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To: [House Education](#)
Subject: Public Testimony on House Joint Resolution 25 (HJR 25)
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Public Testimony on House Joint Resolution 25 (HJR 25)

Bill in Question: HJR 25 - Supporting and Encouraging the Continued Recruitment and Retention of International Educators on J-1 and H-1B Visas in the State of Alaska

Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Joint Resolution 25, which supports the recruitment and retention of international educators on J-1 and H-1B visas in Alaska's schools. While I understand the intent behind this resolution, I have several critical concerns regarding its implications for the state's education system and its legal ramifications. I hope these concerns will be taken into consideration as the resolution is debated.

1. Concerns Over Equal Opportunity for Local Educators

The resolution strongly emphasizes the recruitment of international educators but does not include sufficient provisions for local Alaskan educators. It is crucial that we balance efforts to address staffing shortages with ensuring fair competition and equal opportunity for all potential teachers, especially those who are already part of our local communities. Alaskan educators—who understand the state's unique cultural, social, and environmental challenges—must not be overlooked as we seek to address the state's teacher shortages.

2. Federal Immigration Law Compliance

While the resolution encourages state support for international educators, it does not make explicit reference to the need for all efforts to be in full compliance with federal immigration laws. It is essential that any action taken at the state level remains within the boundaries of federal authority on visa programs. I recommend amending the resolution to clearly reaffirm that federal laws governing J-1 and H-1B visas will be respected, and that no state-level actions should attempt to circumvent or contradict these laws.

3. Labor Protections for International Educators

International educators on J-1 and H-1B visas are often vulnerable to exploitation due to visa restrictions and other challenges. The resolution does not sufficiently address the working conditions, wages, or job security of these educators. I believe it is essential to include specific protections to ensure that these individuals are not taken advantage of and are treated equitably with respect to local teachers. This includes providing measures for fair pay, job mobility, and employment protections to ensure they can remain in the profession without fear of unjust termination or exploitation due to their visa status.

4. Community and Cultural Support

While the resolution recognizes the importance of international educators, it does not address

the support systems necessary for these educators to successfully integrate into Alaska's diverse and often remote communities. The success of international educators is not only dependent on recruitment but also on cultural adaptation and community integration. I recommend that the resolution include provisions for cultural orientation programs and community support structures to help international educators integrate smoothly into their new communities, enhancing their teaching effectiveness and the positive impact on students.

Proposed Amendments

To address these concerns, I propose the following amendments to HJR 25:

Ensure Equal Opportunity for Local Educators:

Add language encouraging school districts to actively recruit and support local educators, particularly those with the necessary qualifications and experience, especially in rural and remote areas.

Federal Immigration Compliance:

Clearly state that any recruitment and retention efforts will adhere to federal immigration law and that the state will work within the framework of current visa programs to recruit international educators.

Labor and Employment Protections:

Include provisions ensuring that international educators receive equal pay, employment protections, and fair working conditions that are comparable to those provided to local educators.

Cultural Orientation and Community Integration:

Include a statement encouraging school districts to implement cultural orientation programs and provide necessary support for international educators to integrate into Alaska's communities.

In conclusion, while I fully support the intention behind HJR 25 to address the state's teacher shortage, particularly in rural and remote areas, I urge the committee to consider these modifications. By doing so, we can ensure that both international and local educators are treated equitably, and that the recruitment and retention of international educators align with federal immigration laws and promote long-term, sustainable success for Alaska's education system.

I thank you for your time and consideration, my concern lies with all peoples involved. We must protect everyone.

Sincerely,
Susan Allmeroth
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Myself