

February 7, 2023  
House Education Committee  
Alaska State House of Representatives

Dear Co-Chairs Allard and Ruffridge and respected Committee Members,

I am writing to support HB 31, *An Act relating to the Alaska performance scholarship program*. In light of the rising costs to attend postsecondary education, nationally and in Alaska, and with the growing need to establish a well-trained Alaskan workforce to fuel the state's economy, it is now more crucial than ever that Alaska's students have access to the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) which has made postsecondary education more accessible for Alaska's adults. This scholarship has helped thousands of students afford college and career technical certifications, in many cases helping individuals meet their complete financial needs to achieve career training or college credentials to reach their aspirations.

HB 31 expands student use and provides new career technical education (CTE) pathways to help encourage students to pursue careers desperately needed in the Alaska workforce. By increasing the eligibility window, and award amount proposed in the bill, students will have more time to consider CTE and college opportunities while having greater access to funding sources that are more competitive with today's rates. The additional removal of barriers to testing requirements and entrance exams allows students from all backgrounds an inclusive opportunity to achieve the award and pursue their educational aspirations.

In serving on the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education for the past five years and as an Administrator at Charter College, I am acutely aware of the need for postsecondary education in-state to reduce workforce shortages and out-migration. Financial assistance provided by the APS is vital for all Alaskans, especially those pursuing a CTE pathway.

Pre-pandemic, our state set the goal to have at least 65 percent of working-age Alaskans hold a high-quality postsecondary credential such as apprenticeship completion, technical certificates, or collegiate degrees by 2025<sup>[1]</sup>. This goal remains crucial to achieving fiscal stability in Alaska. This legislation would benefit Alaska's students and families while helping us achieve our goal shared statewide. Thank you for your continued support of higher education and career and technical training attainment in Alaska.

Joshua Bicchinella  
Regional Campus Manager  
Charter College

<sup>1</sup> More information on the states 65 by 2025 goal can be found on the Alaska CAN! Network website at <http://65by2025.org/>