



March 22, 2021

The Honorable Representative Johnathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
State Capitol Room 411  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: HB 118 – Expand Access to IDs and Computers in Alaska’s Correctional System

Dear Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska.

The Boards support access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment in Alaska’s correctional system, which is known to improve the likelihood of rehabilitation, recovery, and safe and sober living in the community after incarceration. HB 118 removes provisions in state statute that restrict access to safe and secure computers for treatment, reentry and transitional support, visitation, and more.

Additionally, HB 118 supports the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) working together to provide an ID to eligible inmates before release to aid with access to housing, employment, training, treatment, and the requirements of probation.

Since the suspension of community in-reach programming and visitation in March 2020 due to the COVID public health emergency, most inmates have been with little or no access to programming. Where many were previously involved in treatment and recovery, anger management, batterer’s intervention, English and writing classes, cultural programming, parenting classes, vocational training, and more—they are no longer able to access most of those programs and supports. Family members are reporting that the moratorium on visitation for the past year has had a negative impact on their incarcerated loved ones’ morale and mental health. Additionally, the lack of contact with children and families has been difficult for family health.

HB 118 would address the statutory barriers that DOC faces in accessing modern digital technological resources for improved programming, education, and reentry support. Additionally, having an ID before release will address multiple complications experienced by returning citizens as they try to reintegrate successfully into their communities after release.

Thank you for your leadership on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Beverly Schoonover  
Executive Director