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January 31, 2014

Senator John Coghill
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 119
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Chair Coghill and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 64 to address Alaska's rising corrections costs while building safer and healthier Alaskan communities. Catholic Social Services (CSS) supports SB 64 because we need better incentives and tools for offenders to successfully reintegrate when they are released from prison. We witness first-hand the impact of our current revolving door prison system where 2 out of 3 Alaskan prisoners return to custody within the first three years of release because their first stop is often Brother Francis Shelter in Anchorage, if they are released in south-central Alaska.

People getting out of prison have a very difficult time – they are often released without any resources and gaining employment and securing housing, due to their criminal record, is challenging. CSS whole heartedly supports key components of the bill that would allow for twice daily alcohol monitoring for certain offenders, the ability to receive credit for time served in a residential substance abuse treatment programs, and the establishment of a Recidivism Reduction Fund to support community re-entry services.

SB 64 is sound legislation because it uses evidence-based practices and a cross-governmental approach to reform by focusing resources on high-risk offenders and supporting mandatory supervision and treatment in the community. If it is possible to cut our rising corrections costs without sacrificing public safety we should absolutely try it.

Catholic Social Services supports SB 64 and thanks you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Bomalaski, Ph.D, LPC
Executive Director

CC: State Senate Members Alaska Legislature
Archbishop Roger Schwietz