



February 5, 2012

Senator Bettye Davis  
State Capitol Room 30  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Letter of support for Senate Bill (SB) 137 – Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training

Dear Senator Davis,

On behalf of the Alaska School Counselor Association (AkSCA), we whole heartedly support SB 137, requiring two hours of training for certain educators and school personnel.

School Counselors know that thoughts of suicide are present at school on a regular basis. School Counselors are trained to intervene during a crisis, to include suicide ideation, suicide intervention, as well as aftermath of a crisis. School Counselors need other school personnel to help identify students at risk of suicide. The AkSCA board believes educating our school staff in identifying a student at risk of suicide and properly intervening by engaging and connecting the student to the appropriate help will save lives.

Nationally, suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10-19. In our state, suicide is the second leading cause of death for this same age group. While some suicides occur without any outward warning, *most* people who are suicidal *do* give clear warning signs. With educators having such a direct connection with our young people, they are in a prime position to recognize the signs of suicide and make the appropriate referrals for the next step of intervention. By training our educators to recognize these signs and to have an action plan in place, young lives will ultimately be saved.

Our students spend about a third of their life at school. The school staff needs to know that staff can learn skills to keep students alive and that keeping students alive is part of education and student success. Student safety is everyone's duty.

Thank you for your time, we fully support SB 137. If you would like to contact AkSCA, please feel free to email or call Sheila Beardsley, president at 907-401-0929 [sbeardsley@yksd.com](mailto:sbeardsley@yksd.com) or Eric Kelly, past president at 907-852-3880 [eric.kelly@nsbsd.org](mailto:eric.kelly@nsbsd.org).

Sincerely,

Sheila Beardsley  
AkSCA President

Sincerely,

Eric Kelly  
AkSCA Suicide Prevention Chair

cc: AkSCA Board