



March 20, 2024

**RE: Support for House Bill 189 - Permitting Restaurant Staff Aged 18 and Over to Serve Alcohol**

Dear members of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Alaska Legislature,

As the most prominent business advocacy organization in Interior Alaska, we write to express our strong support for House Bill 189. This proposed legislation is a pivotal tool for enhancing the caliber of service within our hospitality sector and addressing the pressing labor shortages that have become endemic. We are encouraged that the Legislature continues introducing meaningful legislation to enhance workforce development, a critical area of our focus for 2024.

Alaska's hospitality industry, a cornerstone of our local economy, employs a significant portion of our workforce. The ability to serve alcohol is integral to restaurant operations, enhancing the dining experience and contributing substantially to establishments' revenue through sales and service. It is worth noting that tips from serving positions can represent a substantial portion of earnings, especially for college students. This demographic includes many who journey to Alaska for summer employment through the J1 visa program yet find themselves constrained by outdated statutes that prohibit them from serving alcohol due to their age.

The current state law places unnecessary limitations on our labor pool, especially during peak tourist seasons when demand is highest. Alaska's regulations concerning who may serve alcohol are among the nation's most stringent, inadvertently placing additional burdens on our businesses and staff. Alaska lags in this industry, as 46% of states have adopted similar legislation.

We also advocate for an amendment to House Bill 189 to expedite its effective date immediately. Such a timely implementation would enable our hospitality sector to adapt swiftly, ensuring they are fully prepared to welcome and serve the influx of visitors we anticipate each summer.

We are grateful for policy proposals aimed at helping employers manage the state's workforce challenges. We urge you to support the passage of House Bill 189.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Johnson  
President & CEO

Kelly Ward  
Board Chair

**EXECUTIVE PARTNERS**

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- Costco Wholesale
- Denali State Bank
- GCI
- Mt. McKinley Bank

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- Doyon, Limited
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- Golden Heart Utilities
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- Holland America Group / Princess Cruise
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- FNSB Riverside Division
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- GHEMM Company, LLC.
- Global Credit Union
- Golden Valley Electric Association
- Interior Gas Utility
- JL Properties, Inc.
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- Lynden
- MAC Federal Credit Union
- McDonald's of Fairbanks
- Northrim Bank
- Robinson & Ward PC
- Santos, Ltd.
- Sourdough Fuel/Petro Star
- Spirit of Alaska Federal Credit Union
- Stewart Title Company - Yukon Division
- Tower Hill Mines-Livengood Gold Project
- Vivamore Companies

1.30.2024