



April 10, 2026

Representative Andrew Gray  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Chair Gray and House Judiciary Committee 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. This is not preferential treatment. It is equal treatment. 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 the State Tribal Affairs Committee to support this bill and to move it forward for passage. 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/Mahsí' Choo/Baasee'/Maasee'/Dogedinh/Thank you,



Tamra Truett Jerue  
Executive Director  
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Cc:

Rep. Chuck Kopp  
Rep. Ted Eischeid

Rep. Genevieve Mina  
Rep. Mia Costello

Rep. Sarah Vance  
Rep. Jubilee Underwood