

## Testimony for SB 127

4-18-2018

Alaska Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 127. NAMI Fairbanks is a grass roots organization made up of people with serious mental illness and their families that has been active since 1983. We have been increasingly aware that mental health services are not adequate to meet the existing need. We also know that people with serious mental illness are more likely to be arrested and criminalized because of their illness and treated more harshly than others. We supported SB 91 that was passed in 2016 because it addressed many of the problems with our justice system including the financial burden to the state.

Please do not repeal SB 91. It is too early to determine the cause of rising crime. Crime rates in Alaska have been rising steadily for decades and it is inaccurate to blame SB 91.

Many factors contribute to the rising crime rate including an economic recession, state budget cuts that have forced cuts to our police, prosecutors and community treatment programs and especially the increased abuse of heroin and other illegal drugs.

Other states that have instituted justice reforms have seen a reduction in their prison populations and associated costs including Texas, North Carolina and Hawaii.

Alaskans need enough time for justice reforms to be implemented and evaluated before they are removed. If SB 91 is repealed, access to rehabilitation services for justice involved individuals will be greatly reduced. Low level misdemeanor offenders will be mixed with more serious criminals. Alaska's Pretrial Assessments would be removed. This just began in January 2018 and allowed an assessment within 24 hours of arrest to determine those with higher risk of reoffending. Instead of releasing those who can afford bail and keeping those who cannot in expensive prison beds until trial, the courts now have informed data to use for their decisions.

SB 91 allows low risk offenders to be monitored in the community by pretrial enforcement officers. Case management for an inmate's reentry needs makes it less likely that they will reoffend by meeting their community treatment needs.

50% of the marijuana tax will be invested in rehab services and programs in SB91. Losing these funds will reduce the treatment and reentry services.

Instead of putting our money into prisons, it makes more sense to invest in treatment options, and meeting other reentry needs so we can reduce the prison population.

NAMI Fairbanks Board of Directors: submitted by Jeanette Grasto- Advocacy Chair