

**STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE**

2025

Source
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**Legislative
Resolve No.**
16



Supporting and encouraging the continued recruitment and retention of international educators on J-1 and H-1B visas in the state.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the state is committed to providing students a high quality education and ensuring each student has the opportunity to succeed academically and reach the student's full potential; and

WHEREAS recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators is essential to the success of the state's educational institutions, the future of the state's students, and the long-term sustainability and well-being of the state's communities; and

WHEREAS many school districts in the state, particularly school districts located in rural and remote communities, face persistent shortages of qualified educators, especially in the critical subject areas of math, science, and special education, which creates significant challenges in maintaining consistent, high quality instruction and places added strain on grades kindergarten through 12 and higher education institutions; and

WHEREAS a growing number of school districts in the state have hired international

educators through the J-1 and H-1B visa processes to address shortages and expand workforce capacity; and

WHEREAS the J-1 visa, which is commonly used as a temporary, exchange-based program to promote cross-cultural learning through educational and professional experiences, and the H-1B visa, which is used to sponsor professionals in specialty occupations, provide critical mechanisms for school districts in the state to fill teaching vacancies with experienced and qualified educators; and

WHEREAS the Kuspuk School District began hiring international educators in 2020 to address persistent staffing shortages, and, from 2021 to 2025, 60 percent of the district's teaching staff, on average, have worked under J-1 or H-1B visas and more than half of the district's schools have been staffed entirely by visa-holding educators; and

WHEREAS the Kodiak Island Borough School District began an H-1B visa sponsorship program in 2022 and has since filled 22 teaching positions through the H-1B visa process; and

WHEREAS the North Slope Borough School District faced a shortage of 50 teachers in the district's remote village schools and successfully responded in 2022 by hiring qualified international educators for H-1B positions from 2022 to 2024; and

WHEREAS, after initial success with educators on J-1 visas, the Bering Strait School District transitioned to H-1B sponsorship to retain experienced teachers and filed approximately 148 H-1B labor condition applications between fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2024; and

WHEREAS the independent efforts of a few remote school districts to meet staffing shortages have since expanded into a statewide strategy, and the districts now attribute much of an educational continuity to international educators, including educators who have credited cohorts of visa-holding teachers, who make it possible to sustain school operations and achieve the state's commitment to providing each student a high quality education and an opportunity to succeed academically; and

WHEREAS the J-1 and H-1B visa programs allow international educators to contribute to the education system by sharing specialized knowledge, skills, and expertise that may not be readily available within the local workforce; and

WHEREAS educators from the Philippines have been among the most common

international hires in the state, widely recognized for a strong English proficiency, comparable professional training, strong historical ties to the United States of America as an allied nation dating as far back as the First and Second World Wars, a knowledge of the nation's history and culture, and an exceptional adaptability to life and teaching in the state's diverse and remote communities; and

WHEREAS educators on J-1 and H-1B visas form strong connections to students, families, and communities while working under the visas, and school districts see quality training and positive outcomes from those relationships; and

WHEREAS, despite critical contributions to the state's schools, educators on J-1 and H-1B visas often face significant challenges related to immigration status, including the unpredictability of the duration of visas, restrictions on job mobility, and the varying periods behind the processing times on immigration paperwork, which can affect an educator's continued service in the state and compromise the state's ability to provide quality education to its students; and

WHEREAS the continued success of the state's education system depends on the support, retention, recruitment, and inclusion of skilled educators, especially educators on J-1 and H-1B visas, who are the most vulnerable members of the state's educational workforce;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature strongly supports educators on J-1 and H-1B visas and recognizes the vital roles those educators play in the state's commitment to providing students a high quality education, ensuring each student has the opportunity to succeed academically and reach the student's full potential, and enriching each student's educational experience; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages school districts, higher education institutions, and other educational organizations to continue to support the recruitment and retention of educators on J-1 and H-1B visas, particularly in areas of the state experiencing an ongoing shortage of educators; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature encourages policymakers at the state and federal levels to support the educational needs of the state's rural and remote communities and the educators in those communities who are on J-1 and H-1B visas by advocating for policies that acknowledge those educators as a vital part of the state's workforce through adjusting or extending the status of the educators' visas when permissible,

increasing job mobility, and ensuring greater security for the international educators who meaningfully contribute to the academic success of the state's students; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature reaffirms its commitment to foster an educational environment in which educators, regardless of visa status, race, ethnicity, nationality, or cultural background are valued, supported, and empowered to provide high quality education to the state's students; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature urges state and federal policymakers to take action to support the educational needs of the state's rural and remote communities and the educators in those communities who are on J-1 and H-1B visas by advocating for policies that provide pathways to support international educators, such as adjusting or extending visa statuses, when possible, increasing job mobility, and ensuring greater security for international educators who contribute meaningfully to the academic success of the state's students and serve as a vital part of the state's workforce; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature strongly encourages the members of the Alaska delegation in Congress, national leaders and advocates, and federal policymakers to provide pathways for the continued recruitment and retention of international educators and to preserve and protect the legal status of highly qualified and skilled educators, especially educators on J-1 and H-1B visas whose invaluable contributions and accomplishments prove integral to the success of the state's diverse education system.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.