

Kristina D. Andrew
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March 20, 2018

RE: Letter of Support - House Bill 151

Dear Senator Wilson and members of the Senate HSS Committee,

I am writing in support of HB of 151. With record numbers of children and youth in foster care, high rates of caseworker turnover, and the need for more relative foster homes, Alaska is in dire need of the improvements outlined in HB 151.

Our children deserve the best of care when they are seeing their parents at their worst. Currently because of the caseload size, caseworkers are not able to give their best to the children in need. When people become overworked, the very work they have in front of them suffers, in this case it is the children. Please give them the best chances in life by giving them happy healthy caseworkers to fill in the gaps while their parents get help.

Also, children take ownership and accountability when they are a part of the planning process. Please help ensure that children find the right fit and allow them to be a part of their case planning.

This bill offers solutions to insure training and workload standards for front line caseworkers, strengthens language, and agency accountability for timely relative searches; requires the department encourage children connections to siblings and former foster parents, when appropriate; provides for supports for certain family members to obtain variances to provide foster care; mandates that child in custody and at least age 14 be included in their own case planning and provided with tools they need to successfully transition to adulthood.

The changes proposed in HB151 will help to stabilize the workforce to better serve the needs of families involved in the child welfare system, increase the timeliness of children exiting foster care, improve the care and wellbeing of children and youth in foster care and help youth successfully transition to adulthood.

I strongly support your efforts to improve the life of Alaska's children by passing this bill.

Sincerely,

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House District 37, Senate District S