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26 February 2018

Re: SB 198 – UAA Long-Acting Contraception Study

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) fully supports SB 198 and the effort to increase access to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) for women who experience significant risk of unintended pregnancy and prenatal drug and alcohol exposure. As you may be aware, unintended pregnancy is directly correlated with increased incidents of child abuse and neglect in Alaska. In addition, children prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol often experience significant lifelong health and social challenges. As rates of maternal opioid use continue to skyrocket, the importance of increasing access to substance abuse treatment and long-acting reversible contraception has reached critical mass in Alaska.

We believe the project described in SB 198 will have far reaching benefits for improving health outcomes in both children and families in our state. In addition to providing a valuable intervention to women in need, the data derived from SB 198 has the potential to inform policy and health strategy in Alaska for years to come. This project will provide a critical data foundation for developing a comprehensive LARC strategy and understanding the long-term impacts of children born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome in Alaska.

We look forward to working with our colleagues at the UAA Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies and other key stakeholders involved with SB 198 in the effort to improve health outcomes in mothers, reduce unintended pregnancy in Alaska, and mitigate the substantial impact of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure in our state. When healthy Alaskan mothers have healthy Alaskan babies, we all win.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. Storrs  
Executive Director

Together we can prevent child abuse and neglect