

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: HJR 4 Statement

HEM for MLD

From: Liam Wade [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 1, 2025 10:16 PM
To: Rep. Maxine Dibert <Rep.Maxine.Dibert@akleg.gov>
Subject: HJR 4 Statement

Good Evening Representative Dibert,

My name is Liam Wade and I am the chairman for Region 6 student council, a coalition of all high school student councils in the Interior. We meet monthly to discuss a plethora of topics ranging from everything under the sun. I believe it is our duty not only as representatives of our respective student body's but also as Alaskan residents to stay up to date on local and statewide legislation.

Just recently we have been reading through a couple of the bills on the floor at the moment and Region 6 believes that HJR 4 is of great importance to our Alaskan way of life. The 53 of us who showed up to our January monthly meeting debated HJR 4 looking at all sides of the argument and repeatedly returned to one general consensus; Denali is Denali and should stay just that way. We voted on the resolution and unanimously agreed with all 53 members from 6 schools voting to support HJR 4, and additionally wrote a Region statement on this important resolution.

"Region 6 Student Council, a coalition of 7 high school student councils in Interior Alaska, strongly supports the resolution urging the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior to maintain Denali as the official name of North America's tallest mountain. The name Denali, meaning "The High One" in Koyukon Athabaskan, has been in use for thousands of years by the Indigenous peoples of Alaska and is deeply rooted in the cultural and historical identity of the state.

Denali is more than just a geographic feature; it is a symbol of Alaska's rich Indigenous heritage, its resilient communities, and its breathtaking natural beauty. The Athabaskan people and their ancestors have lived in the region for over 10,000 years, and the name Denali reflects their longstanding connection to the land. In 1975, the State of Alaska officially recognized the name Denali, and in 2015, the federal government appropriately restored it as the mountain's official name.

Any efforts to rename Denali would not only disregard the historical and cultural significance of the Indigenous name but also cause unnecessary confusion and economic disruptions in tourism, which is a vital industry in Alaska. Furthermore, renaming the mountain to honor a historical figure with no direct connection to Alaska undermines the principle that local residents should have the primary voice in determining the names of their geographic landmarks.

Beyond these considerations, renaming Denali would set a concerning precedent in dismissing Indigenous place names in favor of politically motivated changes. The preservation of Indigenous names fosters cultural recognition and acknowledges the contributions and history of Alaska Native peoples. Reverting to the former name would be perceived as a step backward in efforts to promote inclusivity and historical accuracy.

Preserving the name Denali aligns with broader efforts to recognize and respect Indigenous languages, traditions, and history. Across Alaska, traditional Indigenous names continue to be used by local, state, and federal government agencies, reinforcing the state's diverse cultural heritage.

The Region 6 Student Council stands with the Alaska State Legislature in urging the President of the United States and the United States Secretary of the Interior to uphold the rightful name of Denali and to ensure that no action is taken to rename this iconic and revered mountain.

We call on all residents, policymakers, and leaders to respect the historical and cultural significance of Denali and to preserve its name for future generations."

Thank you so much for your efforts

Sincerely,

Liam Wade, Region 6 Chairperson