



ALASKA STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 52

May 15, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Dear Representative Hall,

House Bill 193, as written, will strengthen Alaska's workforce, support working families, and provide long term economic stability for our state. As the Executive Director for the Alaska State Employees Association – the largest bargaining unit in the state with over 8,000 dedicated public employees – I urge passage of this bill.

Alaska's unemployment insurance system has fallen far behind the increased cost of living in our state. It's left too many Alaskans vulnerable during periods of job loss or family transitions for far too long. HB 193 is a long overdue step to modernize the system and align it with the current reality facing workers today.

HB 193 establishes a paid parental leave program, updates the maximum weekly unemployment benefits for workers and their dependents, aligns future benefits with inflation, increases funding for the State Training and Employment Program (STEP), and implements a 20% unemployment insurance tax cut for employers.

These reforms reflect a balanced and responsible approach that acknowledges the realities faced by workers, families, and employers alike. Together, they give working families added time and security to care for newborn children, address inflation and rising costs, grow our workforce during a critical time, all while reducing costs for employers and keeping Alaska's business environment competitive.

Additionally, paid parental leave not only benefits families, but leads to healthier child development, greater workplace retention, and stronger economic participation. Modernizing our unemployment insurance system and investing in workforce development ensures Alaska can meet the needs of today's labor market and attract the talent needed for tomorrow.

As public servants and union members, we see firsthand how economic insecurity affects morale, productivity, and long-term stability. HB 193 is more than policy - it's a commitment to the dignity of work, the value of families, and the belief that Alaskans should not have to choose between caring for a newborn or paying the bills after a layoff.

Sincerely,

Heidi Drygas
Executive Director
ASEA/AFSCME Local 52