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House Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Submitted via email at House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Dear Members of the Alaska House Labor and Commerce Committee:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) writes to provide support for HB161, which addresses concerns associated with the 2024 ballot measure that burdens Alaska's businesses.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. AMA's more than 1,400 members come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Alaska's miners are individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

Like so many other ballot measures, Ballot Measure 1 in November brought bad policy with no opportunity for public input to improve the harmful provisions and retain the good. At the time, AMA published a [statement of opposition](#) and educated our members about the harmful provisions, but unfortunately, the confusingly worded measure was approved.

HB161 seeks to alleviate some of the harmful policies in the measure. First, it supports small businesses by exempting employers with fewer than 50 employees from the paid sick leave mandate, helping to reduce compliance burdens on these small businesses. It recognizes seasonality by exempting employers with operations that span or peak for six months or less, which is certainly appropriate for Alaska's unique seasonal economy and workforce patterns. It clarifies needed sick leave definitions, with clearer language on what qualifies, providing consistency and clarifying implementation. It permits the option for employees to cash out unused sick leave, bringing flexibility to workers. Finally, the bill is just good business. It brings a more balanced, business friendly approach to employee leave by channeling voluntary compliance over mandates, mitigates cost increases that lead to reduced hours, wages, and recruitment, and provides flexibility to remote and rural businesses so that they can reasonably operate.

HB161 is a smart solution to correct harmful policy, and we urge the Legislature to pass this bill promptly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director