



— Alaska Native —
JUSTICE CENTER
Voices for Justice

January 21, 2022

Representative Matt Claman
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau AK, 99801

Sent via email: Representative.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov

RE: Support for HB 183 - creation of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission

Dear Representative Claman:

The Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC) was pleased to learn of your introduction of HB 183 regarding the creation of the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission. HB 183 will ensure that the critical data collection and analysis functions currently housed within the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission (“ACJC”) will continue past the ACJC’s pending sunset. HB 183 embodies the consensus recommendation 11-2020 of the ACJC. The Alaska Native Justice Center designates a Commissioner to the ACJC, and I have fulfilled this role for nearly three years.

Since its inception, the ACJC has gathered valuable data and analysis providing law makers and state agencies with valuable insights and solutions-based thinking for improving Alaska’s criminal justice system. It is essential that this data collection function continue. Reliable data is essential for making informed policy decisions and to clearly demonstrate the disproportionate harm and impacts borne by Alaska Native people – both in victimization and in incarceration.

The Alaska Native Justice Center (“ANJC”) is a direct services provider of victim¹ services for Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) people. We also provide services to people returning to our community after incarceration. Finally, ANJC partners with Alaska Tribes to strengthen self-determination and sovereignty to serve tribal citizens. ANJC was originally founded to address the lack of attention Native women victims experienced in the Alaska justice system and the disproportionate imprisonment of Alaska Native men. Today, our mission continues to be Justice for Alaska Native people.

¹ Not everyone who has been affected by criminal activity wishes to be referred to as a victim. Some might prefer the term “survivor,” for example. For the sake of clarity, however, this letter uses the term “victim.”

The sobering fact and unacceptable truth of the matter is that violence in Alaska, and particularly violence against Alaska Native women, is at an epidemic level.

- We know that 80% of Alaska Native women will experience violence in her lifetime.²
- Despite being 18% of Alaska’s general population, 55.6% of Alaska’s sexual assault victims are Alaska Native people – primarily Alaska Native women.³

Because of the ACJC’s data collection responsibilities, we also know:

- From 2018 to 2020 less than 50% of the sex offense cases referred to the Department of Law by Alaska law enforcement were accepted for prosecution.⁴
- Alaska Native people are increasingly overrepresented within the prison population, from July 2014 to July 2020 the proportion of incarcerated Alaska Native people grew from 38% to 41%.⁵

To that end, ANJC is keenly aware of the ACJC’s singular contributions in helping state agencies, law makers, the public, and service providers such as ANJC to articulate systemic disparities in Alaska’s criminal justice system to better serve Alaskans. No other state entity or commission has the authority to provide the type of data collection from three state agencies, as currently provided by the ACJC. Because ANJC provides services to victims, survivors and re-entrants we are particularly invested in ensuring that data on all aspects of Alaska’s criminal justice system including victimization, incarceration and recidivism continues to be gathered and analyzed.

HB 183 would enable this critical data collection and analysis to continue with in the Alaska Criminal Justice Data Analysis Commission (“ACJDAC”). In addition to small modifications to the membership of the commission to improve stakeholder representation, HB 183 would amend the powers and duties of the commission to emphasize its status as a clearinghouse for reliable data and information on Alaska’s criminal justice system. Under HB 183 duties of the ACJDAC would include:

- Data analysis, research, and reporting on all aspects of Alaska’s criminal justice system, including state laws, public safety, rehabilitation, crime and incarceration rates, the needs of victims, and other factors set forth in the Alaska Constitution;
- Receiving data related to the criminal justice system from the Alaska Department of Corrections, Department of Public Safety, Department of Law, and the Alaska Court System;
- Identifying areas for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system;
- Recommending expenditures from the Recidivism Reduction Fund;
- Making other recommendations and providing analysis if requested by the Legislature, the Executive, or the Judiciary; and
- Issuing an annual report.

The statistics shared above, some of which originate from the ACJC’s 2020 and 2021 Annual

² André Rosay, “Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men”
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>

³ <https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/dec8c6c2-1db7-45fb-9401-637932594882/Felony-Level-Sex-Offenses-2018>

⁴ <http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/acjc/docs/ar/2020.pdf>, <http://ajc.alaska.gov/acjc/docs/ar/2021.pdf>.

⁵ Id.

Reports demonstrate an ongoing need for continued analysis and reform. To allow the ACJC to sunset without a replacement for collecting and analyzing data would represent a major loss in efforts to promote crime reduction, safety, and justice for all Alaskans.

Sincerely,



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