too young of an age.

Failure to hold employers accountable: For decades— even centuries— employers have tried to increase profits by making children work. So the fact that the current surge in child labor is happening amidst record-breaking corporate profits is reprehensible, but hardly surprising. Bad employers prefer to hire minors because they often accept lower wages and they are less likely to stand up to poor, sometimes even illegal, treatment in the workplace due to an inherent imbalance of power. As it stands now, the State of Alaska does not do enough to investigate and enforce child labor law violations. This bill would open up increased opportunities for bad employers to flout the law without fear of investigation and enforcement.

It's the wrong solution to a tight labor market: Loosening hard-fought provisions designed to keep children safe and to ensure a work/life balance are not the solution for Alaska's workers.

¹<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jul/27/child-deaths-labor-department>