

Alaska FASD Partnership

*Over 75 organizations
and individuals
supporting:*

Advocacy • Diagnosis

- *Case Management*
 - *Prevention*
- *Substance Abuse Treatment for Pregnant Women*
- *Parent Navigation*
- *Training for Parents*
- *Public Awareness*
 - *Alternatives to Incarceration*
- *Court Interpreters*
 - *Peer Support*
- *Training for Judges, Public Defenders, and Prosecutors*
 - *Training for Educators and Medical Professionals*
- *Traditional Healing*
- *Supported Housing and Employment*
- *Family Support*



March 2, 2012

Senator Kevin Meyer
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Meyer,

It is with great pleasure that the Alaska FASD Partnership supports the proposed committee substitute for SB 151 to include FASD, Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury, and Intellectual Disability as "impaired brain function" in the definition of "mental disease or defect."

The Partnership also supports the bill's intent to include FASD and traumatic and acquired brain injury as mitigating factors related to sentencing.

Individuals diagnosed with a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or a traumatic or acquired brain injury (T/ABI) are disproportionately represented within Alaska's criminal justice system. However, the intent underlying Alaska's sentencing structure – that people will modify their behaviors based on the criminal justice system's response to their crimes – is not met when applied to individuals with FASD or T/ABI. These disabilities manifest as deficits in executive function resulting in impaired adaptive behavior, memory difficulties, an inability to plan, and a failure to recognize the consequences of actions. In the interest of justice, it is important to take these deficits into account during sentencing. Neither the offender nor society benefits from holding individuals with FASD or T/ABI to community standards that they cannot possibly attain given their impairments.

The cost of incarceration in Alaska's prison is about \$136 per day. Over the course of five to ten years in an Alaskan prison, an inmate is expected to cost the state close to \$250,000-\$500,000 (not including medical, mental health or other specialized treatment while incarcerated).

According to the 2009 ISER Study, *The Cost of Crime: Could the State Reduce Future Crime and Save Money by Expanding Education and Treatment Programs?* the cost of providing services is less than the cost of incarceration. With appropriate supports, clients with FASD, T/ABI and other brain-based disabilities can live successfully in the community as contributing citizens, **and** provide jobs for Alaskan case workers, clinicians, assisted living providers, mental health and substance abuse

counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists. Not only does CSSB 151 further the cause of justice for a vulnerable population, it represents a better investment of our state's resources.

Additionally, the state's movement toward "Smart Justice" will promote less crime, reduced public costs, and greater rehabilitative effect on offenders. The research behind "Smart Justice" suggests that spending money on rehabilitating offenders is more cost effective than paying the high costs associated incarceration and recidivism, including public safety, courts, prisons, alcoholism and drug abuse programs.

Thank you for the time and effort you have put into supporting this important effort.

Sincerely,



Monica Charles-Leinberger, Chair
Alaska FASD Partnership

Partnership members include: *Abused Women's Aid in Crisis, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Alaska Behavioral Health Association, Alaska Center for Children & Adults, Alaska Children's Services, Alaska Mental Health Board, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaska Peer Support Consortium, Alaska Youth & Family Network, All-Alaska Pediatric Partnership, Anchorage Coordinated Resources Project, Anchorage School District (Anchorage), Arctic FASD Regional Training Center, Assets Inc., Association for the Education of Young Children-SEAK, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska, Boys & Girls Home of Alaska, Camp Fire USA Alaska Council, Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Christian Health Associates, Copper Basin Neurodevelopmental Center, Deltana Community Services Partnership, Dena A Coy/Southcentral Foundation, Diocese of Juneau, Fairbanks Community Behavioral Health Center, Family Centered Services of Alaska, Frontier Community Services, Gastineau Human Services, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Hoonah Indian Association, Hope Community Resources, Independent Living Center, Kenai Peninsula FASD Program, Ketchikan Indian Community, Kinetictions, Kobuk Valley Consulting, Kodiak Area Native Association, Juneau Family Health and Birth Center, Juneau FASD Diagnostic Clinic, Juneau Partnerships for Families and Children, Lower Kuskokwim School District, Lynn Canal Counseling Services, Nenana City School District, Nome Youth Facility, Nondalton Tribe, Regional Wellness Forum, Set Free Alaska, Inc. (Wasilla), Southcentral Foundation FAS Diagnostic Team, Southeast Regional Health Consortium, Southeast Regional Resource Center, Southern Kenai Peninsula Communities Project, Sprout Family Services, Stone Soup Group, Tongass Substance Screening, UAA Department of Health Sciences, UAA Center for Human Development, Volunteers of America-Alaska ...and many individuals.*