



3601 C Street, 1420 | Anchorage, AK 99503
1-866-227-7447 | Fax: 907-341-2270
aarp.org/ak | alaska@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpalaska
facebook.com/aarpak

March 4, 2025

Rep Sara Hannan
Alaska Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB48 Support

Dear Rep Hannan:

Older adults have unique health and social needs. Many are on fixed incomes. Often, older adults depend on government benefits and services that have complex requirements. Navigating this system can require access to competent legal assistance. Additional examples of legal help for seniors includes securing in-home care for eligible seniors to avoid the need for more expensive and remote care; preventing elders from losing housing due to predatory lending practices, illegal foreclosure or eviction; ensuring access to transportation and services needed for seniors to remain in their homes; assisting elders with getting their affairs in order so they can age securely by drafting wills, advance directives, and powers of attorney, and protecting elders from financial exploitation, neglect, and abuse through the use of civil protective orders.

People with low incomes, including older adults, are eligible to receive free legal services from legal aid lawyers under the Older Americans Act. As a grantee of the Legal Services Corporation who administers those funds, Alaska Legal Services Corporation receives federal funding which allows them to assist less than 100 low-income older Alaskans with legal needs annually. Last year, ALSC was able to serve more than 1,500 seniors with direct casework augmenting those minimal federal funds with state and private dollars.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation is a private nonprofit law firm that provides civil legal services to low-income Alaskans to protect their health, safety, and financial security. With the current statutory formula, Alaska Legal Services does not have the capacity to meet the demand of low-income Alaskans for legal assistance. Under current funding, for every qualified client served, one Alaskan in need is turned away due to a lack of funding. AARP fully supports updating the statutory formula to increase court fees designated to the civil legal services fund from 10% to 25% through SB1. Thank you for bringing this legislation forward.

Respectfully,
Marge Stoneking
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska





January 27, 2025

House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol Room 120
Juneau AK, 99801
Email: House.Judiciary@akleg.gov

Subject: Support for House Bill 48, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

We are pleased to offer our support for HB 48, 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.

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), which is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska including a membership of 174 federally recognized Tribes, 154 village corporations, 9 regional corporations and 9 regional nonprofit and Tribal consortiums, unanimously passed Resolution 24-15 during the 2024 Annual AFN Convention that urges the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to provide sufficient funding for ALSC to continue their vital work in Alaska to support low-income Alaskans. HB 48 is a critical step towards meeting the current need for services.

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. Legal assistance is provided statewide to assure Alaskans, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. For low-income Alaskans, ALSC is often the only place to seek justice to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans are at increased risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability to be protected from abuse. These unresolved issues have devastating consequences when left unresolved and impact the overall health and safety of our communities.

Since the original passage of AS 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. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary services, individuals could be subject to unfair treatment and would not be able to fully utilize the justice system.



AFN strongly supports the passage of this important legislation to improve access to the civil justice system and ensure that the Alaska justice system is fully accessible to all residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Mallott', is positioned above the printed name.

Benjamin Mallott
President



January 27, 2025

Subject: Support for HB 48, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear House Judiciary Committee:

We are pleased to offer our support for HB 48, 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. Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) houses thousands of Alaskans every year, operating approximately 1,750 rental homes in Seldovia, Ninilchik, Kenai, Anchorage, and Wasilla. While civil legal aid is often viewed as a resource primarily for tenants, it also provides critical benefits to landlords and helps maintain stability in our communities.

As a landlord, CIHA strives to provide safe and affordable housing while maintaining positive relationships with our tenants. However, navigating the legal complexities of landlord-tenant relationships can be challenging for both parties, especially when disputes arise. The assistance provided by ALSC ensures that tenants and landlords have access to legal guidance and resources that can prevent misunderstandings, reduce costly litigation, and encourage fair resolutions. For example, when tenants are facing financial hardships and unable to pay their rent, ALSC can assist a tenant by making referrals for rental assistance, negotiating payment plans, discussing alternative housing options, and helping tenants to understand their rights and obligations. This results in tenants that are better equipped to meet their rental responsibilities, thereby reducing the likelihood of eviction or prolonged vacancies for landlords.

Additionally, civil legal aid plays a key role in educating landlords about evolving housing laws and compliance requirements, minimizing the risk of unintentional violations. This education helps landlords avoid penalties, streamline operations, and maintain trust with tenants. Moreover, when disputes cannot be resolved amicably, having access to legal resources ensures that both landlords and tenants can engage in fair and efficient proceedings. CIHA has found that when an attorney is involved in supporting a tenant, a case is more easily resolved.

Supporting civil legal aid funding is not just a tenant advocacy issue—it is a community stability issue – and by ensuring that everyone, regardless of income, has access to legal resources, we are supporting a fair housing market that benefits tenants and landlords alike. Funding civil legal aid programs helps to create a more equitable and efficient legal system that fosters more economically sound outcomes for all parties involved. 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. SB 1 will be a positive step towards meeting the current need for services.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,



Gabriel Layman
President/CEO

January 25, 2025

Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801



RE: Support for House Bill 48 - Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Representative Hannan,

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) offers our strong support for House Bill 48, which would update state statute to allocate up to 25% of court system filing fees to the civil legal services fund. As the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, ACT supports policies that contribute to the economic wellbeing of vulnerable Alaskan families. House Bill 48 does this by expanding Alaska Legal Services Corporation's (ALSC) capacity to address the needs of low-income Alaskans in search of legal aid.

House Bill 48 provides a much-needed update to the state funding allocated to ALSC. Currently, the legislature has the discretion to allot up to 10% of funds from court filing fees to ALSC. However, the need for legal services has increased beyond this current funding capacity, resulting in ALSC having to turn away hundreds of families a year. ALSC services focus heavily on areas of law that impact the economic wellbeing of families, such as children and child support, low-income workers and consumers, domestic violence victims, and homelessness prevention. Accessible legal aid is a critical part of ensuring families have the knowledge, skills, support, and resources they need to thrive.

Since 1984 the eligible client population for ALSC services has grown by over 57,000 Alaskans, while available state funding for these services has decreased. This means that every year hundreds of families in need of and eligible for these legal services must be turned away. According to KIDS COUNT Data, in 2022, 14% of children in Alaska lived in poverty, and a study by the American Bar Association showed that half of low-income households experience at least one legal problem each year. Access to affordable legal services matters for Alaska's most vulnerable children and families.

House Bill 48 would increase the ability of ALSC to provide access to professional legal services for Alaskans, regardless of financial means, thereby supporting the economic stability and wellbeing of Alaska's most vulnerable children and families. Thank you for bringing forward this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. Storrs
President & CEO
Alaska Children's Trust

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

Holly Handler, Esq.
1406 Mary Ellen Way
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 321-9433

January 24, 2025
House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol Room 120
Juneau AK, 99801
Email: House.Judiciary@akleg.gov

Subject: Support for HB 48, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing as an attorney Board Member for Alaska Legal Services to express support for HB 48. This bill would 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. Legal assistance is provided statewide to assure Alaskans, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. For low-income Alaskans, ALSC is often the only place to seek justice to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans are at increased risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability to be protected from abuse. These unresolved issues have devastating consequences when left unresolved, and impact the overall health and safety of our communities.

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. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary services, individuals could be subject to unfair treatment and would not be able to fully utilize the justice system. HB 48 will be a positive step towards meeting the current need for services.

Thank you for championing this important legislation to improve access to the civil justice system, and ensure that the Alaska justice system is fully accessible to all residents.

Sincerely,



Thank you!