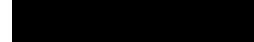


Meghan Mason



Anchorage, AK 99504

February 15, 2024

Senator David Wilson  
Chair, Senate Health and Social Services Committee State Capitol Room 121  
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: Alaska SB 181

Dear Senator Wilson,

I am writing to you today to express my strong support for SB 181.

Our family has been a licensed Foster family since 2017 and during that time we've had the privilege to love and care for 8 children. During this time we've seen first hand the lack of resources that go into making sure children in the system have what they need, which is leading to long term trauma and severe trust issues. As a foster parent our job is to bring these children into our home and ensure they know they're loved and cared for; that they're safe and protected. It's our job, in a sense, to provide a place of "healing" for them. Then the state expects them to uproot again. When do the children become the priority? When they've aged out? When they have seen and experienced more in their in short life than most adults? We need things to change now more than ever.

We had the honor of being the Foster parents of a little girl who we met the day we she was born and took home at 2 weeks old and had in our home till she was just over 4 years old. We had been offered adoption by the state and that was right around the corner when a biological family member across the country whom the child did not know decided to take placement. How do you explain to a child who knows they can't live with their biological parents and has grown to see you as their safe place, that they aren't allowed to live with you either? You can't. There's no words to make it make sense to a child, it's already sometimes impossible as an adult to understand the why.

By supporting SB 181 will allow children the opportunity to stay with a Foster family they've bonded and growing to love. SB 181 will also hold the State accountable for doing a better job at locating all and potential family/ family friend placements within a reasonable amount of time, not years after a child has bonded and been in our family.

There have been countless studies showing the negative impact that is had on children who have been in Foster care for many years and while keeping kids out of the system is inevitable, we can take steps to make changes to the laws and hold the appropriate people accountable for making sure these children have the opportunity to find placement quicker. Everyone deserves to be loved and feel loved, especially these children who may have never known that feeling.

Thank you for taking time to consider Bill SB181.

Sincerely,

Meghan Mason