

RE: Support for House Bill 307

March 11, 2020

Co-Chair Rep. Fields, Co-Chair Rep. Kreiss-Tomkins, and Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

The undersigned support House Bill 307, which intends to expand access to computers for inmates in the custody of Alaska Department of Corrections.

As collaborative partners within the Anchorage Reentry Coalition, we work with individuals that have returned to the community from incarceration and have witnessed the struggles that some individuals face as they are compelled to use modern technology such as computers, touch screens, and cell phones as they endeavor to navigate and integrate into the community. There are men and women that have been incarcerated for years and decades that have been left behind, technological-speaking, and are released into our communities with little functional knowledge about modern and appropriate use of everyday technologies. Allowing and facilitating access to computers and other modern technologies to access resources, communicate, take classes, learn skills, or otherwise retain familiarity with computers and technology will help to improve reentry outcomes.

We, the undersigned, support House Bill 307 to the extent that it removes barriers to accessing technology, but access to such technology must remain free and at no-cost to the inmates or their families. The concern is that this policy change could have the unintended consequence of allowing for-profit businesses to further enter into the space of incarceration and reentry in Alaska. Allowing a for-profit model to be established inside Alaska Department of Corrections facilities regarding access to propriety technology will further exacerbate inequalities and pass costs on to many already low-income individuals and families. Nor should this policy change allow for communication and technology costs to be passed on to service providers or reentry resources in the community, so long as free communication options exist and are readily available.

Again, we support House Bill 307 so long as it ensures reasonable, yet equitable, fair and free access to computers and technology for all inmates inside Department of Corrections facilities throughout Alaska.

Respectfully submitted,

Contributing Members of the Anchorage Reentry Coalition Steering Team



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