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Tribal Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
April 2026

HB 384 – Definition of “Victim Counseling Center”

The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), the federally recognized state coalition of twenty-four community-based domestic violence and sexual assault service providers supports the introduction and passage of HB384.

When the confidentiality statute located in AS 18.66.200-250 was created to ensure all victims of domestic and sexual violence had access to a counselor who could hold every word they said to them in confidence, with limited exceptions, it included the types of organizations in the definition of “victim counseling center” that were doing the work across the state at that time.

Since the original passage of the statute, the federal government has recognized the need to ensure that tribal governments have access to victim services funds and Alaska tribes are now serving victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Unfortunately, there have not been corresponding updates to the confidentiality definitions. At this time victim counselors working for tribal government funded victim counseling centers do not have the same privilege given to other victim counselors across the state.

Having an advocate who can hold privileged conversations with the victim ensures that the victim can feel safe sharing information knowing that it cannot be used as evidence in court or with outside parties without their written consent. This allows the victim to control their own information at a time when control has been taken from them by the victimization.

HB384 adds two words “and tribal” into the statute. These two words will ensure that all communication between a victim and a counselor working for a tribal government funded victim counseling center is held in the strictest confidence.

We appreciate the introduction of this important piece of legislation and the recognition of its importance to victims across the State of Alaska.

Member Programs

Anchorage AWAIC, STAR | Hooper Bay Bay Haven | Bethel TWC | Cordova CFRC | Craig HOPE |
Dillingham SAFE | Emmonak EWS | Fairbanks IAC | Haines Becky's Place | Homer SPHH | Juneau AWARE
|Kenai LeeShore Center | Ketchikan WISH | Kodiak KWRCC | Kotzebue MFCC | Nome BSWG | Palmer AFS |
Petersburg WAVE | Seward Seward's Safe Harbor| Sitka SAFV | Unalaska USAFV | Utqiagvik AWIC |
Valdez AVV



Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
(Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax)

Date: February 3, 2026

Ref: Support of House Bill 384

Chief Gary Harrison,
Chairman/Elder

Rick Harrison,
Vice-Chair

Larraine "Rain" Wade,
Secretary/Elder

Cheryl Sherman,
Treasurer

Emily Peterson,
Member

Phillip Ling,
Member

Doug Wade,
Member/Elder

Good morning, Chair and members of the House Tribal Affairs Committee,

My name is Donna Anthony, and I serve as the Chief of Police for Chickaloon. I have over 20 years of law enforcement experience, having worked with local, state, and federal agencies. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 384.

Our Chickaloon Police Department and Tribal Court system operate at a high professional standard. We maintain an FBI ORI number and receive funding through the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and COPS grants. Providing victim-centered services, including advocacy, is not only a priority for our community, but also part of our grant deliverables—reflecting the level of responsibility and accountability we carry in serving and protecting our community.

The Alaska Constitution guarantees victims the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, and to be protected throughout the criminal justice process. In my experience, those rights only have real meaning when survivors feel safe enough to come forward and seek help.

Donna Anthony,
Chief of Police

Deven Stewlow,
Police Lieutenant

Jess Bently,
Program Manager

Todd Herring,
Training Sgt.

L.D. Howard,
Detective Sgt.

Tom Helzer
Police Officer I

Doug. Paradise
Police Officer I

Mike Patino
Police Officer I

Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand how critical it is for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to feel safe when seeking help. Victim advocates play an essential role by providing confidential support, crisis intervention, and guidance during some of the most difficult moments in a survivor's life.

However, under current Alaska law, tribal victim advocates do not have the same confidentiality protections as those working for private or local government organizations. This creates a serious gap. Survivors who seek help through tribal services may have their communications subject to disclosure, which can discourage them from reaching out at all.

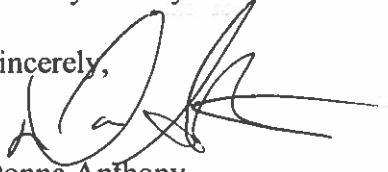
House Bill 384 provides a simple and necessary fix by extending these protections to include tribal governments. This ensures that all advocates can provide the same level of confidentiality, regardless of where they are employed.

From a law enforcement perspective, trust is essential. When survivors feel safe accessing advocacy services, they are more likely to seek help and begin the path toward safety and healing.

I strongly support House Bill 384 because it strengthens protections for victims, supports our communities, and helps ensure equitable protections for all—supporting ALL Alaskans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Anthony', written over a faint circular stamp.

Donna Anthony
Chief of Police
Chickaloon Tribal Police Department
907-745-1133
dlanthony@chickaloon-nsn.gov



April 10, 2026

Representative Maxine Dibert
Chair, House Tribal Affairs
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Chair Dibert and House Tribal Affairs Members,

We are writing today to express our strong support for House Bill 384 and the amendments to strengthen Alaska Statute AS 18.66.250 to extend victim advocate privilege protection to Tribal government agencies. This simple, two-word amendment is essential to protecting survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Alaska Native communities.

Alaska state law has long recognized that confidential communications between survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their victim counselors deserve legal protection. AS 18.66.250 extends privilege protection to those communications, but only when the counselor works for a private organization, a federally operated military program, or a local government agency. Tribal governments and tribal advocates are notably absent from this definition. This creates a legally indefensible gap: Tribal advocates do identical work with identical survivors, yet receive zero legal protection for their clients' confidential communications.

Without privilege protection, survivors in Alaska Native communities cannot disclose safely to Tribal advocates. When a survivor shares detailed information about abuse, escape plans, trauma, or safety strategies with a Tribal advocate, that information can be subpoenaed by an abuser's attorney, discovered in civil proceedings, or compelled as testimony in court. Survivors know and understand this. They have learned, often through painful experience, that disclosure carries risk. As a result, many survivors choose silence over help. They do not seek advocacy. They do not develop safety plans. They do not access the resources and support that could protect them. Tribal advocates, who are trained and equipped to provide trauma-informed care, find themselves unable to do their best work because survivors cannot trust that their communications are safe. This is happening in Tribal communities across Alaska right now, and it directly undermines victim safety and survivor healing.

Similarly, Tribal advocates know that their confidential communications are not currently protected under state law. As a result, some stop documenting thoroughly because detailed records about abuse, trauma disclosures, and safety strategies could be used against their clients. This actually worsens outcomes; survivors don't get the comprehensive support detailed documentation enables, and legislators and policymakers don't see evidence of the critical work being done. Advocates also feel ethically compromised; they cannot promise survivors the confidentiality that trauma-informed advocacy requires. This undermines the advocate-survivor relationship, which is built on trust and safety.

Amending AS 18.66.250(5) to include "or tribal" in the definition of victim counseling center would extend the same privilege protection to Tribal advocates that Alaska law already provides to private advocates, military program counselors, and local government advocates. Tribal governments are sovereign, and the work their Tribal advocates perform deserves the same legal recognition that Alaska already extends to local governments.

AKNWRC and our partner organizations, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), and Tribal leaders across Alaska, stand united in support of this amendment. We ask for your support for this bill. Tribal survivors deserve legal protection for their advocacy relationships, and Alaska law should reflect this.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this amendment and answer any questions. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to the safety of Alaska's survivors.

Gunalchéesh/Háw'aa/Quyana/Mahsi' Choo/Baasee'/Maasee'/Dogedinh/Thank you,



Tamra Truett Jerue
Executive Director
Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

Cc: Rep. Ashley Carrick; Rep. Robyn Niauya Frier; Rep. Justin Ruffridge; Rep. Andi Story; Rep. Rebecca Schwanke; Rep. Jubilee Underwood