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February 2, 2015

The Honorable Berta Gardner
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Bldg. Room 9
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: SB 31 - Sexual Abuse/Assault Programs in the Schools – Erin’s Law

Dear Senator Gardner:

I am writing to express our strong support for SB 31 – Erin’s Law. The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) is a statewide coalition of community based programs that provide direct services and advocacy to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, including child sexual abuse victims. In addition to intervention and advocacy, our programs are often called upon by schools to provide outreach and age-appropriate education to their students. Our programs provide these services as resources allow, but there are far more requests than can be met.

Schools are important partners in the prevention of and education about child sexual abuse. Teachers interact daily with children and their parents and it is critical that they are trained to identify signs of abuse. Children also need the skills to identify dangerous or inappropriate situations and tools they can use to become safe and summon assistance.

For 2013, the Office of Children Services (OCS) reported 2,296 allegations of child sexual abuse directed at 1,118 victims. Forty percent of the victims were Alaska Native. While OCS is still compiling its 2014 data, we unfortunately expect the number to remain near the same. Even one child being sexually abused is one too many and it is the reason that we need to pass Erin’s law this session.

Erin’s law will provide schools with the tools necessary to educate both teachers and children, providing critical information about sexual abuse to raise awareness and protect our children. We know from experience that early prevention and education are the keys to preventing child sexual abuse.

Thank you for bringing forth this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Peggy A. Brown, Executive Director
cc: Lisa Mariotti, Policy Director

Member Programs

Anchorage AWAIC, STAR Barrow AWIC Bethel TWC Cordova CFRC Dillingham SAFE Fairbanks IAC Homer SPHH
Juneau AWARE Kenai LeeShore Center Ketchikan WISH Kodiak KWRCC Kotzebue MFCC Nome BSWG
Seward SeaView Community Services Sitka SAFV Unalaska USAFV Valdez AVV