



Mayor
Suzanne LaFrance

Anchorage Fire Department



Fire Chief
Douglas Schrage

The Honorable Senator Robert Myers
State Capitol Room 7
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Representative Frank Tomaszewski
State Capitol Room 405
Juneau, AK 99801

January 31, 2025

Dear Senator Myers and Representative Tomaszewski,

I am writing to lend my support for legislation that expands Alaska's "Safe Haven Law," AS 47.10.013, to provide immunity from prosecution for abandonment to a parent who safely surrenders a newborn infant to an infant safety device designed for that purpose. We are fortunate to have a Safe Haven law that provides immunity to a parent who surrenders a newborn to a firefighter, law enforcement officer or certain health care workers under conditions specified in the Statute. Experience shows that such face-to-face interaction can be a deterrent to a new parent who might be unable to hand over their child directly to one of these professionals.

There have been recent incidents where parents of newborns abandoned their infants even though the Safe Haven Law would have allowed surrender to a firefighter or police officer without fear of prosecution. As recently as November 2024, a newborn infant was found abandoned just one block away from Anchorage Fire Station 1 downtown. In January 2022, a baby was left in a bassinet at a well-travelled intersection in Fairbanks.

Fire departments around the country are equipping their fire stations with safe-surrender baby boxes which are secure, monitored, and environmentally protected vaults in which a parent can safely surrender their newborn infant. These boxes are an alternative for those that might not be up to directly giving up their child to a live person. Once the infant is placed in the box, the fire personnel inside the station and their 911 center are notified with a special alarm after allowing the parent a short amount of time to get away undetected.



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The current Statutes do not provide immunity from prosecution for abandonment in the case of a safe surrender box being used. Thank you for sponsoring legislation to provide the same immunity as if the baby were surrendered to an on-duty firefighter.

I will make myself and my colleagues available for invited testimony if it would be of service to you and the public process. Please let me know if I can provide any addition information.

Respectfully,

Douglas Schrage