



To: Members of the House Finance Committee
From: Joelle Hall, President of the Alaska AFL-CIO
Date: April 22, 2021
Subject: House Bill 151

CORRECTED

The Alaska AFL-CIO supports HB 151 on the following grounds:

A comprehensive and just UI system: The Alaska AFL-CIO views the Unemployment Benefit system as a critical partnership between workers and the state and believes that a functioning UI system should replace wages in close approximation to the wages needed to survive in Alaska. Alaska has the lowest wage replacement rates for unemployment in the country.

Respect for working families: We support the extension of the provisions outlined in HB151. We know that working families are still hurting. The extension of these benefits will provide targeted relief to unemployed Alaskans with dependents who are struggling to return to the workforce. This [report](#) from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics highlights the challenges facing women, particularly those with dependents, when returning to work:

- Women have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 recession, losing employment at higher rates than men.
- Women are less likely to have jobs that allow them to telecommute.
- Women are picking up a bigger share of child care and remote learning obligations.
- In December of 2020, women account for 100% of jobs lost nationwide.

Support for our state's economic recovery: This bill will extend the child benefit until September, which will give unemployed parents crucial time. Alaska's families continue to need additional support as we turn the corner on this pandemic. Schools are not open full time yet across Alaska. As of today's date, we are unsure about the capacity of childcare, camps and facilities that normally step in to assist working parents. By extending this benefit until September, we give our rapidly re-opening economy a fighting chance to bounce back over the summer.

At this time, some child care facilities in Anchorage are offering limited hours and have long waitlists as Alaskans try to return to work. The Anchorage School District has reduced hours and is not fully back to in-person learning.

Until childcare centers and schools are fully open for students, working families will be hard-pressed to find childcare and return to work. This reality is not the worker's fault. The extension of benefits to those without access to childcare and the additional benefit for dependent children is exactly the targeted relief working families need to bridge the gap until our state is open and our economy rebounds.



We have learned a lot during this pandemic, but one clear message is that daycare and schools are essential tools for working parents, and without them, the whole economy suffers.

Leverage federal funding: Our UI system is a partnership, and we feel it is incumbent on our state partners to do everything in their power to leverage federal funding. UI is designed to keep our system solvent and healthy in unforeseen circumstances like a global pandemic and economic downturn. Those that pay into the system over their working years deserve to get their fair share of this relief at their time of need. We should use federal funding to complement our system and get targeted relief to the working families who need it most, all while bringing dollars into our state at a critical time.

We need to raise our weekly benefit: Prior to the pandemic Alaska was 50th in wage replacement. We are still 50th. We encourage the Legislature to retain some or all of the increased benefits when the pandemic is over. Alaska is a high cost of living environment and our UI amount should be more in line with expenses working people experience. The workers and the economy overall benefit from a higher weekly benefit.

Using a minimum wage (\$10.34/hr) Alaskan worker as an example, they would earn approximately:

- **\$5211.36 per quarter** if they worked full-time
 - 100% of wages
- After September 6th, 2021, an eligible/unemployed full-time, minimum wage employee would receive \$202/week in UI benefits, or **\$5187.00/quarter**.
 - 50% wage replacement
- Factoring in the additional \$300 federal benefit through September 6th, that equates to **\$4,737.60 per quarter**.
 - 90.9% wage replacement

Lawmakers will no doubt have opinions as to the amount that represents making sure people do not starve and the amount that represents a disincentive. But it should be clear that 50% of wage replacement is completely insufficient and needs to be changed.

A higher benefit this summer will allow working families to meet the needs of their children while we work to get schools and day care systems running at full capacity. Expecting working parents to find work while this essential service is still largely off line is unrealistic.

From: Ann Rappoport <a [REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 10:46 AM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. James Kaufman
Subject: Please support HB151 to extend expanded unemployment insurance!

Dear House Finance Committee and my Representative Kaufman -

I am writing to urge your support of HB 151 which would extend expanded unemployment insurance for thousands of Alaskan's who continue to be negatively affected by the global pandemic and its secondary impacts. This modest (\$51/week) expansion is targeted and temporary. It will only provide assistance for the next year for eligible applicants who are caretakers for children or people living with disabilities. This bill will extend the assistance provided last year to these vulnerable Alaskans and their families by HB 308, a reasonable response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, HB 308 is no longer being implemented.

While our economic situation is improving in Alaska with some increases in employment and our steady vaccination rate, this process is slow and will continue over the coming year. Research economists say it could still take several years for our economic recovery to be complete; and we need to encourage ALL Alaskans to get vaccinated, but all this takes time. Moreover, Alaska currently has the lowest wage replacement rate in the nation. HB 151 is not a government assistance program: it is an insurance program that both employees and employers pay into so help is there when they need it, similar to health or auto insurance. With the Department of Labor's enforcement of work search requirements earlier this month, you do not need to worry about applicants for this program sitting around (and I doubt many Alaskans would anyway). This bill requires applicants to actively look for work in order to receive benefits.

I look forward to hearing of your strong support for HB 151, a sensible, needed step in bringing Alaskans back to work and allowing our communities and economy to thrive again!

Sincerely,

Ann Rappoport
[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99516

From: Lili Misel [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 11:02 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Please support HB 151

Greetings House Finance Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 151 to extend expanded unemployment insurance.

Alaska still has business owners and workers who are struggling from the pandemic and by extending this program, it will aid those who are struggling. I believe that the ability to leverage the \$2.5M in federal dollars provided by the Biden American Rescue Plan Act will help in getting benefits to those unemployed Alaskans who need help and the increase in weekly per-dependent benefit will help those families who are even more impacted.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the citizens of Alaska. Please support HB 151.

Lili Misel
Fairbanks

From: Michelle Sparck <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 11:12 AM
To: House Finance; Rep. Ivy Spohnholz
Subject: Support for HB 151 - Unemployment Insurance Bill

Importance: High

Dear House Finance Committee Members:

I won't be able to call in for today's hearing, so I am writing you today in favor of HB 151, temporary expanding unemployment insurance benefits for Alaskans with dependents.

My sisters and I own and operate ArXotica (pronounced Arc-Zotica, it's an amalgam of Arctic and Exotic.) We are a small bath and beauty business with an incredible array of skincare products featuring ingredients we wild harvest out in the Bethel area. We enjoy #MadeinAlaska and #Made/ProducedbyAmericanIndians trademark status through the American Indian Foods program under the Intertribal Agriculture Council of the US Department of Agriculture. We may not qualify for the #AlaskaGrown label due to the nature of wild harvesting, but we are members of the Alaska Farm Bureau.

Like many small businesses, we have been hit hard by the pandemic, in terms of our inability to participate in popular pop-up markets around Alaska in the last year. We have; however, done well online in that our tundra botanical extracts have added value to hand sanitizer options in the marketplace. We fared better than most, but in our working lives, there have come times where we were laid off, or between jobs, and unemployment insurance, whether utilized or not, is a safety net too valuable to quantify, or deny for others.

We realize our state's economy has also been rocked, and its ability to collect revenue hampered too. It's not very diverse, and with a small population economy without the aid of outside tourist dollars, the thought of increasing UI would be alarming to fiscal-minded citizens and leaders.

That is not the case here, we, along with 49 other States, have seen a necessary and life-saving relief bills passed by Congress to address such issues head on. With HB 151, we feel many components are for the good of our hard hit citizenry. Waiving the waiting week period, targeting families that need it, with a modest increase of \$51 a week in benefits per child would be incredible lifelines.

We have seen the benefits of responsive federal and states legislation that have minimized the pain of job loss, efforts to restore safe and healthy work environments, and underemployment opportunities already, and this bill should also mitigate the damage of these times. There is a light at the end of this tunnel, people want to go back to work, we want to get back to productive and fulfilling lives in the workplace, and in the homes and backyards of our friends and loved ones and celebratory public spaces. HB 151 is good for our economic recovery, good for society, and good for local businesses.

Quyana, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle (Macuar) Sparck

[REDACTED]
Bethel, AK 99559

From: Greg & Susie Zimmerman [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 11:57 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 151

Please add count us among the group in support of HB 151 leveraging federal dollars to extend and expand unemployment benefits, a good and necessary piece of legislation in these troubled times.

Thank you,
Greg and Susie Zimmerman
Fairbanks, AK

From: Scott Bergmann
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 12:09 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: Public Testimony for HB 151

Here is public testimony that was submitted to us on HB151:

April 23, 2021

"Hello.

I am the owner of Bright Beginnings Early Learning Centers in Anchorage and Eagle River. We are licensed to care for 455 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years.

I am concerned about the effects that extended unemployment benefits and stimulus checks are having on our ability to hire staff. I am grateful for the extra benefits when it was necessary for our staff to receive them because we were not able to employ them during 2020. That was a very difficult year for all of us.

Enrollment in our childcare centers is starting to increase, and it is necessary for us to hire additional staff members to care for these children. The extended benefits have made hiring very difficult, and our company is not able to enroll new children because of staffing shortages. It has been necessary for us to discontinue care for some of our families because there simply are not enough staff members to care for them. This was truly a heartbreaking decision for us to make and put our parents in a very difficult position.

For our childcare centers to provide care for the parents that are returning to work, it is vital that we have qualified applicants to hire.

Please consider targeting funds for the genuinely needy, while encouraging people capable of working to seek employment. This will help each sector of our economy recover.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter."

Susan DeLoach

Scott Bergmann
Legislative Aide
Representative Sara Rasmussen
House District 22
(907) 465-3892

From: Charlie & Jamie Rodriguez <cjrodriguez@ak.net>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 12:33 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Adam Wool; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Sara Rasmussen; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Bart LeBon; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. DeLena Johnson
Subject: Testimony in support of HB151: Extending Expanded Unemployment Insurance Benefits
Attachments: HB151 FIN Email Testimony, 4.26.21 J. Rodriguez.pdf

To: House Finance Committee, Co-Chairs Foster and Merrick, Vice Chair Ortiz, and Members Wool, Edgmon, Josephson, Rasmussen, Thompson, LeBon, Carpenter, and Johnson

Re: Testimony in support of HB151: Extending Expanded Unemployment Insurance Benefits

My name is Jamie Rodriguez and I'm writing from Anchorage in support of HB151.

HB 151 is a well-thought-out pragmatic bill that provides continuity for Alaskans hit hard, some catastrophically, by the COVID-19 emergency. The passage of this bill will support unemployed families and economic recovery across Alaska and will ultimately pay for itself. By extending unemployment benefits now, this investment qualifies for reimbursement by the Federal Government. In short, HB151 is a win-win situation for Alaska.

Passing HB151 and reinstating the provisions previously passed by the legislature provides consistency for the Department of Labor and will, in turn, ensure that eligible Alaskans receive unemployment benefits needed as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This will not only assist Alaskan families as our economy recovers, but it will also have a huge ripple effect in communities across the state.

The passage of HB151, as written, will kick in a reimbursement provision of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, passed by the US Congress, in which the federal government will reimburse states for 100% of Unemployment Insurance benefits. These simple steps are equal to roughly an additional \$2.4 million in benefits at no cost to our state. It would be short-sighted to oppose this bill.

Extending unemployment is not a handout and will certainly not cause people to not want to go back to work. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on everyone. People want to go back to work. The vast majority just want to do so safely when they can find safe dependable child care and when we're on solid enough ground to do it without the worry that doing so, too soon, will cause new surges. We've certainly seen that happen over the course of the past year. A reminder that the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic lasted two years. It occurred in three separate waves around the globe. It was devastating. With today's vaccines and a little more patience we can get through this. If we do it right, we won't have to keep reliving it. Until then, HB151 is a good fix.

Thank you to the House Labor and Commerce Committee for putting forth this bill. And thank you to the House Finance Committee for the opportunity to weigh in today and for seriously considering the passage of HB151.

To: House Finance Committee, Co-Chairs Foster and Merrick, Vice Chair Ortiz, and Members Wool, Edgmon, Josephson, Rasmussen, Thompson, LeBon, Carpenter, and Johnson

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407 DENALI STREET, SUITE 102 | ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501
(907) 274-2722 | f (907) 274-2727 | nwCarpenters.org

UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA

April 24, 2021

The Honorable Kelly Merrick
Alaska State House
State Capital Room 511
Juneau, Alaska 99801

The Honorable Neal Foster
Alaska State House
State Capital Room 505
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for HB 151- UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR COVID-19

Co-Chairs Merrick and Foster, and members of the committee:

The Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters represents more than 1500 carpenters, piledrivers, divers, drywallers, scaffold erectors and millwrights across Alaska. We strongly support HB 151, a measure that provides Alaskans additional financial protection while we continue to weather the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unemployment insurance is just that—an insurance program. It is not a government assistance program or handout. UI benefits are intended to provide Alaskans with *temporary* assistance when they are out of work through no fault of their own. Both Alaskan employees and employers pay into our UI trust fund. In fact, Alaska is one of only three states in the country where employees contribute to the UI fund. In the construction industry, our members must often rely on UI benefits between projects or when work is scarce in the winter.

As a single father of two young girls, I often relied on unemployment insurance to support my family between seasonal construction work. At that time, I paid \$1600/month in rent, \$150/month in electricity, \$100/month in auto insurance, \$350/month for my car payment, \$120/month for phone/internet, and \$100/month for gas. All told, my basic expenses totaled \$2420/month, and this did not include money required for food, emergencies, or daycare costs (to ensure that I did not lose my kids' place at their care provider.) Even when you include the supplemental federal UI assistance of \$300/week for a total of \$1200 more per month (which ends in September 2021) I would have only had \$460 a month to cover all other expenses. I would have lost my children's place at daycare (which would have impacted my ability to return to work once construction started again). For those that think workers unnecessarily utilize UI and choose to stay out of the workforce, this is simply not the case for the vast majority of workers. Rather, UI benefits provide

a necessary safety net for these workers and their families between jobs and ensure they can continue to contribute to Alaska's economy.

HB 151 waives the one-week waiting period for UI eligibility, and the American Rescue Plan will 100% reimburse states for UI benefits for the first week to the tune of \$2.4 million. This provision seems like a no-brainer, as it won't cost the state one penny. The bill also increases the weekly per-dependent benefit from \$24 to \$75 and removes the cap of three dependents for one year. Frankly, the current dependent benefit of \$24 is woefully inadequate for today's families, and has not been increased since the 1980s. That aside, increasing the per-dependent benefit will be a lifesaver for struggling families, and will not impact the health of the UI trust fund.

While our economy is slowly recovering, the fact is that thousands of Alaskans are still out of work due to pandemic closures. And even if a job is available, working parents like me are still burdened with the issue of periodic child care closures and school closures. Many immunocompromised workers are left with the difficult and dangerous choice of going to work at the risk of their life and health.

Alaskans are hurting, and it will take time to fully recover from this pandemic. HB 151 provides temporary and necessary assistance to Alaskan families. We urge your support for this measure and ask that you move it out of committee as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CD' or similar initials, followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Chris Dimond, Alaska Regional Manager
Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters

Cc: Representative Ivy Spohnholz

From: Gary Miller <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2021 8:54 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Bart LeBon; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Sara Rasmussen; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Adam Wool
Subject: HB 151 "Unemployment Benefits for Covid-19"

My wife and I are very lucky because we are retired, our home is paid for and we can afford to pay for the food, clothes, and utilities that we need to live.

Unfortunately for thousands of Alaskan, they are not so lucky. They have house payments, kids to raise, utilities to pay for etc. Alaskans have always cared for one another and helped each other in times of disasters. Covid-19 is one of the worst disasters to hit Alaskans. The unemployed need all the help that you can give them. Please support HB 151 and vote for it.

Thank you.

Gary Miller
20135 Cohen Dr
Juneau, AK 99801-8211
(907) 789-3757

From: Lin Davis <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 8:40 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Support HB 151 today

Dear House Finance Committee Representatives:

I retired from DOLWD after 15 years of working with unemployed Alaskans at the Juneau Job Center. I totally support the temporary UIB enhancements in HB 151. They make sense.

Our workers struggle still, often their voices and the details of their lives are not much heard. Let's also support our local business owners and Alaskan economic recovery by providing these expansions which give families more funds to buy food and household goods.

Sadly Alaska has the lowest UIB wage replacement rate in the country and our cost of living is one of the highest.

No reason not to pass HB 151, and thank you!

Lin Davis
[REDACTED]
Juneau 99801

From: Maureen Longworth <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 8:35 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 151

Please say YES to HB 151 to help us restore our economy. It would be foolish to do otherwise and abandon our economic recovery.

Thank you,
Maureen Longworth, MD
[REDACTED]
Juneau, AK 99802
[REDACTED]

Maureen Longworth
Sent from my iPhone

From: maryclaire bernstein <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 6:26 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB151

I am in support of HB 151 and encourage you to pass it as soon as possible. This increase is not only essential to vulnerable Alaskan children and families, it also puts more dollars into our local economies, supporting economic recovery in our communities. Be humane. Be efficient. Get this money into the hands of Alaskans.

Mary-Claire Bernstein
Tenakee Springs, Alaska

From: C & J Rodriguez [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2021 4:13 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: Testimony in support of HB151: Extending Expanded Unemployment Insurance Benefits
Attachments: HB151 FIN Email Testimony, 4.26.21 J. Rodriguez.pdf

To: House Finance Committee, Co-Chairs Foster and Merrick, Vice Chair Ortiz, and Members Wool, Edgmon, Josephson, Rasmussen, Thompson, LeBon, Carpenter, and Johnson

Re: Testimony in support of HB151: Extending Expanded Unemployment Insurance Benefits

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HB 151 is a well-thought-out pragmatic bill that provides continuity for Alaskans hit hard, some catastrophically, by the COVID-19 emergency. The passage of this bill will support unemployed families and economic recovery across Alaska and will ultimately pay for itself. By extending unemployment benefits now, this investment qualifies for reimbursement by the Federal Government. In short, HB151 is a win-win situation for Alaska.

Passing HB151 and reinstating the provisions previously passed by the legislature provides consistency for the Department of Labor and will, in turn, ensure that eligible Alaskans receive unemployment benefits needed as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This will not only assist Alaskan families as our economy recovers, but it will also have a huge ripple effect in communities across the state.

The passage of HB151, as written, will kick in a reimbursement provision of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, passed by the US Congress, in which the federal government will reimburse states for 100% of Unemployment Insurance benefits. These simple steps are equal to roughly an additional \$2.4 million in benefits at no cost to our state. It would be short-sighted to oppose this bill.

Extending unemployment is not a handout and will certainly not cause people to not want to go back to work. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on everyone. People want to go back to work. The vast majority just want to do so safely when they can find safe dependable child care and when we're on solid enough ground to do it without the worry that doing so, too soon, will cause new surges. We've certainly seen that happen over the course of the past year. A reminder that the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic lasted two years. It occurred in three separate waves around the globe. It was devastating. With today's vaccines and a little more patience we can get through this. If we do it right, we won't have to keep reliving it. Until then, HB151 is a good fix.

Thank you to the House Labor and Commerce Committee for putting forth this bill. And thank you to the House Finance Committee for the opportunity to weigh in today and for seriously considering the passage of HB151.

From: Gary Miller <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2021 8:54 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. DeLena Johnson; Rep. Andy Josephson; Rep. Bart LeBon; Rep. Daniel Ortiz; Rep. Sara Rasmussen; Rep. Steve Thompson; Rep. Adam Wool
Subject: HB 151 "Unemployment Benefits for Covid-19"

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Thank you.

Gary Miller
[REDACTED]

From: Megan Holland
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2021 7:22 PM
To: Sorch Hazelton; House Finance
Subject: HB 151 Invited Testifier, 4/26

Sorch,

I kept forgetting to send you this, here is the name/affiliation for our invited testifier Monday:

Dan Robinson, Chief of the Research and Analysis Section, DOLWD.

Thanks!

Meg

Megan R. Holland
Office of Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Alaska State Capitol, Ste. 406
Juneau, AK 99801
Office: 465-2696



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From: Megan Holland
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2021 10:55 AM
To: Sorch Hazelton; House Finance
Subject: FW: Letter in support of HB 151
Attachments: HB 151 ltr of support-NW Carpenters.pdf

ICYMI. Gracias.

From: Heidi Drygas <heidi@drygasgroup.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2021 1:31 PM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick <Rep.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov>; Rep. Neal Foster <Rep.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Ivy Spohnholz <Rep.Ivy.Spohnholz@akleg.gov>; Chris Dimond <cdimond@nwcarpenters.org>
Subject: Letter in support of HB 151

Co-Chairs Merrick and Foster:

Attached please find a letter in support of HB 151- Unemployment Benefits for COVID-19 from Chris Dimond, Alaska Regional Manager for the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters. Thank you in advance for providing it to committee members.

Don't hesitate to reach out with questions.

Best,
Heidi

Heidi Drygas, Esq.
DRYGAS GROUP LLC
211 4th Street, Suite 108
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 350-7982

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From: Jan Carolyn Hardy [REDACTED]@com>
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021 11:22 AM
To: House Finance
Cc: Rep. Sara Rasmussen; Rep. Ivy Spohnholz; Kim Hays; Joelle Hall; Alex Jorgensen; Alex Baker; akharleyco@aol.com; Jake Metcalfe; Megan Holland; Jan Carolyn Hardy
Subject: Fw: Testimony in support of HB 151

Dear All,

Apparently this email did not arrive as it should. I am re-sending.

Thank you for your patience.

Tikkun Olam,

Jan Carolyn Hardy

Older Persons Action Group Executive Board Vice President
AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52 Executive Board Vice President
ASEA/AFSCME PAC Director
Central Labor Council Member

Residential and Commercial Sales
GTK Real Estate
(907) 301-4685 Cell
[REDACTED]

Anchorage, Alaska 99503
<http://www.AlaskaCommercialLeasing.com>

Silence is complicity. Joseph R. Biden

*Everyone does better when **everyone** does better. Eleanor Roosevelt*

Please spay or neuter your pets!

If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. Shirley Chisholm

== Please remember that if this email was sent to multiple recipients to use the "Reply to All" button so everyone sees the reply ==

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----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Jan Carolyn Hardy [REDACTED]

To: house.finance@akleg.gov <house.finance@akleg.gov>

Cc: Rep. Sara Rasmussen <rep.sara.rasmussen@akleg.gov>; Rep. Ivy Spohnholz <rep.ivy.spohnholz@akleg.gov>; Kim Hays <kim@akaficio.org>; Joelle Hall <joelle@akaficio.org>; Alex Baker <baker@akaficio.org>; Alex Jorgensen <alexj@akaficio.org>; akharleyco@aol.com <akharleyco@aol.com>; Jake Metcalfe <jakem@afscmelocal52.org>; Megan Holland <megan.holland@akleg.gov>; Jan Carolyn Hardy <jancarolynhardy@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, April 23, 2021, 10:52:12 AM AKDT

Subject: Testimony in support of HB 151

Dear Committee Members,

I am a Retired State of Alaska employee and a former Unemployment Insurance (UI) Adjudicator. During my training I was taught that for every dollar of UI infused into the community an additional quarter is generated. That money is spent here in Alaska and circulates in the community thereby providing more jobs for more people.

People want to work. No one likes to be without a job: a job helps to define who we are and to give our lives meaning. Work is a matter of pride. Moreover, when we work we can save some of our earnings, get the benefit of retirement, qualify for health insurance, and even a 401K. That is not possible when drawing UI. Yes, we pay taxes on earned income but we also pay taxes on UI. Same for Social Security and any other benefit earned from a lifetime of work.

UI claims in February were 208% greater than last year. While things are improving we have a long way to go in our recovery. On the bright side, augmented UI benefits during the pandemic have increased consumer spending, smoothed consumption, stabilized aggregate demand, and benefited local business owners. The proposed increase in benefits under HB151 is targeted, temporary, and goes to families who need it. The idea that increased flexibility and benefits are no longer necessary or are bad for business is short sighted and illogical.

Passing HB 151 will result in leveraging \$2.4 million in UI benefits paid for by the federal government, providing the Department Labor and Workforce Development which oversees UI with additional flexibility and temporarily increasing a per dependent benefit of \$51 per week for unemployed families with children or who are caring for individuals with disabilities. Since the State of Alaska has the lowest wage replacement rates in the nation and is still down 20,000 jobs from pre-pandemic employment, we need this bill to sustain our economy and to keep Alaskans from moving to States where they perceive greater opportunity.

I know our legislators are aware that Alaskans are not yet out of the pandemic woods. We are making great strides to recovery but we cannot let our guard down. HB 151 provides for the temporary assistance we need now. I urge you to shepherd this through the committee process, vote in favor, and send HB 151 on to the Senate floor for approval.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

In Solidarity.

Tikkun Olam,

Jan Carolyn Hardy

Older Persons Action Group Executive Board Vice President
AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52 Executive Board Vice President