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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 11:27 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** HB 151

Dear House Finance Committee,

House Bill 151 will extend expanded unemployment benefits for Alaska working families. Last year, expanded unemployment benefits were granted under HB 308, due to hardship associated with the COVID pandemic. Those expanded benefits were repealed on April 1 of this year, leaving Alaska families in economic hardship again, because the job losses from the pandemic still exist, and the paychecks Alaskans depend upon are still scarce.

HB 151 will provide immediate assistance for workers have just lost their jobs, and will leverage \$2.4 million in Federal funding at no cost to the state. Further, this funding will help to stimulate Alaska's economy, helping Alaskans return to productive employment sooner.

The expanded funding will raise the unemployment benefit from about 50% of lost wages to about 90% of lost wages – a critical difference for those living on low income. The expanded benefit will continue only until September 1st, when the economy should be in better shape than it is today. HB 151 is supported by the Alaska Food Bank and Alaska Children's Trust, which would otherwise find their resources stretched to provide support to families who have lost their means of support due to unemployment.

Please support HB 151, for the good of Alaskan families.

Regards,  
Doug Robbins

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**From:** Larri Spengler [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 9:10 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** support HB 151

Greetings:

I strongly urge you to support HB 151, which will temporarily extend expanded unemployment benefits for Alaskan families, leverage federal dollars, and support our economic recovery.

This measure will help those struggling in the dire economic environment in which Alaskans find ourselves, which should be a very high priority!

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Larri Spengler

Larri Irene Spengler  
[REDACTED]  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** Mary Corcoran [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 1:24 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** House Labor and Commerce  
**Subject:** PUBLIC TESTIMONY HB151

To House Finance Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB151B.

It's well known that Covid has impacted lives of Alaskans drastically for over a year. It is not going away soon for several reasons.

Pieces of this legislation will have a direct, positive effect on our most vulnerable workers and their families.

Children and the disabled will be have enough food and care to decrease the stress the situation presents them. Their caregivers will be able to be help those in need without having to balance as many things in work, schooling and mental health.

When families do better so does our economy. This bill creates a trickle up situation that will position thousands of Alaskans to improve life for all of us.

Sincerely,  
Mary Corcoran  
Delta Junction, AK

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**From:** Doug Woodby [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 1:16 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Support for HB151

Dear Members of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to support HB151.

The impacts of the pandemic are far from over and Alaskan families are still hurting.

I support HB151 because

1. it will temporarily extend the expanded unemployment benefits for Alaskan families,
2. it leverages federal dollars, and
3. it supports our economic recovery.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Respectfully,

Doug Woodby

[REDACTED]  
Juneau, AK 99801

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**From:** Susan DeLoach [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 12:52 PM  
**To:** Rep. Kelly Merrick  
**Subject:** Unemployment Benefits are Paralyzing Alaska's Workforce

April 26, 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. The passing of HB151 would magnify this problem. I was grateful for the extra benefits when it was necessary for our staff to receive them in 2020 due to lack of work. That was a very difficult year for all of us.

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. Even though our business offers competitive wages, health insurance, 401K, paid vacations, and other benefits, we have very few applicants. Many times, applicants don't show up for their scheduled interview. It seems that they are looking to fulfill the requirements for maintaining their unemployment benefits, and not actually wanting to work. It has been suggested that we contact the unemployment officials when someone does not show up for an interview or declines a job offer. We cannot be put in the position of policing unemployment fraud. This would be time-consuming and create animosity towards our business.

Now it is time to encourage people to go back to work. 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.

Last week it was necessary for us to discontinue care for some of our families because there simply are not enough staff members to care for the children. The parents of ten children from our Eagle River center were informed that we could no longer care for their children. This is devastating for all of us. These are children that we have a relationship with and care very much about. The financial loss to our center is \$8000/month.

This week we are having an emergency meeting to determine how many children we can care for at our other three sites with the staff that we have. Sadly, it is necessary to discontinue care for more of our children. This was truly a heartbreaking decision for us to make and puts our parents in a very difficult position.

Our current staff members are not getting proper rest. They are often working 10 hours a day with no lunch breaks so that we can meet the proper child to adult ratios. This has been going on for the past six weeks, and we must take steps to protect our staff from exhaustion. If workers were incentivized to return to work rather than to stay home, we would not be in this difficult position.

My colleagues in the childcare industry and I are struggling financially. Our business is operating at a \$100,000 loss each month. We are relying on our Payroll Protection Loan and a grant from the MOA to keep our doors open. Without increased enrollment, we will be forced to close when these funds run out.

I understand that the intent of HB151 is to provide assistance to unemployed people with families. The unintended result will be that families choose to stay home with their children instead of returning to the workforce. The reality is that this will result in childcare centers permanently closing. Then, when people are ready to return to work, they will not have access to childcare. This will cripple the economy.

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

Bright Beginnings

1000 Sundown Court

Anchorage, AK 99515

907-715-0091

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**From:** Heather DeLoach [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 26, 2021 12:50 PM  
**To:** Rep. Kelly Merrick  
**Subject:** HB151: Get Alaskans Back To Work, Not More Unemployment

Representative Merrick,

My name is Heather DeLoach. I am the Corporate Finance & IT Manager for Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center in Anchorage and Eagle River. As a lifelong Alaskan, graduate of UAA's School of Business, and mother of two children, I would ask the members of our House of Representatives to vote against the provisions in HB151 that will allow an indiscriminate increase of unemployment benefits until March 2022. The original intent of increased unemployment benefits was to support Alaskans as their places of work were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, businesses are reopening and are in desperate need of a workforce to support a recovering economy. Increasing unemployment benefits at this time does not support this effort. Our leadership team has diligently fought to retain and hire teachers to meet the need for childcare in our community. However, the workforce is greatly diminished. As a result, our dedicated teaching staff is becoming overworked as they selflessly tend to the children entrusted to our care. We need more teachers, but the applicants are minimal and far too many will schedule an interview, only to not show up. Hiring has always had its challenges for our industry, but the difficulty in hiring over the last several months is unprecedented. As we are unable to fill vacant positions, we are at a point of needing to turn away families seeking childcare and have even been forced to disenroll current families so we can maintain safe ratios. This is costing us thousands and will soon cost us 10's of thousands of dollars each month in lost income and increased expenses.

If the goal of our state's leaders is economic recovery, I would urge financial incentives for employers to increase wages and benefits, funding to the Background Check Unit so as to make the hiring process more efficient and reducing the 30-day turnaround on background checks, provide support to the Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance staff to investigate fraudulent unemployment claims, and so on. These actions would help strengthen our economy, instead of removing incentives to work and then increasing employer Unemployment Insurance taxes.

Funding greater unemployment benefits will only increase the number of people using these benefits. When looking at economic incentives, if given the choice to either work or not work while still making the same, if not more, income, the incentive is to NOT work. Where will our economy be when businesses fail due to a lack of workers – there will be few jobs available when the unemployment runs out and we will have prematurely exhausted the funding to sustain it. A lot of the current unemployment funding is provided by federal resources. Let's send the message that Alaskans want to work for a living. I respectfully urge you to lead Alaska's economic recovery by considering the long-term needs of both employees and employers and voting against HB151.

Thanks,



Heather DeLoach  
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