

Theresa Woldstad

From: Kelly McLachlan [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 16, 2025 2:49 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Robert Myers
Subject: Support for SB 9

The Honorable Senator Robert Myers

State Capitol Room 7

Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel

State Capitol Room 121

Juneau, AK 99801

February 16, 2025

Dear Senators Myers and Giessel,

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 9 and expansion of Alaska's Safe Haven Law AS 47.10.013 to provide additional options for parents to relinquish newborns via use of infant safety devices. Currently, the surrendering parent(s) must hand their infant over to a peace officer, medical personnel or firefighter. This interaction could be the most daunting task a desperate parent could ever face. Due to fear of persecution or judgement, they may abandon the child without notifying anyone who can help. Tragically, we have seen infants in our communities abandoned out in freezing temperatures rather than be surrendered directly to an authorized professional. Providing parents with a completely anonymous alternative to a face-to-face interaction could save a child's life.

As a future Master Social Worker, I am passionate about advocating for and protecting Alaska's most vulnerable populations. The death of abandoned newborns is a public health issue that must be addressed. It is incumbent upon us to provide anonymous options for safe and legal surrender of newborns.

Please continue working to advance Senate Bill 9. Thank you for sponsoring this important piece of legislation. I am happy to provide additional information if requested.

Respectfully,

Kelly M. McLachlan

Master of Social Work Student

University of Alaska - Anchorage

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Submitted Testimony
SB9
Infant Safety Devices/Safe Haven Baby Box Authorization
Alaska Senate Health and Social Services Committee
February 22, 2025

OPPOSE
Submitted Testimony
by
Marley E. Greiner, Executive Chair. Bastard Nation

This is joint testimony submitted by Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization and Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now. I am the Executive Chair of BN and the owner of SSHBBN, the largest baby box information. educational and media resource website in the world.

Bastard Nation: the Adoptee Rights Organization is the largest adoptee civil rights organization in the United States. We support only full unrestricted access for all adopted persons to their original birth certificates (OBC) and related documents.

Since 2016 we have opposed “Safe Haven Baby Boxes” that allow parents to anonymously stick their infant in a box in a wall and walk away.

Alaska has been a pioneer in protecting the civil right of its adoptees to obtain their OBCs without restriction and conditions. Until 1998 it was only 1 of 2 states that acknowledged the right of its adoptees to obtain their own OBCs and refused to seal our records. Passage of SB9 will be a giant step backwards and a betrayal of the state's history of adoptee support, dignity, and respect.

We urge you: DO NOT PASS SB9

This testimony has 2 parts (a general over-view of why baby abandonment boxes are bad and (2) our easy-to-follow Talking Points attached at the bottom of the testimony.

The promotion and use of Safe Haven Baby Boxes is anti-adoptee, anti-adoption, anti-family, and unethical. Boxes are a danger to the physical and mental/emotional health of mother and child. information. They promulgate the old secret system that adopted people have battled for over 70 years to abolish.

Baby abandonment box promoters subscribe, whether or not they realize it, to the long-discredited “blank slate” theory of adoption, reducing adoptees (whom they assume box babies will become) to familyless, historyless commodities—gifts given to strangers with no thought of the consequences to infant legal and psychological welfare or that of their biological parents.

Instead, advocates promote boxes as a consumerist “choice”—a simple solution for parents (usually mothers) so “desperate” that unless they can dump their newborns anonymously in a box-in-a-wall they will kill them or at least discard them dangerously. Proponents simultaneously claim these dangerous parents love their babies and want protect them from harm and not kill them. When asked to provide evidence of the efficacy of baby abandonment boxes, advocates can cite no studies or any other facts—only an intuitive “we just know.” The fact is that the number of reported dangerous discard cases throughout the US has remained steady for decades.

Recently the [Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University's Infant Abandonment Working Group](#) published Legislative Report: US Policy Responses to Infant Abandonment and Infanticide) download at bioethics.yale.edu/infan_abandonment)) Although report is not comprehensive, this is to my knowledge, the first study of the use and efficacy of “newborn safety devices.” The Center also sent an [open letter to HSS](#) supported by over 100 child welfare and maternal health scholars, clinicians, legislators and policymakers, educators, advocates, legal professionals, indigenous leaders, and concerned citizens from across the US to request increased HHS involvement in public health policy responses to crisis pregnancies and asking for oversight of a rapidly expanding network of unregulated baby abandonment boxes. (These documents and more are available at the general working group link above.)

Please don't think that these abandonment boxes are free as advertised by Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc, the non-profit Christian ministry that controls the entire baby box industry from bill-writing and lobbying to manufacture to installation to hotline to promotion to media. They frequently use babies boxed through their program in public events and fundraisers.

The organization initially operated on voluntary donations from individuals, ministries, fraternal organizations, non-profits, and foundations. It still collects substantial funds from them, but in the last couple of years states and local jurisdictions have diverted taxpayer dollars to pay for them. This year, the Wyoming legislature rejected a bill, before it was even officially introduced, to allocate \$300,000 and possibly more to pay for boxes, even though no discards were reported for at least 8 years. In the past couple of years, Indiana allocated \$1,000,000. New Mexico, with no box law on the books, \$330,000. San Antonio, Texas allocated nearly \$450,000 for 12 boxes. They have not been installed because the City Attorney doesn't like the company's contract demands on the city. Some locations have taken money from COVID and Homeland Security accounts. In Union Township, Ohio, outside of Cincinnati, township trustees decided it would be OK to bypass Ohio law requiring 24/7 staffing at box locations. When a local man discovered, upon visiting the fire station, that it was unstaffed with a working box, the trustees decided to hire an extra firefighter to babysit the facility; thus, taxpayers were dunned not only the cost of the box but paying an extra full-time firefighter at union scale with benefits. Ohio has had 1 box case years.

Of special note to Alaskan legislators: SB9 possibly ignores portions of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (Act) and state legal protections for Alaska natives, which could lead to litigation.

Not one adoptee rights or adoption reform organization in the United States supports the legalization and installation of baby abandonment boxes. Although, the current Safe Haven Baby Box initiative is a natural outgrowth of the Safe Haven movement, traditional Safe Haven organizations—the very people who developed Safe Haven laws—oppose baby boxes. [Here is a link](#) to organizations throughout the US that oppose boxes. (stopbbnow.org, our-friends)

The adoptee voice has been silenced in baby box discourse by design. We trust you will listen to us. Advocates and SHBB Inc in particular, refuse to respond to adoptee objections in any serious manner. The company's hotline operator and counselor publicly called adoptees who object to boxes “mentally unstable.” The founder of the company said on TikTok, “So take your little trauma narrative [*headbutt*] and go somewhere else.” The overall response, when given is “you hate adoption.”

What we hate are deceptive relinquishment practices, rooted in shame and secrecy that lead to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems and deny the babies who are adopted under this system, when they grow-up, their birth and adoption records, histories, and context.

What we demand is ethics and accountability in adoption and related childcare practices, not a band-aid solution to social, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discard to happen.

Please vote DO NOT PASS. It's the right thing to do.

Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!

Why We Oppose Safe Haven Baby Boxes

Adoptee rights and adoption reform organizations throughout the United States oppose deceptive relinquishment practices that are rooted in shame and secrecy, lead to drastic permanent solutions to temporary problems, and create a population of adopted people who have no birth records, identity, or history.

We seek ethics, transparency, and accountability in adoption and in related child welfare practices, not band-aid and gimmick solutions to social, political, and mental health problems that cause newborn discards. Contrary to long-standing and established child welfare policies, the use of baby boxes (sometimes called “newborn safety devices”):

- Creates a secretive and shadow child welfare system that eliminates informed consent, a child’s identifying information, and any record of the social and medical histories of newborns. Baby boxes operate to eliminate a child’s right to identity by eliminating accurate birth registrations and records.
- Commodifies infants and normalizes “legal” baby abandonment as a consumer choice, without acknowledging the lifetime psychological consequences for the baby and the mother, including, but not limited to, abandonment issues, shame, guilt, substance abuse, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation. Boxes represent state-promoted throwaway culture; some critics call them instruments of child abuse.
- Replaces professional best practice standards with unprofessional and unethical “relinquishment” procedures. Baby boxes instead give vulnerable parents a right to abandon an infant out of convenience or ignorance, with no counseling, documentation, or discussion of established alternatives, such as adequate medical care, financial and material family preservation assistance, or crisis nurseries.
- Deprives the non-surrendering parent of the right to rear her or his own child. Baby boxes eliminate any protections to prove that a person using the box has a legal right to surrender the baby. Embarrassed, frightened, or abusive partners, spouses or family members, and even sex traffickers, will use (and undoubtedly have used) baby boxes without the consent or knowledge of the (other) parent, with no repercussions. Baby box proponents dismiss the real, dangerous, and violent situations experienced by women, simply advocating that “if your baby is taken, just call the police.”
- Disenfranchises natural parents—particularly the non-surrendering parent (usually the father)—of their right to due process by eliminating their ability to locate the child, thus denying them knowledge of (among other things) the dependency proceeding to which they are a party. State-based Putative Father Registries, touted as a safeguard, are rendered useless since records are filed by the name of the mother who remains anonymous by law.
- Creates at-risk adoptions due to possible litigation from the non-surrendering parent or biological family members who may learn of the abandonment and seek custody.
- Contravenes family reunification guidelines of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA) and

dispenses with tribal rights embedded in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which can also lead to federal litigation.

- Encourages women to keep problematic pregnancies a secret. The promotion of baby boxes discourages family and professional communication and eliminates assistance for sexual and physical abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, and social isolation—factors that cause nearly every newborn discard. Studies indicate that once a pregnancy is acknowledged and discussed the chance of discard almost always disappears.
- Hides crimes such as rape, incest, spousal and partner abuse, and human trafficking.
- Promotes and supports the non-profit ministry Safe Have Baby Boxes, Inc., a million-dollar corporation that controls the manufacture, promotion, sales, installation, and referral of women to baby boxes in the United States. It has created the baby box market and lobbies legislatures, produces boxes at its own factory, installs the devices, operates a hotline that refers pregnant women to box locations near them, and holds press conferences when a newborn is left in a box. Rather than protect legitimate privacy interests of the infant, it uses boxed children as fundraising tools for its ministry.
- Discourages women from seeking pre-and post-natal care, instead encouraging dangerous and unsafe unattended births in the community, outside of a hospital.

Baby boxes do not address the causes of infant discard. Anonymously dropping a baby into a box and walking away does not obviate or solve the root causes of newborn discard/neo-naticide, which are:

- poverty
- inability to secure affordable medical treatment and reproductive health care
- denial or ignorance of pregnancy
- draconian immigration policies and practices
- substance abuse and physical and sexual abuse
- shame, crime, mental illness, dysfunctional families, social isolation, and poor communication skills.

More Information: Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now

Marley Greiner 614) 795-6819

stopshbbnow.org

2023 Stop Safe Haven Baby Boxes Now!

6537 S. Staples Street, Suite 125, Corpus Christi, Texas 78413-5423

(614-795-6819 * stopshbbnow.org

Testimony for Alaska Senate Bill 9

Honorable Members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee

My name is Pamela Stenzel, and I am a founding member of the Board of Directors for Safe Haven Baby Boxes. I am a licensed counselor with a Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and serve as the Director of the National Safe Haven Crisis Line (1-866-99BABY1). With over 30 years of experience counseling women facing unintended pregnancies, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges and fears these parents encounter.

Since the launch of the National Safe Haven Crisis Line in March 2016, we have received over **16,000 calls** and have assisted hundreds of parents in safely surrendering their newborns. I have personally handled many of these calls and continue to provide guidance and support to parents in crisis.

One of the most significant barriers to utilizing existing Safe Haven laws is **anonymity**. While current laws claim to provide confidentiality, they **do not guarantee true anonymity**. I recall one mother in Indiana who was terrified of a face-to-face surrender. Living in a rural area without access to a Safe Haven Baby Box, she had no choice but to call 911. When paramedics arrived, one of the responding firefighters turned out to be her former classmate—validating her deepest fears.

A review of **illegal abandonments** across the country reveals a common theme: **most parents wanted to do the right thing, but fear held them back**. Many placed their infants near Safe Haven surrender locations or in areas where they hoped the child would be found—too afraid of direct interaction with authorities. **Newborn safety devices**—tested, electronically monitored, and built into hospitals or fire stations—offer a **critical lifeline** for these parents.

Babies placed in these devices are retrieved and receive medical attention in under **five minutes**, ensuring their safety.

While our ultimate hope is that mothers in crisis receive the support they need, we must also ensure that **safe, legal surrender remains a viable option** for those facing desperation. A **dumpster, trash bin, or toilet is no place for an infant**—these women are crying out for help. **Senate Bill 9 offers a compassionate solution**, providing a beacon of hope for families in crisis throughout Alaska.

I respectfully urge you to vote **Senate Bill 9 as Ought to Pass**.
Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Pamela Stenzel, M.F.T.

National Safe Haven Action Coalition

February 24, 2025

Senator Robert Myers
State Capitol Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Senator.Robert.Myers@akleg.gov

RE: MSW Graduate Student Support for Senate Bill 9

Dear Senator Myers,

I will be graduating from UAA with a Master's in Social Work this upcoming May. As a member of UAA's Project BLENDS, my education has included a special focus on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH). As part of my process of transitioning from student to social worker, I have been following and researching Senate Bill 9, Surrender of Infants; Infant Safety Devices.

Through my studies of IECMH, I have learned that a key component of working with infants and young children is supporting their parents or primary caregivers. Therefore, when I considered the editing of our current safe surrender laws to include infant safety devices, I naturally wondered about the impact of such a development on the parents who might use the baby boxes. More specifically, if an infant is anonymously surrendered without human contact, then who is there to follow up on the wellness and needs of the parents? To settle this concern, I researched and was pleased to learn that Safe Haven Baby Boxes (such as the ones described in the patent information posted in the Documents tab of SB 9 on akleg.gov) contain packets of supportive resources that parents may take with them if they so desire.

My conclusion is that changing Alaska's safe haven laws to legalize the use of infant safety devices would actually increase our current support system for parents in extreme crisis. I advocate for Senate Bill 9 to be passed. In addition to the obvious potential for infant lives to be saved, the wellness of parents is also taken into consideration.

Thank you so much.



Danielle Desrochers, BSW

From: [Susan A](#)
To: [Senate Health and Social Services](#)
Subject: SB 9
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 11:10:56 PM

Public Testimony on SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

Madam Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Honorable members of the legislature, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 9. While I recognize the intent behind this bill—to prevent unsafe infant abandonment—it raises **significant legal, ethical, and social concerns** that disproportionately harm **low-income and historical marginalized communities throughout Alaskan which will have several unattended consequences, or at least this is my hope it was unattended. I urge you to reject this bill completely and refocus on** ethical, legal, and child-centered solutions.

SB 9, in its current form, is not a true "safe" surrender law but rather a policy that risks legitimizing coercion, family separation, and systemic inequities. Without significant amendments to protect parental rights, prevent coerced surrenders, and ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), this bill will exacerbate existing challenges in Alaska's child welfare system.

Key Concerns with SB 9

Risk of Coerced Surrenders

Research indicates that safe surrender laws, without proper safeguards, can be exploited to pressure vulnerable parents—especially minors, survivors of domestic violence, and individuals in crisis—into giving up their children under duress.

(American Psychological Association, 2023) explores the long-term psychological impacts of infant surrender on birth parents, including PTSD and depression.

(National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023) highlights the risks of coercion in anonymous surrender laws, particularly for domestic abuse survivors.

Impact on Indigenous Communities and ICWA Compliance

Indigenous children have historically been overrepresented in the foster care system due to forced removals. SB 9, if not carefully structured, could lead to violations of ICWA, which mandates tribal notification and placement preferences.

(Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023) emphasizes the need for strict ICWA compliance to prevent Indigenous family separation.

(Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, 2023) documents racial disparities in maternal and infant health, demonstrating systemic inequities that SB 9 fails to address.

Strain on Alaska's Foster Care System

Alaska's foster care system is already facing severe shortages in caseworkers, funding, and placement options. Increasing the number of surrendered infants without additional resources will further destabilize the system.

(Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023) reports ongoing caseworker shortages and funding gaps in Alaska's child welfare services.

(Child Welfare League of America, 2023) warns that overburdened foster care systems can lead to worse outcomes for children, including instability and developmental harm.

Poverty and Family Separation

Many parents surrender infants due to economic hardship, not neglect or lack of love. A law like SB 9, if not balanced with family preservation programs, risks pushing struggling families toward permanent separation rather than providing needed support.

National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023) explains how financial instability, rather than parental unfitness, often leads to unnecessary child removals.

(Urban Institute, 2023) analyzes how poverty is a significant factor in family separations and infant surrenders.

Legal and Ethical Concerns

SB 9 lacks sufficient protections for fathers' rights, opening the door for situations where infants are surrendered without the knowledge or consent of the biological father.

(National Parents Organization, 2023) examines how current safe haven laws can strip fathers of parental rights without due process.

(American Bar Association, 2023) raises legal concerns about parental rights violations under surrender laws without adequate oversight.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation Risks

Loopholes in SB 9 could be exploited by traffickers, as anonymous surrender options can provide a legal avenue for child transfers without accountability.

(Polaris Project, 2023) warns that safe haven laws without safeguards could be misused for illegal adoption and trafficking schemes.

International Human Rights Violations

The UN has criticized anonymous infant surrender laws for violating a child's right to know their biological origins, potentially leading to statelessness and identity issues later in life.

(United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023) outlines international concerns

regarding baby box laws and their impact on identity rights.

(United Nations, 1989) establishes that children have a fundamental right to family connections under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Policy Recommendations

The Alaska Legislature should reject SB 9 unless substantial amendments are made to:

Ensure ICWA compliance by requiring tribal notification and placement preferences.

Prevent coerced surrenders by implementing waiting periods, parental counseling, and informed consent safeguards.

Expand family preservation programs to address economic hardship and provide support before permanent separation is considered.

Protect fathers' rights by requiring notification and consent for infant surrenders.

Strengthen oversight mechanisms to prevent human trafficking and abuse of surrender laws.

At this point I stopped to question the entire legislature why this is necessary if there has been only been one damn case. Why not act on all the missing children or children in need of care right now? Are we creating an unnecessary problem once again to target vulnerable people?

SB 9, as written, does not prioritize child welfare, parental rights, or legal due process. Without major revisions, it risks exacerbating systemic inequities and contributing to unnecessary family separations. The Alaska Legislature must reject SB 9 unless it is amended to focus on ethical, legal, and child-centered solutions.

I will break it down completely for you to understand completely as I view the issue. Without critical protections, SB 9 risks increasing **family separation, overburdening the foster care system, and violating constitutional and tribal rights.**

1. Constitutional & Parental Rights Concerns

SB 9 allows for **the immediate termination of parental rights** without due process or a clear path to reunification. A parent in crisis may later regret surrendering their infant, but this bill offers **no mechanism to reverse their decision** (American Bar Association, 2023). Furthermore, fathers and extended family members are not notified or given priority for custody, creating potential **legal challenges under family law** (National Council on Family Relations, 2022).

The bill also grants **broad immunity** to facilities and individuals receiving surrendered

infants, raising **accountability concerns** (Alaska Bar Association, 2021). If a facility fails to properly report or care for a surrendered infant, **there are no legal consequences**.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

The root causes of infant surrender—**poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequities**—are not addressed in SB 9. Low-income parents, particularly in Indigenous and Black communities, often **face financial barriers** to raising children (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2022). Without access to **housing assistance, mental health services, or affordable childcare**, many parents may feel forced to surrender their infants rather than receive help.

BIPOC children are already **overrepresented in Alaska's foster system**. Indigenous children make up **65% of the state's foster care population** despite being only **15% of the child population** (Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023). SB 9 would likely increase these numbers, pushing more BIPOC infants into a **foster system with documented racial disparities** (Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2022).

Studies show that foster youth—especially from **marginalized communities**—face **higher risks of homelessness, incarceration, and mental health struggles** due to systemic neglect (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021).

3. Indigenous Rights & Tribal Sovereignty Violations

SB 9 could violate the **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)** by allowing Indigenous infants to be surrendered **without tribal notification or consent** (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022). Indigenous families have suffered **generations of forced child removal** through boarding schools, adoption programs, and state interventions (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2021). This bill continues that **historical pattern of family separation** by making it easier to permanently separate Indigenous infants from their culture and families.

Furthermore, many **rural Native communities** lack designated surrender sites, meaning parents may face **legal consequences** if they cannot access a safe drop-off location (Alaska Native Health Board, 2023).

4. Loopholes & Safety Risks

SB 9 mandates **infant safety devices**, but **lacks oversight** to track surrendered infants. There are **no clear regulations** on:

How long an infant can remain in a device before emergency responders arrive.

Who monitors video surveillance and how that data is stored.

Whether surrendered infants can be funneled into private or faith-based adoption networks, raising ethical concerns.

Without **transparency**, there is an increased risk of **human trafficking, unethical adoptions, and medical neglect** (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Additionally, the bill **allows private physicians and birth centers to receive infants without a vetting process**, leaving room for **exploitation and illegal adoption practices** (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2023).

5. Impact on Foster Care & Adoption Systems

SB 9 does not guarantee surrendered infants will find permanent, supportive homes. Instead, many will enter a **foster system that is already overwhelmed** (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2023). More children in foster care means **increased strain on social services**, leading to lower placement stability and worse outcomes for youth.

Additionally, this bill could be exploited by organizations seeking to **expand faith-based adoption networks** (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Without protections, certain groups—such as **LGBTQ+ parents and non-religious families**—could face **discrimination** when trying to adopt (Lambda Legal, 2022). These concerns align with **Project 2025**, which seeks to **expand conservative-led adoption while restricting reproductive rights and social services** (Heritage Foundation, 2023). This is not what the majority of Alaskans or Americans want.

6. Funding & Implementation Issues

SB 9 does not outline how **infant safety devices, staff training, or adoption processing will be funded** (Alaska Legislative Finance Division, 2024). If funding is diverted from existing child welfare programs, **struggling families will have even fewer resources**, worsening the **very problem this bill aims to address** (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023).

Additionally, **most designated surrender sites** are in urban areas, leaving **rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—without equal access** to safe surrender options (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

7. International Law & Human Rights Violations

By deprioritizing **family preservation and cultural identity**, SB 9 risks violating the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the **Hague Adoption Convention** (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023). Indigenous and BIPOC children could be placed in **transracial or international adoptions** without proper **legal safeguards** (International Social Service, 2023).

Recommendations

To **truly protect** infants and families, SB 9 must be amended to include:

A reunification process allowing parents time to reclaim custody if surrender was made under distress.

Tribal notification & ICWA enforcement to prevent Indigenous infant removals.

Equitable access to surrender sites and increased support for struggling parents.

Oversight & tracking mechanisms to prevent trafficking and unethical adoptions.

Funding transparency to ensure the foster system and family support programs are **not further strained**.

SB 9, as written, prioritizes **surrender over support**. Instead of making it easier for struggling parents to **give up their children**, we must address **the root causes of infant abandonment—poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequality**.

If we are serious about **protecting children**, we must invest in **keeping families together**, not expanding pathways to **permanent separation**. I urge the committee to **amend SB 9** to ensure it truly serves **the best interests of children, families, and communities**. Thank you for your time.

Further Problems with SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

In addition to the previously discussed concerns, there are several **additional risks and unintended consequences** associated with SB 9. These issues include **legal ambiguities, lack of procedural safeguards, potential misuse, and economic ramifications** that could further harm already marginalized communities.

1. Increased Risk of Coerced or Forced Surrenders

SB 9 lacks **safeguards against coercion**, creating an environment where vulnerable parents—particularly teenage mothers, victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness—may be pressured into surrendering their infants. Without a **mandatory waiting period or counseling requirements**, parents facing short-term crises may surrender their children **without fully understanding their options** (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2023).

Additionally, **abusive partners or family members** could exploit the law by **forcing or tricking** a parent into surrendering an infant against their will. **Since no identification is required**, coercion could go undetected, leaving a parent without recourse to reclaim their child (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023).

2. Undermining Safe Haven Laws & Family Preservation Policies

Existing **safe haven laws** in Alaska already allow parents to legally surrender infants at hospitals, fire stations, and other approved locations **while maintaining safeguards for family preservation** (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2022). SB 9 **expands surrender options** without ensuring that parents have been offered **alternatives like temporary guardianship, crisis intervention, or financial assistance**.

The bill contradicts **longstanding child welfare policies** aimed at keeping families intact when possible. Research shows that many parents who surrender infants might have **kept their child if they had access to temporary financial assistance, housing, or mental health support** (National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023). SB 9 **prioritizes permanent separation over family reunification**, which contradicts best practices in child welfare (Children's Defense Fund, 2022).

3. Failure to Prevent Baby Trafficking & Exploitation

The bill allows infants to be **surrendered at private physicians' offices, rural health clinics, and birthing centers**, but it does not require **any independent oversight** to ensure these infants are properly placed in the adoption system. This creates an opportunity for:

Unregulated private adoptions, where surrendered infants are transferred outside traditional child welfare systems, making tracking and accountability difficult.

Baby-selling schemes, where unethical actors could use the bill to **legally obtain infants for trafficking or illegal adoption networks** (Polaris Project, 2023).

Religious or ideological exploitation, where organizations could direct surrendered infants into **faith-based adoption networks** that prioritize ideological concerns over the best interests of the child (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023).

4. No Consideration for Parental Rights of Fathers & Extended Family

SB 9 does not require any **notification to the biological father or extended family** before an infant is permanently placed into the foster or adoption system. Under current family law principles, a father who **was unaware of the birth or surrender** should have the right to **establish paternity and claim custody** (National Parents Organization, 2023).

The bill could result in **a father losing his child without his knowledge** or a chance to assert his parental rights. This is not big on my list but is an important factor to also consider when support is needed but more importantly when a crime is suspected.

Extended family members, such as **grandparents or siblings**, may also be unaware that an infant was surrendered, removing their ability to seek **kinship placement** ([Grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org), 2023).

In cases involving **Indigenous infants**, this could further **violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)** by denying tribes the opportunity to intervene before the child is placed in a non-Native home (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022).

Without **a formalized process to notify biological fathers and extended family members**, the bill may lead to **permanent separations that violate family rights and ICWA regulations**.

5. Impact on Mental Health of Parents & Children

Studies show that parents who surrender infants under safe haven laws often experience **significant psychological distress, regret, and trauma** (American Psychological Association, 2023). SB 9 does not include **mental health screening or counseling**, increasing the risk of **post-surrender depression, PTSD, and long-term regret** among birth parents.

Children who grow up without knowledge of their birth families often experience:

Identity struggles and emotional distress due to a lack of medical or family history.

Higher rates of **attachment disorders and developmental challenges** (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2023).

Increased likelihood of experiencing **displacement and instability in the foster care system** (National Foster Youth Institute, 2023).

Without **mental health resources for both parents and surrendered infants**, SB 9 risks exacerbating **lifelong psychological harm**.

6. Disparate Implementation & Geographic Inequities

SB 9 does not **account for geographic disparities** in access to safe surrender locations. While urban areas may have **multiple designated facilities**, rural communities—especially **Indigenous villages**—may have **little or no access** to these services. This creates several inequities:

Parents in rural areas may face criminal charges for unsafe abandonment if they cannot reach a designated location in time.

Medical risks increase if an infant is surrendered in a non-medical setting without immediate healthcare access (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

Transportation barriers could make legal surrender impossible for families without vehicles or public transit options.

These **geographic disparities** make SB 9 unfairly accessible only to those in **urban**

areas, disproportionately harming **rural and Indigenous families**.

7. Undermining Reproductive Rights & Family Planning

SB 9 is part of a broader **trend of policies that prioritize infant surrender over reproductive healthcare and parental support**. Similar policies have been linked to efforts like **Project 2025**, which seeks to:

Limit access to contraception, abortion, and family planning services (Heritage Foundation, 2023).

Expand conservative adoption networks while restricting **comprehensive sex education and support for young parents** (Guttmacher Institute, 2023).

Encourage crisis pregnancy centers over legitimate medical providers, which often pressure individuals into continuing pregnancies without proper support (Reproaction, 2023).

By making it easier to **surrender infants without addressing the reasons behind crisis pregnancies**, SB 9 aligns with a broader **political agenda that restricts reproductive rights while expanding faith-based adoption networks**.

To **prevent these serious unintended consequences**, SB 9 should be amended to include:

Parental counseling & waiting periods before termination of rights.

Legal safeguards against coercion and trafficking, including tracking mechanisms.

Mandatory father and family notification before permanent placement.

Mental health support for parents & children post-surrender.

Stronger oversight of private surrender locations, including transparency requirements.

Rural access & equity measures to prevent geographic disparities.

Expanded family preservation programs to support struggling parents before surrender becomes their only option.

Removal of punitive approach to parents

SB 9 presents **serious risks** to parental rights, child safety, and marginalized communities. Without **stronger safeguards and family support measures**, the bill will **increase family separations, overburden the foster system, and create new opportunities for exploitation**. Rather than **prioritizing infant surrender**, we must

focus on **preventing family crises through support, equity, and transparency.**

I urge the committee to **reject SB 9 in its current form** and instead invest in **comprehensive solutions that truly protect children and families.**

Furthermore this bill also raises significant legal, ethical, and social concerns that disproportionately harm low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. Without critical protections, SB 9 risks increasing family separation, overburdening the foster care system, and violating constitutional and tribal rights.

1. Constitutional & Parental Rights Concerns

SB 9 allows for the immediate termination of parental rights without due process or a clear path to reunification. A parent in crisis may later regret surrendering their infant, but this bill offers no mechanism to reverse their decision (American Bar Association, 2023). Furthermore, fathers and extended family members are not notified or given priority for custody, creating potential legal challenges under family law (National Council on Family Relations, 2022).

The bill also grants broad immunity to facilities and individuals receiving surrendered infants, raising accountability concerns (Alaska Bar Association, 2021). If a facility fails to properly report or care for a surrendered infant, there are no legal consequences.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

The root causes of infant surrender—poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequities—are not addressed in SB 9. Low-income parents, particularly in Indigenous and Black communities, often face financial barriers to raising children (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2022). Without access to housing assistance, mental health services, or affordable childcare, many parents may feel forced to surrender their infants rather than receive help.

BIPOC children are already overrepresented in Alaska's foster system. Indigenous children make up 65% of the state's foster care population despite being only 15% of the child population (Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023). SB 9 would likely increase these numbers, pushing more BIPOC infants into a foster system with documented racial disparities (Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2022).

Studies show that foster youth—especially from marginalized communities—face higher risks of homelessness, incarceration, and mental health struggles due to systemic neglect (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021).

3. Indigenous Rights & Tribal Sovereignty Violations

SB 9 could violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by allowing Indigenous infants to be surrendered without tribal notification or consent (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022). Indigenous families have suffered generations of forced child removal through boarding schools, adoption programs, and state interventions (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2021). This bill continues that historical pattern of family separation by making it easier to permanently separate Indigenous infants from their culture and families.

Furthermore, many rural Native communities lack designated surrender sites, meaning parents may face legal consequences if they cannot access a safe drop-off location (Alaska Native Health Board, 2023).

4. Loopholes & Safety Risks

SB 9 mandates infant safety devices but lacks oversight to track surrendered infants. There are no clear regulations on:

How long an infant can remain in a device before emergency responders arrive.

Who monitors video surveillance and how that data is stored.

Whether surrendered infants can be funneled into private or faith-based adoption networks, raising ethical concerns.

Without transparency, there is an increased risk of human trafficking, unethical adoptions, and medical neglect (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Additionally, the bill allows private physicians and birth centers to receive infants without a vetting process, leaving room for exploitation and illegal adoption practices (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2023).

5. Impact on Foster Care & Adoption Systems

SB 9 does not guarantee surrendered infants will find permanent, supportive homes. Instead, many will enter a foster system that is already overwhelmed (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2023). More children in foster care means increased strain on social services, leading to lower placement stability and worse outcomes for youth.

Additionally, this bill could be exploited by organizations seeking to expand faith-based adoption networks (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Without protections, certain groups—such as LGBTQ+ parents and non-religious families—could face discrimination when trying to adopt (Lambda Legal, 2022). These concerns align with Project 2025, which seeks to expand conservative-led adoption while restricting reproductive rights and social services (Heritage Foundation, 2023).

6. Funding & Implementation Issues

SB 9 does not outline how infant safety devices, staff training, or adoption processing will be funded (Alaska Legislative Finance Division, 2024). If funding is diverted from existing child welfare programs, struggling families will have even fewer resources, worsening the very problem this bill aims to address (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023).

Additionally, most designated surrender sites are in urban areas, leaving rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—without equal access to safe surrender options (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

7. International Law & Human Rights Violations

By deprioritizing family preservation and cultural identity, SB 9 risks violating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023). Indigenous and BIPOC children could be placed in transracial or international adoptions without proper legal safeguards (International Social Service, 2023).

Additional Problems with SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

In addition to the previously discussed concerns, there are several additional risks and unintended consequences associated with SB 9. These issues include legal ambiguities, lack of procedural safeguards, potential misuse, and economic ramifications that could further harm already marginalized communities.

8. Increased Risk of Coerced or Forced Surrenders

SB 9 lacks safeguards against coercion, creating an environment where vulnerable parents—particularly teenage mothers, victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness—may be pressured into surrendering their infants. Without a mandatory waiting period or counseling requirements, parents facing short-term crises may surrender their children without fully understanding their options (*Center for Reproductive Rights*, 2023).

Additionally, abusive partners or family members could exploit the law by forcing or tricking a parent into surrendering an infant against their will. Since no identification is required, coercion could go undetected, leaving a parent without recourse to reclaim their child (*National Network to End Domestic Violence*, 2023).

9. Undermining Safe Haven Laws & Family Preservation Policies

Existing safe haven laws in Alaska already allow parents to legally surrender infants at hospitals, fire stations, and other approved locations while maintaining safeguards for

family preservation (*Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2022*). SB 9 expands surrender options without ensuring that parents have been offered alternatives like temporary guardianship, crisis intervention, or financial assistance.

The bill contradicts longstanding child welfare policies aimed at keeping families intact when possible. Research shows that many parents who surrender infants might have kept their child if they had access to temporary financial assistance, housing, or mental health support (*National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023*). SB 9 prioritizes permanent separation over family reunification, which contradicts best practices in child welfare (*Children's Defense Fund, 2022*).

10. Failure to Prevent Baby Trafficking & Exploitation

The bill allows infants to be surrendered at private physicians' offices, rural health clinics, and birthing centers, but it does not require any independent oversight to ensure these infants are properly placed in the adoption system. This creates an opportunity for:

Unregulated private adoptions, where surrendered infants are transferred outside traditional child welfare systems, making tracking and accountability difficult.

Baby-selling schemes, where unethical actors could use the bill to legally obtain infants for trafficking or illegal adoption networks (*Polaris Project, 2023*).

Religious or ideological exploitation, where organizations could direct surrendered infants into faith-based adoption networks that prioritize ideological concerns over the best interests of the child (*American Civil Liberties Union, 2023*).

11. No Consideration for Parental Rights of Fathers & Extended Family

SB 9 does not require any notification to the biological father or extended family before an infant is permanently placed into the foster or adoption system. Under current family law principles, a father who was unaware of the birth or surrender should have the right to establish paternity and claim custody (*National Parents Organization, 2023*).

The bill could result in a father losing his child without his knowledge or a chance to assert his parental rights.

Extended family members, such as grandparents or siblings, may also be unaware that an infant was surrendered, removing their ability to seek kinship placement (Grandfamilies.org, 2023).

In cases involving Indigenous infants, this could further violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by denying tribes the opportunity to intervene before the child is placed in a non-Native home (*Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022*).

Without a formalized process to notify biological fathers and extended family members, the bill may lead to permanent separations that violate family rights and ICWA regulations.

12. Impact on Mental Health of Parents & Children

Studies show that parents who surrender infants under safe haven laws often experience significant psychological distress, regret, and trauma (*American Psychological Association, 2023*). SB 9 does not include mental health screening or counseling, increasing the risk of post-surrender depression, PTSD, and long-term regret among birth parents.

Children who grow up without knowledge of their birth families often experience:

Identity struggles and emotional distress due to a lack of medical or family history.

Higher rates of attachment disorders and developmental challenges (*Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2023*).

Increased likelihood of experiencing displacement and instability in the foster care system (*National Foster Youth Institute, 2023*).

Without mental health resources for both parents and surrendered infants, SB 9 risks exacerbating lifelong psychological harm.

13. Disparate Implementation & Geographic Inequities

SB 9 does not account for geographic disparities in access to safe surrender locations. While urban areas may have multiple designated facilities, rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—may have little or no access to these services. This creates several inequities:

Parents in rural areas may face criminal charges for unsafe abandonment if they cannot reach a designated location in time.

Medical risks increase if an infant is surrendered in a non-medical setting without immediate healthcare access (*Rural Health Information Hub, 2023*).

Transportation barriers could make legal surrender impossible for families without vehicles or public transit options.

These geographic disparities make SB 9 unfairly accessible only to those in urban areas, disproportionately harming rural and Indigenous families.

14. Undermining Reproductive Rights & Family Preservation

SB 9 could inadvertently undermine reproductive rights by reinforcing a punitive approach to family separation rather than addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to infant surrender. The bill offers no support for family preservation programs that could help parents struggling with financial instability, mental health issues, or housing insecurity.

Reproductive rights advocacy emphasizes the importance of providing parents with the resources and tools necessary to maintain family units, including access to healthcare, family planning, and social support services (*Guttmacher Institute, 2023*). Without these essential services, SB 9 pushes vulnerable parents into a position where they may feel compelled to surrender their children rather than seeking temporary assistance.

Furthermore, the bill's lack of comprehensive support services or preventative measures perpetuates a cycle of poverty, stress, and family instability, which disproportionately impacts low-income and BIPOC communities. By neglecting to provide options such as financial support, affordable childcare, or mental health services, SB 9 effectively restricts reproductive autonomy by coercing parents into making difficult decisions without offering any opportunity for stabilization or reunification.

15. Lack of Family Reunification Measures

The focus of SB 9 on infant surrender, without robust measures for family reunification, undermines the long-term goals of child welfare policies that aim to preserve family bonds when possible. The bill bypasses opportunities for parents to work through crisis situations and instead creates a streamlined process for permanent family separation. Evidence suggests that family reunification is often a more beneficial and stable option for children, especially when parents are given access to services that can address the root causes of their crises, such as poverty, domestic violence, or mental health challenges (*American Academy of Pediatrics, 2023*). Without any pathway for parents to regain custody, SB 9 exacerbates the trauma experienced by both parents and children, leaving them without the chance to heal and rebuild their relationships.

16. Oversight and Accountability Gaps

Another significant issue with SB 9 is the lack of strong oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability in the infant surrender and adoption process. The bill introduces several new avenues for parents to surrender their infants, such as private physicians' offices and birthing centers, but without clear accountability structures, this opens the door for potential exploitation and abuse. For example, there are no established safeguards to ensure that surrendered infants are placed in ethical adoption systems or that the biological families are adequately notified or consulted. The lack of transparency regarding the tracking of surrendered infants could lead to cases of unethical adoptions or trafficking, with no way for authorities to detect and intervene in such cases. Stronger

oversight is essential to prevent the misuse of this law and to ensure that the best interests of children and families are upheld throughout the process.

Conclusion

SB 9 raises serious legal, ethical, and social concerns that cannot be ignored. While the bill aims to address the issue of infant abandonment, it does so in a manner that risks further harm to vulnerable communities, particularly low-income and BIPOC families, and undermines essential protections for parents and children. It fails to address the root causes of infant surrender, ignores the need for comprehensive family support systems, and lacks adequate safeguards to protect the rights of both parents and children. The bill must be amended to include robust protections for family preservation, mental health resources, oversight mechanisms, and alternatives to foster care, ensuring that the best interests of children are served without further exacerbating systemic inequities.

Furthermore, SB 9 presents itself as a well-intended measure to prevent unsafe infant abandonment. However, its implications raise serious **constitutional, civil rights, tribal sovereignty, economic, and public safety concerns**. It risks increasing instances of **unreported sexual violence, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities, overburdening the foster care system, and violating multiple legal protections, including the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and international human rights treaties**.

Without **additional safeguards, funding mechanisms, and accountability provisions**, **SB 9 will create more harm than good**. This testimony outlines its legal flaws, unintended consequences, and recommendations for more ethical solutions.

1. Legal & Constitutional Violations

A. Tribal Sovereignty & Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Violations

SB 9 directly conflicts with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (25 U.S.C. § 1901-1963), which mandates tribal placement preferences for Indigenous children to prevent state-led family separations (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023). The bill does not ensure tribal notification or jurisdiction, violating federal protections for Indigenous families. Given Alaska's large Indigenous population and its history of forced child removals, ICWA compliance is crucial to preventing further systemic harms (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023). Without safeguards, Indigenous infants could be permanently placed outside their communities without tribal input, violating their legal and cultural rights.

B. Loopholes for Sexual Violence, Human Trafficking, and Concealment of Crimes

By permitting anonymous infant surrenders with no screening or legal oversight, SB 9 creates a loophole that could shield perpetrators of sexual violence, incest, and human

trafficking (RAINN, 2023). Survivors of rape and incest, particularly minors, may be coerced into surrendering infants rather than reporting abuse. Additionally, human traffickers could exploit this law to eliminate evidence of forced pregnancies, preventing authorities from identifying victims (Polaris Project, 2023). The bill's lack of medical or forensic screening eliminates the possibility of identifying injuries indicative of abuse, further complicating efforts to protect vulnerable individuals.

C. Violations of International Law & Human Rights Treaties

SB 9 conflicts with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees a child's right to know their origins and identity (United Nations, 1989). By allowing anonymous infant surrenders, the bill denies children access to their medical history, family background, and genetic heritage. Countries with similar "baby box" laws have faced human rights criticisms for facilitating statelessness and severing a child's right to identity (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023).

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

A. Increased State Intervention in BIPOC & Low-Income Families

Alaska's child welfare system disproportionately removes BIPOC children from their families (National Black Child Development Institute, 2023). Rather than providing financial support to stPublic Testimony on SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

Madam Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Honorable members of the legislature, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 9. While I recognize the intent behind this bill—to prevent unsafe infant abandonment—it raises significant legal, ethical, and social concerns that disproportionately harm low-income and historical marginalized communities throughout Alaskan which will have several unattended consequences, or at least this is my hope it was unattended. I urge you to reject this bill completely and refocus on ethical, legal, and child-centered solutions.

SB 9, in its current form, is not a true "safe" surrender law but rather a policy that risks legitimizing coercion, family separation, and systemic inequities. Without significant amendments to protect parental rights, prevent coerced surrenders, and ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), this bill will exacerbate existing challenges in Alaska's child welfare system.

Key Concerns with SB 9

Risk of Coerced Surrenders

Research indicates that safe surrender laws, without proper safeguards, can be exploited

to pressure vulnerable parents—especially minors, survivors of domestic violence, and individuals in crisis—into giving up their children under duress.

(American Psychological Association, 2023) explores the long-term psychological impacts of infant surrender on birth parents, including PTSD and depression.

(National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023) highlights the risks of coercion in anonymous surrender laws, particularly for domestic abuse survivors.

Impact on Indigenous Communities and ICWA Compliance

Indigenous children have historically been overrepresented in the foster care system due to forced removals. SB 9, if not carefully structured, could lead to violations of ICWA, which mandates tribal notification and placement preferences.

(Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023) emphasizes the need for strict ICWA compliance to prevent Indigenous family separation.

(Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, 2023) documents racial disparities in maternal and infant health, demonstrating systemic inequities that SB 9 fails to address.

Strain on Alaska's Foster Care System

Alaska's foster care system is already facing severe shortages in caseworkers, funding, and placement options. Increasing the number of surrendered infants without additional resources will further destabilize the system.

(Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023) reports ongoing caseworker shortages and funding gaps in Alaska's child welfare services.

(Child Welfare League of America, 2023) warns that overburdened foster care systems can lead to worse outcomes for children, including instability and developmental harm.

Poverty and Family Separation

Many parents surrender infants due to economic hardship, not neglect or lack of love. A law like SB 9, if not balanced with family preservation programs, risks pushing struggling families toward permanent separation rather than providing needed support.

(National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023) explains how financial instability, rather than parental unfitness, often leads to unnecessary child removals.

(Urban Institute, 2023) analyzes how poverty is a significant factor in family separations and infant surrenders.

Legal and Ethical Concerns

SB 9 lacks sufficient protections for fathers' rights, opening the door for situations where

infants are surrendered without the knowledge or consent of the biological father.

(National Parents Organization, 2023) examines how current safe haven laws can strip fathers of parental rights without due process.

(American Bar Association, 2023) raises legal concerns about parental rights violations under surrender laws without adequate oversight.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation Risks

Loopholes in SB 9 could be exploited by traffickers, as anonymous surrender options can provide a legal avenue for child transfers without accountability.

(Polaris Project, 2023) warns that safe haven laws without safeguards could be misused for illegal adoption and trafficking schemes.

International Human Rights Violations

The UN has criticized anonymous infant surrender laws for violating a child's right to know their biological origins, potentially leading to statelessness and identity issues later in life.

(United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023) outlines international concerns regarding baby box laws and their impact on identity rights.

(United Nations, 1989) establishes that children have a fundamental right to family connections under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Policy Recommendations

The Alaska Legislature should reject SB 9 unless substantial amendments are made to:

Ensure ICWA compliance by requiring tribal notification and placement preferences.

Prevent coerced surrenders by implementing waiting periods, parental counseling, and informed consent safeguards.

Expand family preservation programs to address economic hardship and provide support before permanent separation is considered.

Protect fathers' rights by requiring notification and consent for infant surrenders.

Strengthen oversight mechanisms to prevent human trafficking and abuse of surrender laws.

At this point I stopped to question the entire legislature why this is necessary if there has been only been one damn case. Why not act on all the missing children or children in need of care right now? Are we creating an unnecessary problem once again to target vulnerable people?

SB 9, as written, does not prioritize child welfare, parental rights, or legal due process. Without major revisions, it risks exacerbating systemic inequities and contributing to unnecessary family separations. The Alaska Legislature must reject SB 9 unless it is amended to focus on ethical, legal, and child-centered solutions.

I will break it down completely for you to understand completely as I view the issue. Without critical protections, SB 9 risks increasing family separation, overburdening the foster care system, and violating constitutional and tribal rights.

1. Constitutional & Parental Rights Concerns

SB 9 allows for the immediate termination of parental rights without due process or a clear path to reunification. A parent in crisis may later regret surrendering their infant, but this bill offers no mechanism to reverse their decision (American Bar Association, 2023). Furthermore, fathers and extended family members are not notified or given priority for custody, creating potential legal challenges under family law (National Council on Family Relations, 2022).

The bill also grants broad immunity to facilities and individuals receiving surrendered infants, raising accountability concerns (Alaska Bar Association, 2021). If a facility fails to properly report or care for a surrendered infant, there are no legal consequences.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

The root causes of infant surrender—poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequities—are not addressed in SB 9. Low-income parents, particularly in Indigenous and Black communities, often face financial barriers to raising children (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2022). Without access to housing assistance, mental health services, or affordable childcare, many parents may feel forced to surrender their infants rather than receive help.

BIPOC children are already overrepresented in Alaska's foster system. Indigenous children make up 65% of the state's foster care population despite being only 15% of the child population (Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023). SB 9 would likely increase these numbers, pushing more BIPOC infants into a foster system with documented racial disparities (Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2022).

Studies show that foster youth—especially from marginalized communities—face higher

risks of homelessness, incarceration, and mental health struggles due to systemic neglect (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021).

3. Indigenous Rights & Tribal Sovereignty Violations

SB 9 could violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by allowing Indigenous infants to be surrendered without tribal notification or consent (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022). Indigenous families have suffered generations of forced child removal through boarding schools, adoption programs, and state interventions (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2021). This bill continues that historical pattern of family separation by making it easier to permanently separate Indigenous infants from their culture and families.

Furthermore, many rural Native communities lack designated surrender sites, meaning parents may face legal consequences if they cannot access a safe drop-off location (Alaska Native Health Board, 2023).

4. Loopholes & Safety Risks

SB 9 mandates infant safety devices, but lacks oversight to track surrendered infants. There are no clear regulations on:

How long an infant can remain in a device before emergency responders arrive.

Who monitors video surveillance and how that data is stored.

Whether surrendered infants can be funneled into private or faith-based adoption networks, raising ethical concerns.

Without transparency, there is an increased risk of human trafficking, unethical adoptions, and medical neglect (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Additionally, the bill allows private physicians and birth centers to receive infants without a vetting process, leaving room for exploitation and illegal adoption practices (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2023).

5. Impact on Foster Care & Adoption Systems

SB 9 does not guarantee surrendered infants will find permanent, supportive homes. Instead, many will enter a foster system that is already overwhelmed (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2023). More children in foster care means increased strain on social services, leading to lower placement stability and worse outcomes for youth.

Additionally, this bill could be exploited by organizations seeking to expand faith-based adoption networks (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Without protections, certain groups—such as LGBTQ+ parents and non-religious families—could face discrimination when trying to adopt (Lambda Legal, 2022). These concerns align with Project 2025, which seeks to expand conservative-led adoption while restricting

reproductive rights and social services (Heritage Foundation, 2023). This is not what the majority of Alaskans or Americans want.

6. Funding & Implementation Issues

SB 9 does not outline how infant safety devices, staff training, or adoption processing will be funded (Alaska Legislative Finance Division, 2024). If funding is diverted from existing child welfare programs, struggling families will have even fewer resources, worsening the very problem this bill aims to address (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023).

Additionally, most designated surrender sites are in urban areas, leaving rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—without equal access to safe surrender options (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

7. International Law & Human Rights Violations

By deprioritizing family preservation and cultural identity, SB 9 risks violating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023). Indigenous and BIPOC children could be placed in transracial or international adoptions without proper legal safeguards (International Social Service, 2023).

Recommendations

To truly protect infants and families, SB 9 must be amended to include:

A reunification process allowing parents time to reclaim custody if surrender was made under distress.

Tribal notification & ICWA enforcement to prevent Indigenous infant removals.

Equitable access to surrender sites and increased support for struggling parents.

Oversight & tracking mechanisms to prevent trafficking and unethical adoptions.
Funding transparency to ensure the foster system and family support programs are not further strained.

SB 9, as written, prioritizes surrender over support. Instead of making it easier for struggling parents to give up their children, we must address the root causes of infant abandonment—poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequality.

If we are serious about protecting children, we must invest in keeping families together,

not expanding pathways to permanent separation. I urge the committee to amend SB 9 to ensure it truly serves the best interests of children, families, and communities. Thank you for your time.

Further Problems with SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

In addition to the previously discussed concerns, there are several additional risks and unintended consequences associated with SB 9. These issues include legal ambiguities, lack of procedural safeguards, potential misuse, and economic ramifications that could further harm already marginalized communities.

1. Increased Risk of Coerced or Forced Surrenders

SB 9 lacks safeguards against coercion, creating an environment where vulnerable parents—particularly teenage mothers, victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness—may be pressured into surrendering their infants. Without a mandatory waiting period or counseling requirements, parents facing short-term crises may surrender their children without fully understanding their options (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2023).

Additionally, abusive partners or family members could exploit the law by forcing or tricking a parent into surrendering an infant against their will. Since no identification is required, coercion could go undetected, leaving a parent without recourse to reclaim their child (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023).

2. Undermining Safe Haven Laws & Family Preservation Policies

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The bill contradicts longstanding child welfare policies aimed at keeping families intact when possible. Research shows that many parents who surrender infants might have kept their child if they had access to temporary financial assistance, housing, or mental health support (National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023). SB 9 prioritizes permanent separation over family reunification, which contradicts best practices in child welfare (Children's Defense Fund, 2022).

3. Failure to Prevent Baby Trafficking & Exploitation

The bill allows infants to be surrendered at private physicians' offices, rural health

clinics, and birthing centers, but it does not require any independent oversight to ensure these infants are properly placed in the adoption system. This creates an opportunity for:

Unregulated private adoptions, where surrendered infants are transferred outside traditional child welfare systems, making tracking and accountability difficult.

Baby-selling schemes, where unethical actors could use the bill to legally obtain infants for trafficking or illegal adoption networks (Polaris Project, 2023).

Religious or ideological exploitation, where organizations could direct surrendered infants into faith-based adoption networks that prioritize ideological concerns over the best interests of the child (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023).

4. No Consideration for Parental Rights of Fathers & Extended Family

SB 9 does not require any notification to the biological father or extended family before an infant is permanently placed into the foster or adoption system. Under current family law principles, a father who was unaware of the birth or surrender should have the right to establish paternity and claim custody (National Parents Organization, 2023).

The bill could result in a father losing his child without his knowledge or a chance to assert his parental rights. This is not big on my list but is an important factor to also consider when support is needed but more importantly when a crime is suspected.

Extended family members, such as grandparents or siblings, may also be unaware that an infant was surrendered, removing their ability to seek kinship placement ([Grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org), 2023).

In cases involving Indigenous infants, this could further violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by denying tribes the opportunity to intervene before the child is placed in a non-Native home (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022).

Without a formalized process to notify biological fathers and extended family members, the bill may lead to permanent separations that violate family rights and ICWA regulations.

5. Impact on Mental Health of Parents & Children

Studies show that parents who surrender infants under safe haven laws often experience significant psychological distress, regret, and trauma (American Psychological Association, 2023). SB 9 does not include mental health screening or counseling, increasing the risk of post-surrender depression, PTSD, and long-term regret among birth parents.

Children who grow up without knowledge of their birth families often experience:

Identity struggles and emotional distress due to a lack of medical or family history.

Higher rates of attachment disorders and developmental challenges (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2023).

Increased likelihood of experiencing displacement and instability in the foster care system (National Foster Youth Institute, 2023).

Without mental health resources for both parents and surrendered infants, SB 9 risks exacerbating lifelong psychological harm.

6. Disparate Implementation & Geographic Inequities

SB 9 does not account for geographic disparities in access to safe surrender locations. While urban areas may have multiple designated facilities, rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—may have little or no access to these services. This creates several inequities:

Parents in rural areas may face criminal charges for unsafe abandonment if they cannot reach a designated location in time.

Medical risks increase if an infant is surrendered in a non-medical setting without immediate healthcare access (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

Transportation barriers could make legal surrender impossible for families without vehicles or public transit options.

These geographic disparities make SB 9 unfairly accessible only to those in urban areas, disproportionately harming rural and Indigenous families.

7. Undermining Reproductive Rights & Family Planning

SB 9 is part of a broader trend of policies that prioritize infant surrender over reproductive healthcare and parental support. Similar policies have been linked to efforts like Project 2025, which seeks to:

Limit access to contraception, abortion, and family planning services (Heritage Foundation, 2023).

Expand conservative adoption networks while restricting comprehensive sex education and support for young parents (Guttmacher Institute, 2023).

Encourage crisis pregnancy centers over legitimate medical providers, which often pressure individuals into continuing pregnancies without proper support (Reproaction, 2023).

By making it easier to surrender infants without addressing the reasons behind crisis pregnancies, SB 9 aligns with a broader political agenda that restricts reproductive rights while expanding faith-based adoption networks.

To prevent these serious unintended consequences, SB 9 should be amended to include:

Parental counseling & waiting periods before termination of rights.

Legal safeguards against coercion and trafficking, including tracking mechanisms.

Mandatory father and family notification before permanent placement.

Mental health support for parents & children post-surrender.

Stronger oversight of private surrender locations, including transparency requirements.

Rural access & equity measures to prevent geographic disparities.

Expanded family preservation programs to support struggling parents before surrender becomes their only option.

Removal of punitive approach to parents

SB 9 presents serious risks to parental rights, child safety, and marginalized communities. Without stronger safeguards and family support measures, the bill will increase family separations, overburden the foster system, and create new opportunities for exploitation. Rather than prioritizing infant surrender, we must focus on preventing family crises through support, equity, and transparency.

I urge the committee to reject SB 9 in its current form and instead invest in comprehensive solutions that truly protect children and families.

Furthermore this bill also raises significant legal, ethical, and social concerns that disproportionately harm low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. Without critical protections, SB 9 risks increasing family separation, overburdening the foster care system, and violating constitutional and tribal rights.

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The bill also grants broad immunity to facilities and individuals receiving surrendered infants, raising accountability concerns (Alaska Bar Association, 2021). If a facility fails to properly report or care for a surrendered infant, there are no legal consequences.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

The root causes of infant surrender—poverty, lack of healthcare, and systemic inequities—are not addressed in SB 9. Low-income parents, particularly in Indigenous and Black communities, often face financial barriers to raising children (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2022). Without access to housing assistance, mental health services, or affordable childcare, many parents may feel forced to surrender their infants rather than receive help.

BIPOC children are already overrepresented in Alaska’s foster system. Indigenous children make up 65% of the state’s foster care population despite being only 15% of the child population (Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023). SB 9 would likely increase these numbers, pushing more BIPOC infants into a foster system with documented racial disparities (Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2022).

Studies show that foster youth—especially from marginalized communities—face higher risks of homelessness, incarceration, and mental health struggles due to systemic neglect (National Foster Youth Institute, 2021).

3. Indigenous Rights & Tribal Sovereignty Violations

SB 9 could violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by allowing Indigenous infants to be surrendered without tribal notification or consent (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022). Indigenous families have suffered generations of forced child removal through boarding schools, adoption programs, and state interventions (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2021). This bill continues that historical pattern of family separation by making it easier to permanently separate Indigenous infants from their culture and families.

Furthermore, many rural Native communities lack designated surrender sites, meaning parents may face legal consequences if they cannot access a safe drop-off location (Alaska Native Health Board, 2023).

4. Loopholes & Safety Risks

SB 9 mandates infant safety devices but lacks oversight to track surrendered infants. There are no clear regulations on:

How long an infant can remain in a device before emergency responders arrive.

Who monitors video surveillance and how that data is stored.

Whether surrendered infants can be funneled into private or faith-based adoption networks, raising ethical concerns.

Without transparency, there is an increased risk of human trafficking, unethical adoptions, and medical neglect (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Additionally, the bill allows private physicians and birth centers to receive infants without a vetting process, leaving room for exploitation and illegal adoption practices (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2023).

5. Impact on Foster Care & Adoption Systems

SB 9 does not guarantee surrendered infants will find permanent, supportive homes. Instead, many will enter a foster system that is already overwhelmed (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2023). More children in foster care means increased strain on social services, leading to lower placement stability and worse outcomes for youth.

Additionally, this bill could be exploited by organizations seeking to expand faith-based adoption networks (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Without protections, certain groups—such as LGBTQ+ parents and non-religious families—could face discrimination when trying to adopt (Lambda Legal, 2022). These concerns align with Project 2025, which seeks to expand conservative-led adoption while restricting reproductive rights and social services (Heritage Foundation, 2023).

6. Funding & Implementation Issues

SB 9 does not outline how infant safety devices, staff training, or adoption processing will be funded (Alaska Legislative Finance Division, 2024). If funding is diverted from existing child welfare programs, struggling families will have even fewer resources, worsening the very problem this bill aims to address (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023).

Additionally, most designated surrender sites are in urban areas, leaving rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—without equal access to safe surrender options (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

7. International Law & Human Rights Violations

By deprioritizing family preservation and cultural identity, SB 9 risks violating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023). Indigenous and BIPOC children could be placed in transracial or international adoptions without proper legal safeguards (International Social Service, 2023).

Additional Problems with SB 9: Infant Surrender Act

In addition to the previously discussed concerns, there are several additional risks and unintended consequences associated with SB 9. These issues include legal ambiguities, lack of procedural safeguards, potential misuse, and economic ramifications that could further harm already marginalized communities.

8. Increased Risk of Coerced or Forced Surrenders

SB 9 lacks safeguards against coercion, creating an environment where vulnerable parents—particularly teenage mothers, victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness—may be pressured into surrendering their infants. Without a mandatory waiting period or counseling requirements, parents facing short-term crises may surrender their children without fully understanding their options (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2023).

Additionally, abusive partners or family members could exploit the law by forcing or tricking a parent into surrendering an infant against their will. Since no identification is required, coercion could go undetected, leaving a parent without recourse to reclaim their child (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2023).

9. Undermining Safe Haven Laws & Family Preservation Policies

Existing safe haven laws in Alaska already allow parents to legally surrender infants at hospitals, fire stations, and other approved locations while maintaining safeguards for family preservation (Alaska Office of Children's Services, 2022). SB 9 expands surrender options without ensuring that parents have been offered alternatives like temporary guardianship, crisis intervention, or financial assistance.

The bill contradicts longstanding child welfare policies aimed at keeping families intact when possible. Research shows that many parents who surrender infants might have kept their child if they had access to temporary financial assistance, housing, or mental health support (National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, 2023). SB 9 prioritizes permanent separation over family reunification, which contradicts best practices in child welfare (Children's Defense Fund, 2022).

10. Failure to Prevent Baby Trafficking & Exploitation

The bill allows infants to be surrendered at private physicians' offices, rural health clinics, and birthing centers, but it does not require any independent oversight to ensure these infants are properly placed in the adoption system. This creates an opportunity for:

Unregulated private adoptions, where surrendered infants are transferred outside traditional child welfare systems, making tracking and accountability difficult.

Baby-selling schemes, where unethical actors could use the bill to legally obtain infants for trafficking or illegal adoption networks (Polaris Project, 2023).

Religious or ideological exploitation, where organizations could direct surrendered infants into faith-based adoption networks that prioritize ideological concerns over the best interests of the child (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023).

11. No Consideration for Parental Rights of Fathers & Extended Family

SB 9 does not require any notification to the biological father or extended family before an infant is permanently placed into the foster or adoption system. Under current family law principles, a father who was unaware of the birth or surrender should have the right to establish paternity and claim custody (National Parents Organization, 2023).

The bill could result in a father losing his child without his knowledge or a chance to assert his parental rights.

Extended family members, such as grandparents or siblings, may also be unaware that an infant was surrendered, removing their ability to seek kinship placement ([Grandfamilies.org](https://www.grandfamilies.org), 2023).

In cases involving Indigenous infants, this could further violate the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by denying tribes the opportunity to intervene before the child is placed in a non-Native home (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2022).

Without a formalized process to notify biological fathers and extended family members, the bill may lead to permanent separations that violate family rights and ICWA regulations.

12. Impact on Mental Health of Parents & Children

Studies show that parents who surrender infants under safe haven laws often experience significant psychological distress, regret, and trauma (American Psychological

Association, 2023). SB 9 does not include mental health screening or counseling, increasing the risk of post-surrender depression, PTSD, and long-term regret among birth parents.

Children who grow up without knowledge of their birth families often experience:

Identity struggles and emotional distress due to a lack of medical or family history.

Higher rates of attachment disorders and developmental challenges (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2023).

Increased likelihood of experiencing displacement and instability in the foster care system (National Foster Youth Institute, 2023).

Without mental health resources for both parents and surrendered infants, SB 9 risks exacerbating lifelong psychological harm.

13. Disparate Implementation & Geographic Inequities

SB 9 does not account for geographic disparities in access to safe surrender locations. While urban areas may have multiple designated facilities, rural communities—especially Indigenous villages—may have little or no access to these services. This creates several inequities:

Parents in rural areas may face criminal charges for unsafe abandonment if they cannot reach a designated location in time.

Medical risks increase if an infant is surrendered in a non-medical setting without immediate healthcare access (Rural Health Information Hub, 2023).

Transportation barriers could make legal surrender impossible for families without vehicles or public transit options.

These geographic disparities make SB 9 unfairly accessible only to those in urban areas, disproportionately harming rural and Indigenous families.

14. Undermining Reproductive Rights & Family Preservation

SB 9 could inadvertently undermine reproductive rights by reinforcing a punitive approach to family separation rather than addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to infant surrender. The bill offers no support for family preservation programs that could help parents struggling with financial instability, mental health issues, or housing insecurity.

Reproductive rights advocacy emphasizes the importance of providing parents with the resources and tools necessary to maintain family units, including access to healthcare, family planning, and social support services (Guttmacher Institute, 2023). Without these essential services, SB 9 pushes vulnerable parents into a position where they may feel compelled to surrender their children rather than seeking temporary assistance.

Furthermore, the bill's lack of comprehensive support services or preventative measures perpetuates a cycle of poverty, stress, and family instability, which disproportionately impacts low-income and BIPOC communities. By neglecting to provide options such as financial support, affordable childcare, or mental health services, SB 9 effectively restricts reproductive autonomy by coercing parents into making difficult decisions without offering any opportunity for stabilization or reunification.

15. Lack of Family Reunification Measures

The focus of SB 9 on infant surrender, without robust measures for family reunification, undermines the long-term goals of child welfare policies that aim to preserve family bonds when possible. The bill bypasses opportunities for parents to work through crisis situations and instead creates a streamlined process for permanent family separation. Evidence suggests that family reunification is often a more beneficial and stable option for children, especially when parents are given access to services that can address the root causes of their crises, such as poverty, domestic violence, or mental health challenges (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2023). Without any pathway for parents to regain custody, SB 9 exacerbates the trauma experienced by both parents and children, leaving them without the chance to heal and rebuild their relationships.

16. Oversight and Accountability Gaps

Another significant issue with SB 9 is the lack of strong oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability in the infant surrender and adoption process. The bill introduces several new avenues for parents to surrender their infants, such as private physicians' offices and birthing centers, but without clear accountability structures, this opens the door for potential exploitation and abuse. For example, there are no established safeguards to ensure that surrendered infants are placed in ethical adoption systems or that the biological families are adequately notified or consulted. The lack of transparency regarding the tracking of surrendered infants could lead to cases of unethical adoptions or trafficking, with no way for authorities to detect and intervene in such cases. Stronger oversight is essential to prevent the misuse of this law and to ensure that the best interests of children and families are upheld throughout the process.

Conclusion

SB 9 raises serious legal, ethical, and social concerns that cannot be ignored. While the bill aims to address the issue of infant abandonment, it does so in a manner that risks further harm to vulnerable communities, particularly low-income and BIPOC families, and undermines essential protections for parents and children. It fails to address the root causes of infant surrender, ignores the need for comprehensive family support systems, and lacks adequate safeguards to protect the rights of both parents and children. The bill must be amended to include robust protections for family preservation, mental health resources, oversight mechanisms, and alternatives to foster care, ensuring that the best interests of children are served without further exacerbating systemic inequities.

Furthermore, SB 9 presents itself as a well-intended measure to prevent unsafe infant abandonment. However, its implications raise serious constitutional, civil rights, tribal sovereignty, economic, and public safety concerns. It risks increasing instances of unreported sexual violence, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities, overburdening the foster care system, and violating multiple legal protections, including the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and international human rights treaties.

Without additional safeguards, funding mechanisms, and accountability provisions, SB 9 will create more harm than good. This testimony outlines its legal flaws, unintended consequences, and recommendations for more ethical solutions.

1. Legal & Constitutional Violations

A. Tribal Sovereignty & Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Violations

SB 9 directly conflicts with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (25 U.S.C. § 1901-1963), which mandates tribal placement preferences for Indigenous children to prevent state-led family separations (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023). The bill does not ensure tribal notification or jurisdiction, violating federal protections for Indigenous families. Given Alaska's large Indigenous population and its history of forced child removals, ICWA compliance is crucial to preventing further systemic harms (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023). Without safeguards, Indigenous infants could be permanently placed outside their communities without tribal input, violating their legal and cultural rights.

B. Loopholes for Sexual Violence, Human Trafficking, and Concealment of Crimes

By permitting anonymous infant surrenders with no screening or legal oversight, SB 9 creates a loophole that could shield perpetrators of sexual violence, incest, and human trafficking (RAINN, 2023). Survivors of rape and incest, particularly minors, may be coerced into surrendering infants rather than reporting abuse. Additionally, human traffickers could exploit this law to eliminate evidence of forced pregnancies, preventing authorities from identifying victims (Polaris Project, 2023). The bill's lack of medical or forensic screening eliminates the possibility of identifying injuries indicative of abuse,

further complicating efforts to protect vulnerable individuals.

C. Violations of International Law & Human Rights Treaties

SB 9 conflicts with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees a child's right to know their origins and identity (United Nations, 1989). By allowing anonymous infant surrenders, the bill denies children access to their medical history, family background, and genetic heritage. Countries with similar "baby box" laws have faced human rights criticisms for facilitating statelessness and severing a child's right to identity (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023).

2. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income & BIPOC Communities

A. Increased State Intervention in BIPOC & Low-Income Families

Alaska's child welfare system disproportionately removes BIPOC children from their families (National Black Child Development Institute, 2023). Rather than providing financial support to struggling parents, SB 9 accelerates permanent family separation. Many surrenders occur due to economic hardship rather than parental neglect, making poverty a de facto reason for state intervention (Urban Institute, 2023).

B. Racial Disparities in Maternal & Infant Outcomes

Alaska's Indigenous and Black communities experience disproportionately high maternal mortality rates, lower access to prenatal care, and higher rates of state child removals (Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, 2023). SB 9 ignores the root causes of crisis pregnancies—such as lack of healthcare, housing, and financial stability—and instead prioritizes infant surrender over parental support.

C. Violation of Reproductive Justice Principles

Reproductive justice frameworks emphasize the right to have children, not have children, and raise families in safe conditions (SisterSong, 2023). SB 9 undermines these principles by encouraging surrender instead of strengthening support systems that enable parents to keep their children. This disproportionately impacts young, poor, and BIPOC parents, further entrenching systemic inequalities.

3. Economic & Social Costs to Alaska

A. Increased Burden on the Foster Care System

Alaska's foster care system is already underfunded and struggling with shortages of caseworkers and placements (Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, 2023). Adding more infants to an overburdened system without additional funding will decrease

the quality of care, increasing rates of neglect, homelessness, and juvenile incarceration among children in state custody (Child Welfare League of America, 2023).

B. Long-Term Costs to Public Services

The medical costs of surrendered infants, many of whom may have unknown health conditions, will be absorbed by taxpayers. Additionally, increased long-term social service needs—such as mental health care, special education services, and public assistance—will arise as more children grow up without stable family structures (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023).

4. Links to Project 2025 & Conservative Family Policies

SB 9 aligns with anti-abortion, anti-contraception, and adoption-focused policies promoted by **Project 2025**, a conservative initiative advocating for increased state control over reproductive choices (Heritage Foundation, 2023). Instead of expanding access to family planning resources, comprehensive sex education, or financial assistance for struggling parents, SB 9 funnels children into adoption and state custody. Similar laws have been implemented in states that have restricted abortion access, using infant surrender as a supposed "solution" to unintended pregnancies (Guttmacher Institute, 2023). However, SB 9 does not protect life—it reinforces systemic inequities while failing to address root causes of crisis pregnancies.

Conclusion & Recommendations

SB 9 must not be passed in its current form. The bill increases risks for survivors of sexual violence, disproportionately harms marginalized communities, violates legal protections, and places unsustainable burdens on Alaska's foster care system.

Recommended Amendments:

Mandatory screening for abuse, trafficking, or coercion before a surrender is finalized.

Parental support services, financial assistance, and crisis intervention before irreversible termination of parental rights.

Guaranteed ICWA compliance and tribal notification for Indigenous infants.

Increased funding for foster care & social services before expanding pathways for infant abandonment.

Stronger reproductive healthcare access (contraception, prenatal care, abortion rights) to prevent crisis pregnancies.

Without these amendments, SB 9 is not a "safe" surrender law—it is a policy that

legitimizes coercion, family separation, and systemic inequities. The Alaska legislature must reject SB 9 unless significant revisions are made to prioritize parental rights, child welfare, and legal compliance.

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(Polaris Project, 2023) – Human trafficking risks in adoption & surrender systems.

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(United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023) – International laws on child protection & adoption.

Thank you for your consideration
Susan Allmeroth
Two Rivers
Myself

From: [Sethan Tigarian](#)
To: [Arielle Wiggin](#)
Subject: FW: Passing SB9
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:57:31 AM

From: Patty Wisel <pwisel07@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:32 AM
Subject: Passing SB9

Good morning Senators:

I am urging you to pass SB9: The Baby Box Bill today. As you well know it authorizes safe surrender of newborn babies to professional entities - firemen, police, hospitals. I can't imagine there would be any who would not want this for our youngest, most vulnerable citizens. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Patty Wisel

Fairbanks

907-460-4344