



# Alaska Occupational Therapy Association

## **Alaska Occupational Therapy Association**

3705 Arctic Blvd

President@AKOTA.org

4/21/2025

## **Senator Jesse Bjorkman**

Alaska State Legislature

State Capitol

Juneau, AK 99801

## **RE: Support for SB 172 – Occupational Therapy Compact**

Dear Senator Bjorkman,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 172, which would allow Alaska to join the Occupational Therapy Compact. On behalf of the 173 dedicated members of the Alaska Occupational Therapy Association (AKOTA)—including occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students across the state—I urge your support for this critical legislation to enhance access to occupational therapy services for Alaskans.

Alaska currently faces a significant and growing shortage of occupational therapy professionals. There is only one occupational therapy education program in the state, the Creighton University/University of Alaska Anchorage (CU/UAA) partnership, which graduates approximately 8 to 14 students annually. This limited pipeline is not sufficient to meet the state's healthcare demands, particularly as existing professionals retire, relocate, or are unable to practice due to licensure barriers. The problem is even more acute for military spouses and other qualified therapists moving into Alaska who are ready to contribute but face delays in the licensure process.

Real-time job board data from April 2025 paints a stark picture of unmet need. Across multiple platforms, the number of open occupational therapy positions is substantial:

- **Indeed:** 66 positions statewide
- **Glassdoor:** 75 listings
- **ZipRecruiter:** 115 postings
- **Vivian Health:** 194 travel assignments
- **LinkedIn (Anchorage region alone):** Over 220 positions
- **CompHealth:** 19 active therapy openings

While there may be some duplication, these numbers clearly reflect a serious workforce gap. More importantly, these vacancies are not isolated to Anchorage or Fairbanks. Positions remain unfilled in communities across Bethel, Juneau, Kodiak, Wasilla, Palmer, the Kenai Peninsula, and numerous tribal and rural locations. The need for occupational therapy services spans every corner of our state.

Joining the Occupational Therapy Compact is a pragmatic, effective policy solution. It will allow licensed professionals in compact member states to practice in Alaska more swiftly and efficiently, reducing administrative burdens and speeding up the delivery of essential care. This is especially crucial as we face the dual challenge of an aging population and a retiring healthcare workforce.

Supporting SB 172 is not just about removing barriers—it's about ensuring that Alaskans, regardless of location, receive timely, quality occupational therapy services that help them live healthier, more independent lives.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We respectfully urge your full support of SB 172 to strengthen Alaska's healthcare workforce and improve access to care statewide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brianne Oswald, OTD, OTR/L". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "OTD" and "OTR/L" written in a more stylized, abbreviated manner.

Sincerely,

Brianne Oswald, OTD, OTR/L  
President | Alaska Occupational Therapy Association  
President@AKOTA.org

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