

April 14, 2021

To: Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins and members of the House Committee on State Affairs.

We are an ad hoc group with expertise in Alaskan education, law and re-entry issues, working to expand incarcerated people's access to relevant self-education materials.

We write in support of HB118 - Expanding Prison Access to Computers. In our society, it is taken for granted that adults are computer literate and able to access digital information. Denied access to the internet, inmates are denied a basic and potent tool for improving rehabilitation and decreasing recidivism:

- To apply for housing, jobs, and educational opportunities, to be successful parents, and to do almost every paid job **requires digital skills and web-based resources.**
- **With internet access, prisoners can gain such skills before release.**
- Successful re-entry to the community requires **building and maintaining social and financial support systems that are internet-based.** Recidivism is reduced when individuals have knowledge of, prior experience with, and continuing access to educational and training opportunities, health information, job options, and sources of assistance.
- Incarcerated individuals need to **connect with their attorneys and access information that will help them understand and navigate legal proceedings.**
- More information and better connection will **streamline processes** that are chronically backlogged, improving the system overall.
- Teaching, training and consultation **opportunities need to be accessible in forms that do not rely solely on in-person contact;** the COVID-19 situation underscores this point.

While security concerns need to be addressed, technological expertise exists to structure a system that allows appropriately limited access. The minimal risks posed by use of a restricted system in a heavily supervised setting are far outweighed by the benefits to individuals and society of providing access.

Thank you for your consideration,

Niesje Steinkruger, Superior Court Judge, ret.
Audrey Kirby, Community member
Phyllis Morrow, UAF Professor and Dean, Emerita
Marna Sanford, FNSB Assemblymember
Nicole Eiseman, K-12 educator, ret.