

February 28, 2025

Dear Representative Gray:

We are writing to you today in full support of HB101, a bill related to Crimes Against Minors. This bill offers, among other things, protection to teens aged sixteen and seventeen from predatory adults by raising the age of sexual consent to eighteen.

Sixteen and seventeen year olds are minors. They cannot legally enter into a contract on their own, they cannot rent a motel room, or a car, they cannot enter a bar, they cannot get a credit card or even open a bank account without an adult signer on the account.

Juvenile offenders under the age of eighteen are treated in ways significantly different from adult offenders. There is an entirely separate justice system set up to deal with them, and they have certain rights that must be upheld, because as a society we recognize children should not be treated as adults.

Why then, are child victims of sexual assault treated as though they have the full responsibilities of adults when they are victimized by predatory older persons?

This proposed legislation is in alignment with Alaska's statute regulating the age of marriage. A sixteen or seventeen year old needs approval from a court to marry and can only marry a person with an age difference of less than four years.

We cannot simply turn our backs on vulnerable minors and believe they have the capacity to seek out appropriate resources, develop positive coping mechanisms, and access necessary support without taking the crimes committed against them seriously.

STAR is in full support of the bill, and we urge all legislators to vote for it. Thank you for your consideration,

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