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*An Affiliate of TESOL and NABE*

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Dear Alaska State Senators,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 130 on behalf of the Alaska Association for Bilingual Education Alaska Native Language and Culture Retention Special Interest Group. The Alaska Native Language and Culture Retention Special Interest Group (ANLCR SIG) is comprised of a cross section of volunteer Native language educators, advocates, and activists working to protect, promote, and revitalize Native languages. As the only statewide Native language advocacy body, the ANLCR SIG carries out this work through conferencing and workshops, networking best practices, and advocating for institutional and governmental support for Native language revitalization initiatives. As a volunteer body our resources and ability to be effective are strained, however, which is why in 2010 the ANLCR SIG sought the creation of a statewide Alaska Native Languages Commission through Alaska Federation of Natives Resolution 10-34. It is for this reason that the ANLCR SIG enthusiastically supports SB 130.

SB 130 will help provide the political advocacy, human and financial resources Alaska Native language advocates, activists, and educators need to craft policies and projects that will contribute to the protection, promotion, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. Such support is urgently needed at a time when all 19 indigenous languages still spoken in Alaska are endangered or critically endangered. The passing in 2008 of Marie Smith Jones, the last fluent speaker of Eyak, underscores the vulnerability of Alaska Native languages and the urgency with which we must undertake this vital work.

Native languages and the rich cultures they make possible constitute an invaluable contribution to the diversity and richness of our State, and are together an essential component of Alaska's identity. Indeed, there is nothing more Alaskan than Alaska Native languages, and future generations of Alaskans deserve the opportunity to experience and speak them.

Sincerely,

Timothy Aqukkasuk Argetsinger  
Chair, AK Native Language and Culture Retention SIG