

**Taneeka Hansen**

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**From:** Allison Mendel <AMendel@mendelcolbert.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 22, 2016 12:05 PM  
**To:** Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Liz Vazquez; Rep. Louise Stutes; Representative.Dave.Telerico@akleg.gov; Representative.Adam.Woll@akleg.gov  
**Subject:** Opposition to HB 334

I am an Anchorage domestic relations lawyer with 33 years' experience in the courts of this state. I represent both mothers and fathers in divorce and custody cases. The proposed revision to the child custody statutes are misguided, unworkable, and harmful to children. Requiring evidence of a conviction before a parent is considered to have a "history of domestic violence" is wrongheaded.

Very few people are ever convicted of domestic violence, compared to its prevalence in the community. It makes no difference to the children who are the helpless victims of family violence, whether the perpetrator was ever charged or convicted. As everyone knows, very few victims even seek criminal enforcement, due to the dynamics of domestic violence and the victims' inability or reluctance to seek that kind of help. Further, the criminal justice system is not equipped to bring more DV prosecutions, nor is the criminal justice system in place to control or influence private custody cases.

The custody statute should remain as it is. The proposed change would effectively eliminate any real consequences of domestic violence by a parent in custody cases. This would not be in the best interests of children, but would place them at risk of further danger. This is not a way to "choose respect" or to reduce or eliminate domestic violence. It effectively favors perpetrators over children. Please oppose this bill.

**Allison Mendel**

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