**SB XXX Students and Teachers Excel Package**
**Sponsor Statement**

### SB XXX provides a path forward for Alaskan children. Alaska's educational system faces significant challenges, with persistent underperformance and limited resources that hinder the quality of education. To address these issues, it is crucial to implement reforms that support students, educators, and families alike. This bill includes four key proposals which have been strategically analyzed to provide successful results in a timely matter.

The first step is providing families with Educational Savings Accounts. ESAs empower families by providing them with the financial flexibility to choose the best educational environment for their children. In Alaska, where rural and remote communities often lack sufficient educational options, ESAs allow parents to allocate funds toward private schooling, tutoring, online courses, or specialized educational services. This approach promotes parental involvement and student-centered learning, ultimately fostering a more equitable education landscape. ESA’s also have proven to help parents have more of a by-in when they choose neighborhood schools which strengthens neighborhood schools.

The next step is the presence of chaplains in schools. Like many of our other state agencies, chaplains address the growing need for emotional and moral support among our youngest demographic. In Alaska, where isolation and mental health challenges are prevalent, chaplains provide guidance and mentorship, fostering resilience and a sense of community. Their role complements that of counselors by addressing spiritual and ethical dimensions, which are crucial in holistic student development.

An additional step is motivating and retaining quality educators This essential step particularly in a state where recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges will provide teachers a sense of accomplishment. Teacher incentive pay recognizes the dedication and achievements of outstanding educators, encouraging them to continue making a difference in their students’ lives. It also attracts skilled professionals to the field, addressing workforce gaps and promoting stability within Alaska’s schools.

The last step is a teacher spending account. Teachers often invest personal funds in classroom materials and resources. Providing a $5,000 spending account alleviates this burden, enabling educators to create engaging and effective learning environments. In Alaska, where resources can be scarce and expensive, this support empowers teachers to tailor their classrooms to the unique needs of their students, fostering creativity and innovation in education.

In conclusion, Alaska’s educational system demands strategic reforms to address its unique challenges. By implementing ESAs, integrating chaplains, offering teacher incentive pay, and establishing spending accounts, the state can create a more dynamic, supportive, and effective educational framework. These initiatives demonstrate a commitment to empowering students, supporting educators, and fostering a community-oriented approach to learning.