



3/4/16

Representative Geran Tarr
State Capital Room 409
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Tarr,

Thank you for your work on House Concurrent Resolution 21 regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition is pleased to add our support. We are a coalition of nearly 100 Juneau residents. We are survivors, statisticians, volunteers, board members, frontline youth care providers, clinicians, counselors, educators, doctors, and concerned citizens. We see firsthand the impact of childhood trauma, neglect, and abuse and are focusing our efforts on breaking the link between childhood trauma and suicide.

Nationally, Alaska is first in some wonderful things—wilderness, scenery, natural resources, mountains, and miles of coastline. Our fisheries remain the envy of much of the world. Hike a mountain in Alaska and the mountains go back and back and back. The sun sets and rises seamlessly. The salmon run our clean, gleaming streams.

As noted in House Concurrent Resolution 21, we are also first in ACEs. Two-thirds of our citizenry report traumatic childhood experiences at rates higher than other surveyed states. In 2009 Alaska had the highest ACEs scores in sexual abuse, family member incarceration, substance abuse, and divorce. Alaska scored a very close second in every other category. When looked at in this light, our fish are often better set up for success than our most valuable resource—our children.

A person with four or more ACEs is 12.2 times more likely to commit suicide, 10.3 times more likely to use injection drugs, and 7.4 times more likely to be an alcoholic. We score highest in four categories. We know that these levels of toxic trauma and stress are not only driving addiction but damaging brain development, and impacting our youth's ability to learn and make healthy choices. The Alaska Mental Health Board and the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Advisory Board estimate this is costing us, as a state, approximately \$774,000,000 a year.

The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition encourages our state legislators and Governor to work closely with each other to create more trauma-informed schools, increase risk screening in primary care, support early-childhood and parenting programs, as well as develop programs that address the high cost and impact of ACEs on Alaska's youth and communities.

Sincerely,

Gareth Hummel
Suicide Prevention Specialist
On behalf of
The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition