



Office of the Assistant Superintendent • 10014 Crazy Horse Drive • Juneau, Alaska 99801 • (907) 523-1704

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of legislation that would provide sustainable funding for youth court programs in Juneau and other communities in Alaska. For over a decade Juneau Youth Court has provided a vital and important service to the City and Borough of Juneau.

Juneau Youth Court is a diversion program that removes young people who are first time offenders from the traditional juvenile justice system and handles the case in a court of peers. The program works with families to ensure that teens are held accountable for their actions and that consequences are constructive and tailored to the individual youth thereby benefiting both the young person and the community at large. Last year Juneau Youth Court ordered over 600 hours of community work service that were completed at Zach Gordon Youth Center, the American Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, the Glory Hole, the Salvation Army, and at schools throughout Juneau School District.

On average Juneau Youth Court serves 50 youth each year handling referrals from both District Court and Juvenile Justice Probation Officers. This frees up the court and probation officers to handle more serious offenders and helps to reduce their large caseloads. Youth Courts have the additional advantage of educating the youth who volunteer for the program. Youth Court advocates reap the benefits of learning about the legal system, performing meaningful community service, and gaining the opportunity to help their peers.

Juneau Youth Court operates on a very small budget of \$35,000 per year with one part time paid staff person, two dozen volunteer student advocates, a community advisory board including representatives from the Police Department, the Division of Juvenile Justice, the legal community, and community partners. The program offers an important service to the community at a very low cost.

Juneau Youth Court is just one example of a successful diversion program known as youth court. Around the state Youth Courts are doing important work for Alaska by addressing juvenile crime in its earliest stage. I strongly urge you to support legislation that would provide sustainable funding to support these community-based programs.

Sincerely,

Laury Scandling