

# Representative Ron Gillham

## Alaska State Legislature

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### House District 30

#### Sponsor Statement

##### HB 193

*"An Act establishing a license and temporary license for an associate social worker; relating to the exemption of certain persons from licensure as social workers; and relating to the reinstatement of lapsed social worker licenses."*

This Act encourages and supports ongoing efforts to increase recruitment, professional competency, and retention of professional social workers in Alaska; as well as increased protections and successful outcomes for consumers receiving social services.

HB 193 serves to create a career-pipeline for those who wish to increase their personal and organizational competency in the professional practice and delivery of social service supports and programs, resulting in an increased supply and consumer access to highly-qualified, professionally licensed, Social Workers in the State of Alaska.

1. HB 193 defines and creates a new level of professional licensure for Licensed Associate Social Workers (L.A.S.W.). This is a license already recognized by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), and currently implemented in 6 other state jurisdictions. ASWB is the organization Alaska uses for professional examination (testing) of the Bachelor, Master and Clinical Levels of Licensure.
2. This bill allows candidates who have completed an Associates degree in Social Work; or those who received a certificate of human services or social work from a college or university approved by the board, *and* who have provided evidence of a combination of related paraprofessional experience working in a role supporting the delivery of social or human services with the opportunity; to sit for the Associate Social Work Licensing Exam.
3. The Act creates a new position on the Alaska Board of Social Work Licensing Examiners for a Licensed Associate Social Worker representative and eliminates one of two Licensed Clinical Social Worker Seats on the board, providing balanced representation of all four Social Work licensing levels and one public member seat on the Board.

4. The Act reconciles and clarifies regulatory prohibitions on the title, “Social Worker,” restricting its use to those who must be legally required to prove their competency to practice social work and to submit to the Board’s regulation under AS 08.95. This amendment includes the same penalties ascribed under 08.95.100 for Licensed Bachelor, Master and Clinical Social Workers, and for the new Associate level license.
5. HB 193 closes a loophole which has been used by previously licensed social workers, to allow the lapse of their license, while continuing to deliver and perform services employing otherwise regulated social work practices and methods.
  - a. This change includes a 12-month grace-period in which these workers can reinstate their license to practice through an application for Temporary Licensure. After which time they must continue to renew and maintain licensure for the remainder of their professional Social Work practice regardless of job title, or face penalties outlined in statute and regulation.

Consumers receiving or interacting with licensed social workers and agencies offering social services will benefit from increased access to and supply of competent licensed and regulated professional social workers.

Organizations benefiting from this legislation include the University of Alaska (both UAA and UAF Social Work and Human Services Programs), the Alaska Office of Children’s Services, Alaska Adult Protective Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, tribal and non-profit organizations operating Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) programs, community hospitals, school districts, the Alaska Board of Social Work Examiners, and the numerous associations who promote professional social services and social work practice.

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