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SB 19 Sponsor Statement

PRISONER ACCESS TO COMPUTER/PHONE/TABLET

"An Act relating to the use and possession of electronic devices by prisoners."

Alaska Senate Bill 19 embodies a pragmatic and impactful approach to reforming the correctional system. By granting the Department of Corrections the authority to furnish prisoners with limited access to specialized tablets for educational, reentry, and legal purposes, this legislation extends opportunities and a pathway to successful societal reintegration, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of future criminal activity. This strategy isn't solely rooted in compassion but is also a strategic measure for public safety and efficiency in our corrections system. Recognizing the pivotal role education plays in breaking the cycle of crime, SB 19 facilitates access to a plethora of educational and programmatic resources through tablets.

Use of the specialized tablets also helps to reduce the security and administrative burden on the department allowing for services such as telemedicine, review of court documents, and monitored visitation to be performed with reduced staff required for oversight. This bill is not intended to replace any existing programs, it is merely meant to supplement the existing programs.

By acknowledging the transformative power of learning in the rehabilitation process, the bill prioritizes the State's overarching goal of rehabilitating individuals into productive, law-abiding citizens, thereby curbing future crimes and preventing potential victims. Granting inmates restricted tablet access is not a luxury or reward; rather, it's a recognition of the need to invest in education and rehabilitation through technology in our digital age. This approach isn't about leniency on crime but about addressing the root causes of criminal behavior, ultimately reducing recidivism rates, and preventing new offenses. Research consistently highlights the efficacy of education in diminishing the likelihood of reoffending. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for constructive lives, SB 19 not only enhances public safety but also mitigates the financial burden associated with incarcerating repeat offenders. The resulting cost savings could potentially save the state millions of dollars in the long run, making this legislation a prudent investment in societal well-being.

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