



## **Representative Jennifer Johnston Sponsor Statement**

### **House Bill 197 “An Act Relating to Community Seed Libraries”**

House Bill 197 expands the duties of the Commissioner of Natural Resources to administer and promote the creation of community seed libraries. Community seed libraries could be a place where Alaskans can exchange or share regionally-adapted seeds harvested from a plant grown in this state as an alternative to genetically modified, commercial seeds.

By reducing cumbersome labeling and testing regulations for small batches of noncommercial seeds, Alaskans will be able to increase biodiversity and plant resilience in their home and community gardens. HB 197 encourages the Department of Natural Resources to create a website that shows best practices of seed sharing as it is regulated by state and federal law. Additionally, this website would include a registration form which would allow the department to track and publicly promote library locations statewide.

Food security is a major challenge facing Alaskans. Currently, residents spend \$1.9 billion each year buying food produced outside of the state. Community seed libraries encourage self-sufficiency, and help preserve agricultural knowledge. Seed sharing contributes significant value to the health of communities. Each library is a resource for the community as a whole, and an opportunity to connect people with their food systems.

Minnesota, Nebraska, Illinois, and California have all passed legislation establishing seed libraries. Since introduction, these programs have grown with popularity. Nebraska has successfully used seed libraries to help meet the needs of low-income families and give them the tools to create home gardens and expand whole-food nutrition awareness.

Now that I’ve planted the seed, please join me in supporting HB 197.