Senator Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki
Alaska State Legislature District A Fairbanks

SB 10
Sponsor Statement

"An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date."

Senate Bill 10 would extend the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to 2027, ensuring another eight years of support for suicide prevention efforts in Alaska. The Council would otherwise be terminated on June 30, 2019.

According to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Section of Epidemiology, the suicide rate in Alaska increased by 13 percent between 2012 and 2017, making suicide the leading cause of death for Alaskans between the ages of 10 and 64. As a matter of public health, the state has a responsibility to address this disturbing trend and must actively continue to pursue strategies to prevent suicide in Alaska.

The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council was created in 2001 and consists of 14 public and private members, including four state legislators. Under AS 44.39.350, the Council is statutorily responsible for:

- Advising legislators and the Governor on ways to improve Alaskans' health and wellness by reducing suicide;
- Improving public awareness of suicide and risk factors;
- Enhancing suicide prevention efforts;
- Working with partners and faith-based organizations to develop healthier communities;
- Creating a statewide suicide prevention plan and putting it in action; and
- Building and strengthening partnerships to prevent suicide.

The Council holds public meetings, publishes a 5-Year State Suicide Prevention Plan, and works with schools and community groups to provide resources that educate Alaskans on how to prevent suicide.

Last year, the Council partnered with the Alaska Community Foundation and Alaska Children's Trust to continue the GCI Suicide Prevention Grant Program. Nine grants were funded in 2017 across the state, totaling $100,000. The Council also helped secure funding for a 5-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to create the Alaska Native Collaborative Hub for Resilience Research, which will help Alaska Native communities share knowledge, guide research, and identify culturally-relevant suicide prevention strategies in rural Alaska.

Terminating the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council would jeopardize the state's efforts at addressing this heartbreaking, but preventable, issue. I respectfully ask for your support of SB 10 this year.

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