

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

## HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 21

*“Respond to adverse childhood experiences.”*

### Sponsor Statement

HCR 21 urges Governor Walker to establish policy and programs to address the public and behavioral health epidemic of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that occur during childhood and have a lasting, negative effect on a child’s developing brain and body.

The long-term effects of ACEs in Alaska are costly. High ACE score are linked to social, emotional and cognitive impairment; adoption of health-risk behaviors; disease; disability and social problems; and early death. More than 75% of Alaskans have experienced adverse childhood experiences. Alaska has some of the highest ACE rates among the five other states surveyed (Washington, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and New Mexico).

Preventing ACEs and supporting those who have experienced childhood trauma will save the State of Alaska significant health care costs. According to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average lifetime cost per victim of nonfatal child maltreatment is over \$48,000 per child. There are thousands of reports of child maltreatment every year in Alaska, meaning we are spending tens of millions of dollars every year for costs related to child abuse.

Alaska also spends millions of dollars annually on corrections, substance abuse, chronic health conditions, and other issues related to ACEs. For example, 40% of current Medicaid use can be attributed to ACEs. A recent report by the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse found that with a modest reduction in the ACEs scores of Alaskans who use Medicaid, we could see annual savings of \$39 million in Medicaid spending.

Left unacknowledged and untreated, ACEs can lead to poor health and risky behaviors during adulthood. This includes, but is not limited to, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and household dysfunction, such as domestic violence, separation or divorce, and substance abuse, untreated mental illness, or incarceration of a household member.