

January 24, 2025

House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol Room 120
Juneau AK, 99801

Subject: Support for HB 48, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

We are pleased to offer our support for SB 1, a bill to amend AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of the filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System can be appropriated by the Legislature to the civil legal services fund each year to provide access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs. Increasing the appropriation percentage from 10% to 25% will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations and ensure that access to justice in Alaska does not depend on how much money you have.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) is a nonprofit civil legal aid agency who would benefit from this legislation. ALSC has provided no cost civil legal assistance to low-income Alaskans for over 55 years. Civil legal aid is an essential service for survivors of sexual assault by ensuring that survivors have access to the legal support that is necessary to rebuild their lives. Sexual assault survivors often face significant barriers to justice, including navigating complex legal systems while dealing with the emotional and physical trauma of their experiences.

Since the original passage of 37.05.590, the community need and demand for legal services has only increased. Demand for help continues to exceed supply, with many Alaskans turned away due to lack of resources with no other option for affordable legal help. The passage of SB 1 and increase of funding for civil legal assistance will ensure that more victims of sexual assault have equitable access to the justice system. For many survivors, legal aid is not just an avenue for justice but also a lifeline that helps them to regain safety and stability.

Thank you for championing this important legislation to improve access to the civil justice system.

Sincerely,



Keeley Olson, Executive Director