



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Public Safety

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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The Honorable Andrew Gray
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Alaska Capitol Building, Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Gray,

The Department of Public Safety presented to the House Judiciary Committee on March 31, 2025. Below are the responses to questions requested by the Committee.

1. What challenges do Alaska State Troopers face when investigating a death in custody?

Investigating deaths in custody are investigated as any other call for investigative support for a death. However, there are several unique challenges for Alaska State Troopers. Alaska's vast and remote geography often requires troopers to travel long distances to reach correctional facilities, potentially delaying response times and complicating evidence collection.

As noted during the Department of Correction's presentation on March 31, the incarcerated population often has higher rates of chronic medical conditions and mental health issues, adding layers of complexity to determining causes of death. Department of Public Safety investigators and Alaska State Troopers work closely with the Department of Corrections Officers while investigating the in-custody death cases.

2. Do correctional staff receive training in how to investigate deaths in custody or other significant incidents?

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) Alaska State Troopers do not provide formal training to Department of Corrections (DOC) staff. DPS respectfully defers this question to DOC.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. E. Cockrell".

James Cockrell
Commissioner

cc: Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office