



February 24, 2011

Senator Bettye Davis
Alaska Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Davis and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

The Leadership Team of Anchorage United for Youth requests your support for Senate Bill 8, *"An Act relating to questionnaires and surveys administered in the public schools."*

Anchorage United for Youth has been making real headway at addressing the issues that impact Anchorage youth through a coordinated community effort with over 40 non-profit, public and private partners committed to increasing graduation rates, decreasing youth substance use and reducing juvenile crime rates. Current success with the Anchorage United for Youth plan and its implementation has led to interest from around the state in replicating this effort. Reliable and valid data like that obtained through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is integral to the success and sustainability of this effort.

Reliable and statistically valid community data is critical to our mission of supporting Anchorage youth. Routine standardized surveys such as the YRBS allow us to track trends over time and help guide and evaluate the important youth programs we implement to keep our youth on track to graduate from high school, avoid delinquency and reject substance use. The YRBS must have a response rate of 60% to make it statistically valid, yet current legislation requires active parental consent which presents significant obstacles and costs to achieving this response rate. Approximately \$90,000 is spent for just one survey cycle in order to provide the incentives necessary to simply get permission slips returned. However, failure to return permission slips is primarily linked to apathy, oversight, and student error, not parental refusal of permission, which averages around 10%.

Senate Bill 8 protects previously legislated parental rights to consent, parental rights to notification, and children's rights to refuse participation. We support Senate Bill 8 because it continues to provide these protections and respects the privacy of families, while removing the obstacles to obtaining this vital data that allows us to track and improve conditions for our youth.

We thank you for your commitment to youth in the state of Alaska and ask for your support of Senate Bill 8.

Sincerely,

Greg Razo, Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
Chair, Anchorage United for Youth Leadership Team

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