



# Senator Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

Senate District A

## **SB 135**

### **Sponsor Statement**

"An Act establishing September 10 as Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day."

Senate Bill 135 aims to recognize and honor the exemplary work of Community Health Aides by proclaiming September 10 as Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day. This date was chosen to commemorate the first Planning and Advisory Committee meeting for Health Aide Programs in Alaska, which took place on September 10, 1973.

The work of the Community Health Aide is tireless. In the communities they serve, they act as round-the-clock first responders, clinicians, travel coordinators, hospitalists, tribal liaisons, and are often role models within their home regions. Since before statehood, Health Aides have organized and played an integral role in maintaining tribal health and community safety. They are often related to or close to their patients and bring to their positions an abiding respect for traditional knowledge and culture.

Recently, Community Health Aides have been on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 in rural Alaska and have been key to ensuring the success of vaccination efforts in remote communities that lack advanced healthcare services. It is more important than ever that we acknowledge our Community Health Aides for their broad scope of practice and selfless contributions to their communities, regions, and the state. For these reasons, I urge the passage of Senate Bill 135.