

REPRESENTATIVE DAN ORTIZ

Alaska State Legislature / Ketchikan, Saxman, Wrangell, Hydaburg, Metlakatla, Hyder, Loring and Meyers Chuck

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Sponsor Statement

HCR 19, Governor Walker: AK Native Languages Emergency

The state has moved in the right direction by acknowledging and recognizing the 20 Alaska Native languages as official languages of the state; however, recognition is just the first step. The intent of this resolution is to heed the suggestions put forth by the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council (ANLPAC).

The Council strongly urges that the Governor issue an Administrative Order, recognizing the linguistic emergency that exists, and state that it is the policy of the State of Alaska to actively promote the survival and continued use of all of Alaska's 20 Native languages.

In their 2018 Biennial Report to the Governor and Legislature, ANLPAC warned that all 20 Alaska Native languages are in crisis, and most are predicted to become extinct or dormant by the end of the 21st century. The State of Alaska can no longer sustain these rates of language loss unless policy changes are enacted that support people who are learning and speaking Alaska Native languages throughout the state.

The loss of language represents the loss of a critical piece of our history, culture, and a traditional way of life. I respectfully request the Legislature join me in support of ANLPAC and the languages that represent intergenerational knowledge.