



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health

SENIOR AND DISABILITY SERVICES
Governor's Council on Disabilities
and Special Education

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February 7, 2024

Representative Dan Saddler
State Capitol Building, Room 204
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB 219—REPEAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN PROGRAM

Representative Saddler,

We recognize and thank you for your work in initiating HB 219—Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program and are pleased to offer a letter of support. If passed, we understand the bill will allow for the transfer of the remaining fund balance from the Assistive Technology Loan Guarantee and Interest Subsidy Program to the State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) so it can disburse the funds to ATLA, who will get assistive technology into the hands of Alaskans that need it.

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE or the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

Our council membership is composed of self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities (60%), as well as agency and partner representatives (40%). One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on proposed recommendations that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. Our Council uses the Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision (DD Vision) to guide all work in supporting Alaskans with disabilities toward integrated living within their community:

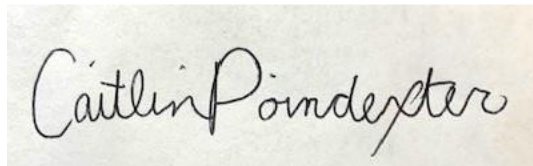
“Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.”

HB 219 supports the DD Vision.

The Council has made HB 219 a legislative priority and have provided you with a DRAFT copy of our position paper (see attachment). ATLA has provided excellent quality of service to the people they serve and to the community in general. Through collaborative efforts, ATLA provides assistive technology information, assessments, services, and access to devices for consumers by working with our Council and community members to ensure people with disabilities have the skills and technology needed to succeed and be more independent in their home, community, employment, or educational environments. ATLA staff has been proactive and supportive of innovative solutions for Alaskans with disabilities. They are committed to collaborating and working together to provide quality assistive technology selection, acquisition, implementation, and follow-up. We believe that ATLA will make good use of the remaining AT funds.

The Council strongly supports the passage of HB 219 to Repeal the Assistive Technology Loan Program and stands ready to support this effort on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities who need assistive technology. We intend to provide public testimony at bill hearings whenever possible.

Sincerely,

A rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Caitlin Poindexter" in a cursive script.

Caitlin Poindexter
GCDSE Legislative Committee Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Patrick Reinhart" in a cursive script.

Patrick Reinhart
GCDSE Executive Director

Attachment: 2024 Assistive Technology Position Paper DRAFT.