



**Alaska Association of Student Government**

**Resolution # 2**

**Empowering Students with Cognitive Disabilities to Graduate with Dignity**

**Submitted by: Chugiak High School**

**Submitted: October 15th, 2025**

**Be it resolved by the Alaska Association of Student Governments,** supports the proposed bill “Alaska Inclusive Diploma Pathway” written by Tammy Hershman, principal of Birchwood ABC.

- 1. Whereas,** currently students with severe cognitive disabilities in the state of Alaska do not have an alternative option for a diploma and instead receive a Certificate of Attendance;
- 2. Whereas,** students with severe cognitive disabilities do much more than just attend, they work to achieve their full potential, and deserve recognition that reflects their growth;
- 3. Whereas,** a certificate of attendance counts the same in school demographics as a student who did not complete high school;

- 4. Whereas,** it's not equitable to those individuals who are currently not on diploma track due to a cognitive impairment;
- 5. Whereas,** a diploma is more than a piece of paper, it opens doors to adult alternative pathways;
- 6. Whereas,** providing an equitable diploma for students with cognitive disabilities supports IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and Equity Laws;
- 7. Whereas,** the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a federal education law passed in 2015 allows states to create state defined alternative diplomas that align with regular requirements<sup>1</sup>;
- 8. Whereas,** other states –including California– have passed legislation creating an alternative diploma and Alaska should lead the north on educational equality<sup>2</sup>;
- 9. Whereas,** denying access to a diploma creates systemic barriers and perpetuates dependency;
- 10. Whereas,** when access is granted, students with cognitive disabilities will be better prepared for adult pathways, resulting in an opportunity for individuality;
- 11. Whereas,** students with severe cognitive disabilities should be recognized fully and equally for their contributions while in school;
- 12. Whereas,** students who have a cognitive disability currently are not recognized as high school graduates;
- 13. Whereas,** students on the alternative pathway would receive the same recognition as their peers;
- 14. Whereas,** this would be the more equitable to individuals that are on the Alaska Inclusive Diploma Pathway;

**Therefore, be it resolved that the Alaska Association of Student Governments** supports the creation of an alternative pathway of a diploma for students with cognitive disabilities, such that the recognition of growth and achievement of ALL students be valued equally.

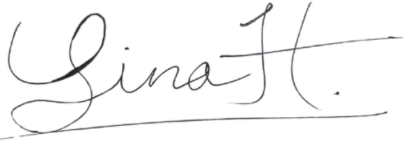
**Action Statement:** if passed by the general assembly of AASG, Tammy Hershman’s ALL Means ALL Bill will have the additional support of students statewide in advocating for the development of legislation to support and require an inclusive diploma for students with cognitive disabilities.

### **Citations**

1. U.S. Department of Education. “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).” U.S. Department of Education, 14 Jan. 2025,  
[www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/every-student-succeeds-act-essa](http://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/every-student-succeeds-act-essa).
2. “California’s New Pathway to a High School Diploma for Students with Intellectual Disabilities.” Undivided.io, 2022,  
[undivided.io/resources/californias-new-pathway-to-a-high-school-diploma-for-students-with-intellectual-disabilities-1243](http://undivided.io/resources/californias-new-pathway-to-a-high-school-diploma-for-students-with-intellectual-disabilities-1243).
3. Hershman, Tammy. “Support for an alternative diploma pathway for students with cognitive disabilities all means all bills.” 4/9/2025, Alaska’s ALL Means ALL Bill

*The resolution passes with unanimous consent*

*Passed by the Fall 2025 General Assembly of AASG*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lina H.". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

AASG Vice President, Lina Hischer

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cassandra Mirosh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

AASG Executive Director, Cassandra Mirosh