

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

## **House Concurrent Resolution 21**

“National Child Abuse Prevention Month”

### *Sponsor Statement*

Child abuse in Alaska is a chronic and devastating problem. In 2013, Office of Children’s Services statistics show that there were 40,000 allegations of child maltreatment, meaning abuse or neglect of a person under 18 years of age. OCS substantiated 5,000 of these allegations. In perspective, this is an average of 13 children dealing with abuse in Alaska every day of the year, at an estimated lowest cost per young Alaskan of \$210,012 for healthcare, child welfare and protection, legal proceedings, special education costs, and public assistance. The trend of high rates of abuse in Alaska must stop and recognition and an open discussion are crucial to breaking the cycle of abuse.

Children subject to abuse are more likely to become abusers themselves. They are also 11 times more likely to engage in criminal and other anti-social behavior and more than twice as likely to be arrested for violent or criminal behavior as an adult. Emotionally and physically, abuse has long-term effects, including improper brain formation, an inability to trust, low self-esteem, and an increased vulnerability to post-traumatic stress disorder, sexually transmitted diseases, heart disease, cancer, and depression. Two-thirds of individuals in drug-treatment programs report being abused as children.

This resolution proclaims April 2014 as Child Abuse Prevention Month, in an effort to raise awareness of child abuse nationally and in-state. In 1983, the U.S. Legislature proclaimed April the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month to show a commitment to identifying and implementing solutions to end child abuse. As a result, child abuse and neglect awareness activities are promoted across the country during April of each year. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCAN) within the Children's Bureau coordinates these activities at the Federal level, providing information and releasing updated national statistics about child abuse and neglect. Many governors also issue proclamations to encourage initiatives and events in their States.

I ask for your consideration and support for Child Abuse Prevention Month to recognize this pervasive problem and open it to discussion about how we can break the cycle of abuse.