

Good afternoon. My name is Karla Head, and I am the Director at Alaska Technical Center in Kotzebue.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about the importance of establishing and expanding apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training opportunities throughout Alaska. In our region alone, the lack of sufficient, available trained, experienced, skilled electricians, mechanics, plumbers, water and sewer experts, and HVAC technicians continues to perpetuate an ever-expanding problem for businesses, schools, homeowners, and communities.

Please indulge me for a moment while I tell you about a situation that the community of Selawik experienced a little over one year ago. Selawik is home to approximately 900 residents who all receive electricity supplied by 3 generators. Around 5 pm on February 14, 2021, with temperatures colder than -35 degrees, the generators stopped working. While this may seem like a minor inconvenience, it quickly became a disaster with consequences that residents endured for almost a year. The power outage lasted for over 18 hours. Unfortunately, many homes in Selawik do not have a secondary heat source. I was the principal at Davis-Ramoth Memorial School last year in Selawik when this happened. Fortunately, our school has a back-up generator so we opened the doors for residents to stay in the gym during the power outage so they could be warm. In my apartment, the temperature dropped to 42 degrees during the power outage, so I had to send my 7-year-old to a teacher's apartment that had heat since it was connected to the school's back-up generator. The aftermath of the power outage is where things became dire. Due to the extended power outage, the village's pumps that provide water to the treatment plant froze and broke. The treatment plant itself froze and was inoperable for a time and, when it was repaired and was back online, the water was not suitable to drink without boiling it for 5 minutes prior to ingesting it. The complex above-ground sewer system froze throughout 2/3 of the village. There were homes that were without running drinking water for several months, but most homes were without without functioning sinks and toilets for up to 9 months after the power outage.

I tell you all of this to emphasize the profound need to develop and maintain pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities in rural communities, to train residents to be able to not only mitigate catastrophes such as the one I shared, but to be able to pre-emptively work to prevent such situations from happening in the first place. In hindsight, had there been trained heavy diesel mechanics within the community that could conduct routine, preventative maintenance on the generators on a consistent basis, would the village have been without power at all? Probably not. If the power did go out, had they had trained professionals readily available to dispatch within the village or even within the region much sooner to address the problem, would the outage cause such long-lasting problems? Again, probably not. Had there been enough trained plumbers, mechanics, and electricians within the village or region that were available to assist immediately, the consequences from the outage would not have stretched out for months and months. Many families had to leave the village

as maintaining a household for an indefinite amount of time without running water and sewer was prohibitive.

Within our region and across Alaska, there are countless people that are ready and willing to be trained. However, for a multitude of valid reasons, these individuals want to live, learn, and train in their home communities, to help elders and families in their villages to have the same quality of life that urban areas experience. These potential trainees want to engage in valuable opportunities through apprenticeships to develop the skills and technical knowledge they need to address the needs of their villages. There are many regional training centers like Alaska Technical Center in Kotzebue that could work and want to work in partnership with other entities, to build successful pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities, but we need your support to fund these potential programs. At Alaska Technical Center, we can offer training that is facilitated in-person, virtually, and via a hybrid model. We welcome the prospect to develop these opportunities, to benefit Alaskans!

In our region and surrounding area, we have a multitude of large infrastructure projects coming up like the

- Noorvik Airport Rehabilitation (DOT)
- Deering Airport Rehabilitation (DOT)
- Selawik 3 Homes Project (NIHA)
- Shungnak Bulk Fuel Upgrade Project (AVEC)
- Selawik Barge Landing / Boardwalk Upgrade (DOT)
- Shishmaref Seawall Project (DOT)
- Kotzebue Cape Blossom Road Project (DOT)

These projects could employ more Alaskans, especially local and regional residents. Not only are these ventures prime opportunities for apprenticeships, but they are also a chance for apprentices to become an integral part of Alaska's workforce. These newly trained individuals would also be a part of the long-term solution towards not having the need to outsource jobs to non-Alaskans. The impact that a fully operational apprenticeship program could have in developing skilled plumbers, electricians, mechanics, water and sewer plant techs, construction workers, and other essential employees is far reaching and long-lasting.

Thank you for listening today as I advocate for expanding pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs across the state in regional training centers. If you have any questions for me, I invite you to ask or to contact me at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

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