



9109 MENDENHALL MALL ROAD SUITE 9-301 JUNEAU, AK 99801-7136

February, 15 2025

Chair and Members

Alaska State Legislature
Senate Labor & Commerce Committee / Senate Finance Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

RE: Letter of Support — SB 217 (Workforce Training / STEP Funding Stability)

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

On behalf of Xtreme Habitats Institute (XHI), a Juneau-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit research organization, I write to express our strong support for SB 217. XHI's mission is to reduce the cost and complexity of construction in extreme and remote environments by advancing practical building innovation—particularly in 3D concrete printing (3DCP), cold-climate materials, and resilient construction methods.

A key constraint on Alaska's ability to adopt advanced construction methods is not technology—it is workforce capacity: trained operators, craft workers, inspectors, and field supervisors who can safely and consistently deploy new tools, materials, and processes at scale. XHI has been actively engaged in workforce development and has trained workers in conjunction with OPCMIA Local 528, helping to build hands-on competency aligned with real-world jobsite requirements and union-quality standards.

SB 217 supports the outcome Alaska needs: stable, predictable investment in workforce training. As introduced, the bill is designed to strengthen and stabilize funding for the State Training and Employment Program (STEP) so Alaska can maintain a reliable training pipeline—even as unemployment insurance (UI) contribution levels fluctuate with economic cycles. That stability matters because construction and infrastructure employers need workforce programs they can plan around, not programs that expand and contract unpredictably year to year.

From XHI's perspective, SB 217 will help Alaska:

- Scale job-ready training for the construction workforce, including hands-on training for emerging construction methods and equipment.
- Strengthen partnerships among employers, labor, training providers, and communities—especially in rural and disaster-affected areas where Alaska's housing and infrastructure needs are most acute.
- Build durable local capability so Alaskans can deliver projects with fewer delays, lower risk, and better long-term outcomes.



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- Support resilience and housing outcomes by enabling a workforce prepared to build higher-performing structures—faster—where logistics and weather make traditional methods costly and slow.

XHI respectfully urges the Legislature to advance SB 217 and to continue prioritizing workforce strategies that keep Alaskans working while improving the quality, safety, and resilience of the built environment. We appreciate the Legislature's attention to practical measures that strengthen Alaska's workforce and position the state for long-term success.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me directly if we can provide additional information on our training experience with OPCMIA Local 528, or how workforce development connects to resilient housing and infrastructure outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'D. Keith Comstock'.

D. Keith Comstock

Executive Director

Xtreme Habitats Institute

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