

Alaska State Legislature

Interim

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Session

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Senator Donald C. Olson

CS FOR SENATE BILL 151(STA)

“Missing/Murdered Indigenous People; Report”

Sponsor Statement

For decades, the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) has plagued the State of Alaska. This crisis has taken loved ones from families. While women and girls are the primary victims of violence and human trafficking, these crimes also impact men, boys, and elders throughout our state. The absence of these lives affects the health and well-being of communities and has negatively impacted generations of Alaskans. In the last several years, there has been increased interest and attention to MMIP issues. The next step in addressing this issue, is passing legislation such as CSSB 151(STA), which proposes the following statutory changes.

Provisions of this legislation requires cultural training be incorporated into police officer training, establishes the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission in the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and directs DPS to employee at least two MMIP investigators. These positions will be permanent within DPS and shall investigate MMIP cases and act as liaisons between law enforcement agencies, communities in the state, and federally recognized tribes.

The Commission will consist of nine members from diverse backgrounds whose sole purpose is to, in coordination with law enforcement, review unresolved MMIP cases from different regions within the state to examine the trends and patterns related to these cases. From their findings, the Commission shall prepare a report providing recommendations to entities throughout the state to increase collaboration and reduce cases involving Indigenous persons. This Act also requests that DPS collaborate with the Commission on public outreach purposes. Along with the Commission’s report, DPS must conduct a needs assessment to determine how to increase protective and investigative resources for identifying and reporting MMIP cases within the state criminal justice system. Additionally, this Act requests DPS to submit names and information relating to missing persons to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) database.

Just last year this legislature secured funding for two additional DPS MMIP investigators. These investigators have made significant progress in reviewing unresolved cases, following leads, and making headway in cases that have historically gone unsolved, and we must not lose momentum. The creation of this Commission is necessary for the continued success of those who are working diligently to solve the tremendous amount of unresolved MMIP cases we have in this State.

In closing, I would like to thank the committee for hearing CSSB 151(STA) and ask for your support of this legislation to continue this essential work.