

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

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Sponsor Statement for SB 123

"An Act relating to commercial motor vehicle drivers' license requirements; and providing for an effective date"

Senate Bill 123 repeals the requirement in AS 28.33.100(a)(2) that requires applicants for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to hold a regular Alaska driver's license for at least one year before they can begin the process of obtaining a CDL.

This requirement was enacted in 1985 before state and federal regulators modernized the training and licensing standards for CDLs. Today, an individual seeking a CDL has an extensive training and testing process to go through to ensure they are ready to safely drive commercial vehicles.

On the state level, a prospective commercial driver must pass a written test at the DMV to obtain a CDL Learners Permit and then a driving test to obtain their full license. Beginning in February 2022, federally mandated Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) requirements must also be met during the CDL Learner's Permit stage. ELDT requires comprehensive theory testing and a driving evaluation process to ensure that CDL applicants possess the necessary skills and knowledge to operate commercial vehicles safely and efficiently. With these new safety and training standards, the one-year regular driver's license requirement now only serves as a barrier to workforce development.

The Alaska Trucking Association estimates that Alaska is about 500 truck drivers short, presenting a risk both to food security and major new development projects in industries like construction, mining, oil and gas, etc. For young people in urban areas, getting a driver's license at 16 is common. However, for people coming from rural communities, a growing number of urban youth waiting to get their license, and newcomers to the county, the year-long wait to *start* the licensing process often prevents the trucking industry from being a viable career option.

Repealing the one-year regular driver's license requirement aligns Alaska's CDL requirements with modern federal standards and removes a barrier to a workforce that, although relatively small, is ready and willing. With the passage of SB 123, Alaska will better be able to meet our commercial vehicle driver needs and empower Alaskans to pursue meaningful employment critical to our state.