



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education

3601 C Street, Suite 740
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Main: 907.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

January 20th, 2017

Representative Steve Thompson
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 500
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: HB16: Disability Training and Identification Bill

Dear Representative Steve Thompson,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) would like to extend its support for HB16. Your sponsorship of this bill is greatly appreciated as we feel that it will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities.

Individuals with a hidden Intellectual or Developmental Disability who find themselves in a situation where it is necessary to effectively communicate with an authority figure may be at a disadvantage because of communication barriers, situational unawareness, and preconceptions authority figures may hold. Sadly, there have been instances in the past where Officers of the Law were unaware of an individual's disability and consequently misinterpreted the individual's actions as suspect and/or criminal, resulting in either injury or imprisonment for the individual. The Council feels that a training program is needed to improve communication skills between police officers, corrections officers and parole/probation officers who interact with people who experience non-apparent disabilities, whether these disabled individuals encounter the "systems" as victims, witnesses, or alleged perpetrators.

The Council strongly supports HB16 and the awareness that could potentially be fostered by providing law enforcement officials with the proper information and sensitivity training regarding individuals who experience a disability. By implementing a training course for law enforcement officials and having the option for an individual to include a discreet marker on their state identification card that conveys their disability to an Officer, the Council believes that HB16 will greatly decrease accidents that could have been prevented in the past by increasing hidden disability awareness throughout Alaska. Passing HB16 will provide a framework for a future in which a person's hidden disability will not be interpreted as uncooperative or unlawful and will prevent needless misunderstandings that can lead to violence and arrest. Thank you for working to ensure that Alaskans with disabilities are safe and understood by the people that work hard to protect them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patrick Reinhart".

Patrick Reinhart
Executive Director
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693
Main: 907.465.3250
Fax: 907.465.1398

February 2, 2017

Representative Steve Thompson
Alaska Capitol, Room 500
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Regarding: Support HB16, Training Regarding Non-Apparent Disabilities & Voluntary Disability Designations on State Identification Cards and Driver's License

Dear Representative Thompson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to renew our support for HB16, as authored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Saddler, Tarr, Gara, Wool, Millett, Stutes, Foster, Wilson, Johnson, Claman, Guttenberg, LeDoux, Grenn, Tuck, Ortiz, Rauscher, Kawasaki, Sullivan-Leonard, Chenault, and Knoff. Although this legislation addresses the needs of all Alaskans with disabilities, the ACoA will focus on the "safety" benefits we perceive for older Alaskans from this legislation, particularly those with concealed impairments that may result from physical or cognitive sources.

Older people who experience non-apparent disabilities are often impacted by the manner in which they respond to sensory stimuli and process information. This behavior can sometimes be misunderstood as resulting from being under the influence of an intoxicant or as purposefully disruptive. For example, hearing loss can result in problems understanding the spoken language and performing complex tasks. Those with anxiety disorders have a tendency to selectively focus and interpret even ambiguous events in a highly threatening way – which can be observed as disruptive behavior. Wandering outside unattended and unprotected is a significant personal safety risk for persons living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Drivers with early stage memory changes are especially likely to minimize the complexity of driving and overestimate their abilities that can lead to unsafe driving. They may also find themselves lost even in familiar surroundings due to diminished short-term memory. Not only do these disabling conditions affect personal safety and the safety of others nearby, but may also impact the outcome of an encounter between a person with a disability and a public safety officer.

The Commission strongly agrees that preserving personal safety and dignity of individuals with disabilities would be greatly improved by having trained public safety officials able to recognize the signs of a person with non-apparent disabilities and have the skills to respond appropriately to them. We greatly appreciate the new requirement as proposed by HB16 for the Alaska Police Standards Council to amend its training curriculum requirements to include training that will enable Alaska police officers, correctional officers, probation officers, and parole officers to recognize people with disabilities, including non-apparent disabilities, to know how to respond appropriately, and possess knowledge about relevant resources to provide assistance. Disability awareness training will advance use of the

"Silver Alert" system and promote greater awareness among public safety officers about the needs of Alaskans with Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive impairments who have a tendency to wander and become lost, sometimes finding themselves in life-threatening situations. Public safety officers trained in disability awareness will be better able to recognize the signs of a person with dementia in the community and respond appropriately to bring that person to safety.

We thank you for your leadership on HB16 to enhance public safety awareness, improve communication, and increase protection for Alaskans with disabilities.

Sincerely,



David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise L. Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Dan Sadler
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Adam Wool
Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Neal Foster
Representative Tammie Wilson
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Matt Claman
Representative David Guttenberg
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Jason Grenn
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Scott Kawasaki
Representative Colleen Sullivan-Leonard
Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Gary Knopp



Equipping Alaskans who are blind and visually impaired with skills for success in life and work

To: The Honorable Representative Steve Thompson
From: Regan Mattingly, Executive Director
Date: January 31, 2017
Subject: Support for HB 16

Dear Representative Thompson,

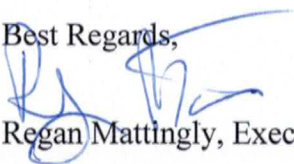
The Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization with the mission of equipping Alaskans who are blind and visually impaired with adaptive skills for success in life and work. As the only resource in Alaska that provides comprehensive adaptive services for those with decreased or no sight, the agency sets the standard for quality and professionalism for vision rehabilitation and low vision services in the state.

Alaskans with disabilities deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully by police officers, corrections officers and parole/probation officers. Sometimes recognizing that a person has a disability can be challenging. Disability awareness training will help an officer recognize a disability and help these professionals to effectively and appropriately interact with people with non-apparent disabilities. According to census data, we estimate that there are 15,372 Alaskans who experience blindness or low vision. Most Alaskans who experience significant vision loss still have some usable vision so it can be difficult to recognize low vision as a disability without the proper training.

The Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired supports HB 16, which proposes requiring disability awareness training for police officers, corrections officers, parole/probation officers and the public and includes voluntary participation in an identification program. We join you in support of HB 16, which will help to reduce potential conflicts between Alaskans with disabilities and public law enforcement. This bill also supports the intent of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability in services, programs and activities provided by State and local government entities.

We appreciate your hard work and service and support your efforts to help Alaskans with disabilities.

Best Regards,


Regan Mattingly, Executive Director

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL of ALASKA



January 23, 2017

Representative Steve Thompson
State Capitol Room 500
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Thompson,

The Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska (SILC) is a federally mandated state council that works to increase the opportunity for Alaskans with disabilities to live independently are fully integrated into the mainstream of society. Created in 1992, the SILC partners with self-advocates, centers for independent living, and other partner agencies to increase community based, cost-effective programs and services and to ensure the consumer voice is heard. As such, the SILC strongly supports HB16 – the Disability Training and Identification Bill, which grew out of a self-advocacy group at Access Alaska.

The key to this bill is education; as we all know, there are many misconceptions about people with disabilities. Misunderstandings can lead to poor judgement. That is why Alaska police and corrections academies will add a minimum 8 hour disability awareness to the curriculum. It will reduce arrests which are caused by misunderstandings, such as thinking a person with slurred speech and shaky gait is a person who has been driving under the influence when in fact it was someone with cerebral palsy. The Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles will add a page which will describe an individual's rights and responsibilities when stopped for cause by a police officer. Finally, an Alaskans would have the option of placing a small emblem, much like the heart currently used to highlight the person's willingness to donate organs, on any state identification.

It's important that we give our state officers the tools needed to communicate effectively with everyone, including people with disabilities. That is why the SILC stands with our sister boards, self-advocates, and partner agencies in support of HB16 – the Disability Training and Identification Bill. If you have any questions or concerns related to people with disabilities, please feel free to contact the SILC.

Sincerely,

Heidi James Frost
Executive Director

1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 206
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
1-888-294-7452 ~ Fax 907-263-2012
www.alaskasilc.org



526 Gaffney Road
Fairbanks, AK.99701
January 24, 2017

The Honorable Steve Thompson
State Capitol Room 500
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Thompson,

WallBusters is an advocacy group for people with disabilities. Our mission is to educate and advocate for the removal of barriers to independence for people with disabilities. We also advocate for the rights of people who experience a disability because it is our social responsibility to ensure that a person with a disability is able to access the same social benefits as any other member of our community.

We strongly support House Bill 16, the Training and Disability ID Bill. We support this piece of legislation because the primary goal of this bill is targeted education. This bill will ensure that law enforcement and corrections officers at the academy level will be informed about what a physical disability is, what a hidden disability is and what barriers a person with a disability may encounter. These professionals will become better equipped to interact with people who experience either apparent or non-apparent disabilities regardless of whether people with disabilities encounter the "systems" as victims, witnesses, or alleged perpetrators.

We also support the ID component of the bill because it will enable people who experience a disability to voluntarily disclose their disability in a discreet manner on an Alaska Driver's License or ID card. This ID marker is completely voluntary and will be a discreet way to inform a law enforcement officer that the person in front of them has a disability even though it may not be initially apparent to the officer.

Thank you for sponsoring HB16. This bill will ensure that law enforcement professionals in Alaska are trained to respectfully and appropriately interact with people who experience a disability. This legislation will go a long way to avoid misunderstandings and protect the right of people with disabilities be treated fairly and appropriately. HB16 will help improve the lives of all Alaskans, especially those with apparent and non-apparent disabilities.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Traylor
WallBusters

1841 Chelton Lane
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
January 17, 2017 2015

Representative Steve Thompson
State Capitol Room 515
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative Thompson,

I wholly support House Bill 16, the Disability Training and ID bill. HB16 will help police officers, corrections officers and parole/probation officers to better interact with people who experience non-apparent or hidden disabilities. Without the appropriate amount of disability awareness training for police, an officer might misinterpret actions or intentions a person with a disability. This misinterpretation may result in an error that could ultimately make the difference between life and death. Even lacking a life threatening situation, a person with a disability may be treated inappropriately and his or her American with Disability (ADA) rights may be violated.

Communicating reasonable and effectively with a person experiencing a disability is the law. Title II of the (ADA) affects the core activities of law enforcement. Nothing in Title II, its regulations, or its legislative history suggests that any police activities are excluded from Title II coverage. Every time a law enforcement or corrections officer violates a person's rights under the ADA, the local or state government is liable and may be subject to litigation.

HB16 targets Title II of the ADA; specifically communication access rights. People with disabilities have the right to understand what is being said them, be able to ask for clarification, have their information understood by the other person and be treated with respect. Training law enforcement officers is not only the law it is the right thing to do. A trained officer makes the situation safer for both the officer and the individual with whom they are interacting.

I support this bill because one of the goals of the bill is to provide training that helps law enforcement and corrections officers to intervene in a way that is helpful, respectful and more sensitive to an individual's disability. Thank you for your hard work and your efforts to sponsor and promote the passage of House Bill 16.

Very Sincerely



Art Delaune.

907-479-2838

Adelaune555@gmail.com

Jenna Steffes
1974 Raven Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99709

January 26, 2017

Dear Representative Thompson,

I would like to express my profound support for House Bill 16. This bill has been introduced several times over the years and I remain optimistic it will make it through this legislative session.

HB16 would provide necessary disability awareness education and training both to law enforcement and the public. Implementing standardized disability awareness training for police officers, corrections officers and parole/probation officers would help to ensure positive interactions between law enforcement and individuals with disabilities. HB16 would also allow for a voluntary identification program. If individuals experiencing a non-apparent disability voluntarily chose to identify on their state ID cards this would aid peace officers with how to appropriately communicate during potentially stressful encounters with the public.

I strongly believe that HB16 is a step in the right direction to eradicate discrimination towards individuals experiencing a disability, as well as an opportunity to further expand education for law enforcement in order to help keep them safe on the job. Thank you for keeping Alaskans with disabilities in mind and for your encouragement and support for HB16.

Sincerely,

Jenna Steffes