

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
AND AUDIT
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ETHICS (ALTERNATE)
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REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

HB 11: Assault in the Presence of a Child

Sponsor Statement

HB 11 seeks to make the act of assault in the presence of a child a class A misdemeanor under Alaska law, following suit with Anchorage Municipal Code 8.10.050, *Family Violence*. Committing the crime of assault with the reckless disregard for the presence of a child or children can have a long lasting, negative impact. A child's involvement can range from overhearing or witnessing confrontations, to being physically injured during an altercation.

A 2022 report by the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission shows 48% of adult women in Alaska have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, an increase from the rates reported in 2010 and 2015. While it's hard to quantify how many children are exposed to abuse, a 2020 report shows that 5% of mothers of three-year-old children reported that their child was present during a domestic violence assault. HB 11 addresses the critical need to protect children from the effects of heinous crimes which can influence all domains of child functioning, including social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral health.

Under current law, domestic violence committed in the physical presence or hearing of a child under 16 years of age may result in a sentence above the presumptive range as provided for in AS 12.55.155(c)(18)(C). HB 11 adds an additional charge in hopes of deterring acts of violence, but specifically in the presence of a child or children. This bill is crucial for preventing and mitigating the trauma experienced by a child who witnesses assaultive behaviors. I urge you to support HB 11.

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