



To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 180 and House Bill 201 - Parent-Guardian/Child Temporary Power of Attorney.

I am the President of Beacon Hill which is a foster care and adoption community resource center that operates in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. We are the organization that implements the Safe Families for Children Alaska program. Safe Families for Children Alaska (SFFCA) hosts vulnerable children and creates extended family-like supports for desperate families through a community of devoted volunteers motivated by compassion to keep children safe and ultimately together with their families.

SFFCA is a movement of the faith based community that returns the community to the forefront of caring for the most vulnerable people group in society, at-risk children and their struggling parents. It expands the community safety net by providing parents in need – on their own, or at the recommendation of a case worker – a loving sanctuary where they can safely place their children in times of crisis. Host Families are background checked by the state background check unit, screened, trained and serve without compensation. Designed to positively impact and support at-risk families, SFFCA is a non-coercive alternative to the state child welfare system, allowing parents to work out their problems without having to worry about losing custody of their child. Beacon Hill, through SFFCA, facilitates the arrangement between the family in crisis and the hosting safe family. Parents place their children voluntarily and retain full legal custody of their children.

The families served through SFFCA have no current involvement with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). SFFCA is designed to prevent children from being abused and families from needing intervention from OCS.

Because of our role as the "arranger" of the placement, we have had to become a Child Placement Agency for the State of Alaska due to AS 47.32.900 even though our host families are not foster homes and the children placed are not in the custody of the state. According to this statute, "child placement agency" means an agency that arranges for placement of a child in a foster home, residential child care facility, or adoptive home; or for guardianship purposes. Unfortunately, the definition of "foster home" in the same statute means a place where the adult head of household provides 24-hour care on a continuing basis to one or more children who are apart from their parents.

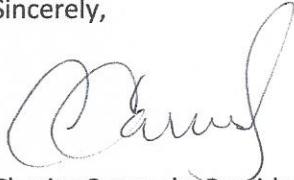
Beacon Hill has been granted a temporary variance to operate SFFCA by OCS that we must renew each year. Our hope is that this bill will eliminate the need for our child placement agency license and accompanying variance. SFFCA's goal is to facilitate a safe and effective way for neighbors to help their neighbors in time of need without any threat of termination of rights or state regulation.

Safe Families for Children Alaska began hosting children on January 1, 2016 in Anchorage and the Valley. We have successfully hosted four children from three different families resulting in these children not having to go into foster care. Alaska is the 37<sup>th</sup> state to operate Safe Families for Children (SFFC). Since 2003, SFFC has hosted more than 22,000 children without one report of harm. It has reduced foster care placements by more than 50 percent in some areas of the country. SFFC successfully operates in 5 countries.

Local churches and Beacon Hill operate SFFCA with NO FUNDING from the federal or state government. The passing of these bills and un-interrupted operation of SFFCA will save the state money and provide much needed relief to our over-burdened foster care system.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate all you do for Alaska. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charity", written in black ink.

Charity Carmody, President

Beacon Hill

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