[redacted] Chair and Members of the House Education Committee:

On behalf of the NAACP Tri-State Area Conference, representing Alaska, Washington, and Oregon, and in my capacity as Alaska State Education Chair, I write to express our strong and unequivocal support for House Bill 183.

HB 183 addresses a longstanding inequity in our public education system by ensuring that students enrolled in district-wide early education programs are recognized and fully counted in the state's education funding formula. For too long, young learners in Pre-K programs have been counted as only "half" a student for funding purposes despite the fact that their learning needs are critical, their potential is limitless, and their success lays the foundation for Alaska's future.

Fully funding early education is not just good policy; it is an issue of equity, access, and social justice. Research consistently shows that high-quality early education improves academic outcomes, reduces achievement gaps, and increases long-term success for students, particularly for children from historically underserved communities, including Black, Indigenous, and rural students across Alaska.

However, without full funding, many districts are forced to limit Pre-K opportunities or turn families away altogether. This disproportionately harms children who would benefit most from strong early learning experiences widening opportunity gaps before children even enter kindergarten.

HB 183 is a powerful step toward correcting this injustice. By treating Pre-K students as **full students** in the funding formula, Alaska will:

- Expand access to early education across diverse communities;
- Strengthen school readiness for all students;
- Create a stronger, more equitable public education system.

As an advocate for educational equity, I urge you to support HB 183 without hesitation. Investing in early education is one of the smartest, most cost-effective investments we can make and it is a moral obligation we owe to Alaska's children.

The NAACP stands ready to work alongside you to advance policies that honor the dignity, potential, and future of every student in our state.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to equity in education.

Sincerely,
Roz'lyn Grady-Wyche
Education Chair, NAACP Tri-State Area Conference
Alaska State Education Chair