CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2(STA)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Offered: 2/12/18
Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES TARR, Spohnholz, Parish, Tuck, Gara, Drummond, Ortiz, Seaton, Millett, LeDoux, Zulkosky, Kawasaki, Josephson

SENATORS Meyer, Begich, Wielechowski, Gardner, Micciche, Bishop, Giessel, von Imhof, Costello

A RESOLUTION

Urging Governor Bill Walker to join with the Alaska State Legislature to address the presence of adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma as factors for many societal issues by establishing a statewide policy, supporting evidence-based programs, and funding research for statewide solutions.

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

WHEREAS nearly two-thirds of adults surveyed in the state report having experienced adverse childhood experiences during childhood; and

WHEREAS adverse childhood experiences are traumatic experiences occurring during childhood that may have a profound effect on a child's developing brain and body and may result in poor health during the person's adulthood, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and household dysfunction, such as domestic violence, separation or divorce involving household members, and substance abuse, untreated mental illness, or incarceration of a household member; and

WHEREAS research over the last two decades in the evolving fields of neuroscience, molecular biology, public health, genomics, and epigenetics suggests that experiences in the
first few years of life may influence the biology of the human body in ways that, in turn, influence the person's physical and mental health over the person's lifetime; and

WHEREAS strong, frequent, or prolonged stress in childhood caused by adverse childhood experiences can become toxic stress, which may affect the development of a child's fundamental brain architecture and stress response systems; and

WHEREAS adverse childhood experience studies have also reported a strong correlation between the number of adverse childhood experiences and a person's risk for disease and negative health behaviors, including suicide attempts, cancer, ischemic heart disease, diabetes, smoking, substance abuse, depression, obesity, unplanned pregnancies, workplace absenteeism, lower educational achievement, and lower wages; and

WHEREAS approximately one in five adult Alaskans has experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS, according to data collected through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, when compared to an adult in the state with zero adverse childhood experiences, an adult in the state with four or more adverse childhood experiences is 4.7 times as likely to have ever been diagnosed with a depressive disorder, 4.2 times as likely to have experienced hunger in the previous year, 2.9 times as likely to use a government food program, 2.7 times as likely to be unable to work, 2.6 times as likely to use Medicaid, 2.6 times as likely to have not graduated from high school or received a general education development diploma, 2.3 times as likely to be a current smoker, and 1.9 times as likely to be a heavy drinker; and

WHEREAS, in research conducted outside the state, when compared to an adult with zero adverse childhood experiences, an adult with four or more adverse childhood experiences is 12.2 times as likely to attempt suicide, 10.3 times as likely to use injection drugs, 7.4 times as likely to be an alcoholic, 2.4 times as likely to have a stroke, 2.2 times as likely to have ischemic heart disease, twice as likely to have chronic pulmonary obstructive disease, 1.9 times as likely to have a type of cancer, and 1.6 times as likely to have diabetes; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse have estimated the direct and indirect cost to the state of adverse childhood experiences in six categories (adult Medicaid, current smoking, diabetes, binge drinking, arthritis, and obesity) to be approximately $774,000,000 annually; and
WHEREAS the life expectancy of a person with six or more adverse childhood experiences is 20 years shorter than the life expectancy of a person with no adverse childhood experiences; and

WHEREAS early childhood offers a unique window of opportunity to prevent and mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, and trauma on a child's brain and body; and

WHEREAS the emerging science and research on adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, and childhood trauma have uncovered evidence of the burden of this growing public health crisis for the state with implications for the state's educational, juvenile justice, criminal justice, public health, public safety, labor, and commerce systems; and

WHEREAS Nobel-prize-winning economist James Heckman has found that high quality programs for disadvantaged children between birth and five years of age can deliver a 13 percent annual return on investment realized through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment; and

WHEREAS it is more effective and less costly to positively influence the architecture of a young child's developing brain than to attempt to correct poor learning, health, and behaviors later in life; and

WHEREAS early intervention and investment in early childhood years and effective, trauma-informed services and systems for people throughout the course of life are important strategies to achieve a lasting foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable state through investing in human capital;

BE IT RESOLVED that the policy decisions of the Alaska State Legislature acknowledge and take into account the principles of early childhood and youth brain development and, whenever possible, consider the concepts of early adversity, toxic stress, childhood trauma, and the promotion of resilience through protective relationships, supports, self-regulation, and services; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that the Governor join with the Alaska State Legislature to address the presence of adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma as factors for many societal issues by establishing a statewide policy, supporting evidence-based programs, and funding research for statewide solutions.