



# ALASKA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

*"Walking Alaska's toughest beat."*

February 26, 2020

RE: Letter of Support for HB 84, *"An Act relating to the presumption of compensability for a disability resulting from certain diseases for firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and peace officers."*

Representative Josephson,

Alaska First Responders, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and Correctional Officers experience dangers in their daily jobs that most employees do not. These dangers can lead to exposure to many life-threatening situations and future debilitating medical conditions. When one of these individuals is fighting a serious, and potentially life-threatening disease or injury obtained on the job, one should not also have to fight for disability compensation. It is difficult enough to have one's abilities diminished from a workplace injury or disease, without having to fight the very system that is supposed to help. Codifying the law to include a presumption of compensability for a disability arising out of these diseases will help alleviate some of the stress stemming from their treatment and for this reason ACOA supports HB 84.

There is one area of this legislation that ACOA requests be revisited. This is the requirement that the employee *"was given an annual medical examination [EXAM] during each of the first seven years of employment that did not show evidence of the disease."* The Department of Corrections does not provide annual medical examinations; instead Correctional Officers are offered a reimbursement for an annual physical. This discrepancy in practice and statute could be remedied with an amendment ensuring that personal physicals satisfy this requirement.

Anyone who has dedicated their life for the benefit and safety of Alaska, deserves the protections this Legislation provides. Thank you for your support of Correctional Officers and the dangerous job they perform every day, 24 hours a day, to keep Alaskans safe.

Sincerely,

Brad Wilson  
Business Manager, Alaska Correctional Officers Association