

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE  
Alaska Mental Health  
Trust Authority

*MIKE DUNLEAVY, GOVERNOR*

Office of the Long-Term Care  
Ombudsman

3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200  
Anchorage AK 99508  
Phone (907) 334-4480  
Fax (907) 334-4486

April 8, 2025

To: Senate Sate Affairs Committee

The Alaska Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is pleased to offer support for *Senate Bill (SB) 62*—“An Act relating to the board of parole; and providing for an effective data”. The mission of the LTC Ombudsman program is to provide resident-centered advocacy designed to protect the rights, health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans living in long-term care settings. However, we advocate to improve the quality of life and care for all seniors.

There’s more than 400 people over the age of 60 who are incarcerated in our prisons on any given day. Aging seniors are a rapidly growing population in prison, yet the most challenging to care for in a prison setting. In order to find ways to provide older incarcerated people with adequate healthcare, end of life care and dignity as they face serious or medical illnesses, we need to explore how to meet the unique needs of this population with sensitivity and compassion. Officials are hard pressed to provide the medical care and activities of daily living to the incarcerated aging population. Consider an elder who has heart failure, dementia, cancer or other debilitating or end of life medical conditions. These seniors who would most likely benefit from living in a long-term care facility. The incarcerated senior population generally pose the lowest risk of repeating crimes for any age group. The recidivism rate for people 55 and older is around 2% and it’s almost zero for people 65 and older.

While we have geriatric and medical parole in Alaska, few people who apply for medical or geriatric parole, are not granted these paroles. Incarcerated seniors would benefit from having weighted consideration to their age and health or medical conditions in parole decisions. Having a licensed physician on the board could provide insight into the aging process and offer considerations for individuals with complex medical needs. The OLTCO supports the additional criteria for membership to create a board that more closely reflects the incarcerated in Alaska and requires that one member of the board have substance misuse rehabilitation support experience and one member be a licensed physician, psychiatrist or psychologist who may better understand the needs of the incarcerated aging population.

The Alaska Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman urges the Alaska State Legislature to support *SB 62* that expands the number of seats on the Alaska Board of Parole and establishes criteria for membership to better reflect the prison population and who may better understand the needs of the incarcerated aging population.

Thank you for your work on this bill.

Sincerely,  
*Stephanie Wheeler*  
Stephanie Wheeler, PhD  
State of Alaska, Long-Term Ombudsman Program

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** wizardousone@ [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 7, 2025 10:50 AM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Craig Phillips  
Homer, AK 99603-9377

**From:** [REDACTED] behalf of [Laura Kimmel](#)  
**To:** [Senate State Affairs](#)  
**Subject:** Support parole reform  
**Date:** Monday, April 7, 2025 10:23:14 PM

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Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Laura Kimmel  
Anchorage, AK 99515-3966

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Caren Yerkes [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 7, 2025 11:51 [REDACTED]  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Caren Yerkes  
Juneau, AK 99801-8332

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki  
**Sent:** Monday, April 7, 2025 8:30 AM  
**To:** Joe Hayes  
**Subject:** FW: SB 62 - SSSB 62 - Board of Parole

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**From:** carolyn V Brown [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 5, 2025 2:28 PM  
**To:** Sen. Scott Kawasaki <Sen.Scott.Kawasaki@akleg.gov>; Sen. Löki Tobin <Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov>; Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** SB 62 - SSSB 62 - Board of Parole

To: Senate State Affairs Committee Members

I want to express my sincere gratitude that SSSB62 has come before the Legislature. My schedule will not permit my attendance to the hearing on Tuesday-8 April at 3:30 PM. Please accept this message and my strong support for this legislation.

I believe this legislation will serve to positively affirm assets for those who have experienced incarceration and may be eligible for parole.

I believe there are many determinants to consider for people wishing to re-enter society with the best possibilities for success. For this reason, a Board of Parole membership that includes experts in the areas of medical and behavioral health, social dynamics in the community, family issues, housing and work possibilities, voting rights and the process of "belonging in a community" are immensely critical, valuable and hopeful for these people as they transition from incarceration.

I strongly support this legislation and ask that you give support to its passage and implementation.

Please contact me if you have further questions. Thank you for this consideration.

carolyn V Brown MD MPH  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



# City of Fairbanks

*Reentry Coordinator*

800 Cushman Street  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Phone 907-459-6795  
moss@fairbanks.us

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Re: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 62

Dear Senator Tobin:

The Fairbanks Reentry Coalition supports Senate Bill 62, which expands the representation of disciplines and expertise on the Alaska Parole Board to include physicians, mental health care professionals, crime victims, and/or addiction recovery experts. Equally important is the inclusion of a member of one of Alaska's federally recognized Tribes. It is a more diversified representation of our State.

The inclusion of these professionals, victims, and Tribal perspectives adds depth to the Parole Board's decision-making processes. It helps address significant Alaskan issues, such as the overrepresentation of Alaska Natives within our prison populations or the unexplained decline in the board's granting of discretionary parole in recent years.

The mission of the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition is to promote public safety within the community by identifying and implementing strategies that increase the success of justice-involved individuals and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. This Bill helps reflect what we are attempting to do for returning citizens.

Senate Bill 62's thoughtful implementation of a broader and more diversified Parole Board makeup, adding expertise in understanding criminogenic needs, seems like a recipe for reentry success.

Sincerely in service,

*Marsha J Oss*

Marsha J. Oss  
AA, BA, CADC, CDC II, BHC II, TPSS III



# JUNEAU REENTRY COALITION

*Promoting Success After Incarceration  
To Reduce Recidivism and Increase Public Safety*

April 1, 2025

Senator Loki Tobin  
State Capitol Room 115  
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 62

Dear Senator Tobin:

The Juneau Reentry Coalition supports Senate Bill 62, which expands the representation of disciplines and expertise on the Alaska Parole Board to include physicians, mental health care professionals, crime victims, and/or addiction recovery experts. Equally important is the inclusion of a member of one of Alaska's federally recognized Tribes.

The inclusion of these professionals, victims, and Tribal perspectives adds depth to the Parole Board's decision-making processes. It helps address significant Alaskan issues, such as the over-representation of Alaska Natives within our prison populations or the unexplained decline in the board's granting of discretionary parole in recent years.

The mission of the Juneau Reentry Coalition is to promote public safety within the community by identifying and implementing strategies that increase the success of justice-involved individuals and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

Senate Bill 62's thoughtful implementation of a broader and more diversified Parole Board makeup, adding expertise in understanding criminogenic needs, seems like a recipe for reentry success.

Sincerely yours,



Don Habeger  
Coalition Coordinator

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025

**Re: Letter of Support, SB 62  
Substitute Board of Parole Membership**



On behalf of the Anchorage Reentry Coalition—a collective of social services providers, reentry programs, transitional housers, state departments, stakeholders, public safety, court representatives, those with previous Criminal Justice Involvement and community members—we write in strong support of SB 62’s proposed reforms to the Alaska Board of Parole.

Enhancing diversity within the Parole Board could significantly improve transparency, elevate process standards, and incentivize treatment, rehabilitation and educational programming across correctional institutions statewide within the inmate population. Since 2020, the board has held 75% fewer hearings and released 79% fewer people compared to pre-pandemic levels, and only 5% of parole decisions involved discretionary parolees, while 95% involved mandatory parolees.

The proposed expansion of Alaska’s Board of Parole from five to seven members aims to enhance rehabilitation-focused decision-making with diverse and specialized expertise. Key seats could be designated for Alaska Native Tribal representatives, victim rights advocates, professionals with backgrounds in providing substance or alcohol misuse treatment, behavioral and mental health professionals, or those with social service experience within the general reentry and rehabilitation workforce.

This bill also aligns with the emerging reforms that are becoming national trends advocating for parole boards with diverse, rehabilitation-oriented membership, who can offer different perspectives on criminogenic needs and behaviors.

By incorporating these perspectives, Alaska can finally begin to take productive steps towards increasing both parole approval access and post-release success rates while prioritizing the need for public safety in all our communities.

Always Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christina Shadura".

Christina Shadura, *Coordinator*  
Anchorage Reentry Coalition  
2515 A Street Anchorage, AK 99508  
907-677-8412  
[cshadura@nwalaska.org](mailto:cshadura@nwalaska.org)  
[www.anchoragereentry.org](http://www.anchoragereentry.org)



**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of [Christina Shadura](#)  
**To:** [Senate State Affairs](#)  
**Subject:** Support parole reform  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 1, 2025 8:29:17 AM

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Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Miss Christina Shadura  
Anchorage, AK 99516-1367

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** tmquaintance@  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 18, 2025 9:59 AM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Tonie Protzman  
Anchorage, AK 99501-5165

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Belle Merritt

**Sent:** Monday, March 17, 2025 8:37 AM

**To:** Senate State Affairs

**Subject:** Support parole reform

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up

**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Belle Merritt  
Palmer, AK 99645-9162

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** halloran.madison@  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 13, 2025 9:02 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Maddie Halloran  
Anchorage, AK 99508-3063

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Jennine Williamson  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 4:59 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Jennine Williamson  
Fairbanks, AK 99709-2018

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] Emily Kloc  
[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 2:26 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Miss Emily Kloc  
Anchorage, AK [REDACTED]

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Amber Nickerson  
[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 2:31 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Miss Amber Nickerson  
Anchorage, AK [REDACTED]

**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] -behalf of Morris Horning  
[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 2:54 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Morris Horning  
Anchorage, AK [REDACTED]



**Joe Hayes**

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**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of Caren Yerkes [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 3:19 PM  
**To:** Senate State Affairs  
**Subject:** Support parole reform

Dear Senate State Affairs Committee,

I write to share my support for legislative reform to the Alaska Board of Parole in SB 62. The Board has a critical role in assessing if eligible Alaskans are fit for parole, an alternative to incarceration for people who are ready to safely reintegrate into their communities. The result of parole is lower costs to taxpayers, lower recidivism rates, healthier families, and safer communities. Last year, over 400 Alaskans successfully and safely completed serving their sentences while on parole in 2024, preventing valuable taxpayers' dollars from being used toward their incarceration.

I support SB 62 because it would reform the Board of Parole to include members with backgrounds that can more accurately assess if someone is fit for parole. I support accountability and transparency measures that ensure the Board is operating fairly and giving Alaskans who are eligible for parole a fair shake.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Caren Yerkes  
Juneau, AK [REDACTED]



March 11, 2025

The Honorable Scott Kawasaki, Chair  
Senate State Affairs Committee  
Alaska Capitol Building  
Juneau, AK 99801

**Re: Senate Bill 62: BOARD OF PAROLE: MEMBERSHIP, REPORT**

Dear Chair Kawasaki and Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee,

The ACLU of Alaska writes to express our support for Senate Bill 62, which would take positive steps to ensure that incarcerated individuals appearing before the Alaska Board of Parole (“the Board”) receive fair consideration, and that the Board is operating in a transparent manner.

Alaska’s Constitution requires the state to base its criminal administration on the principle of reformation, as well as on protecting the public, condemning criminal conduct, and respecting the rights of victims. The Board is responsible for upholding these constitutional requirements in considering eligible applicants’ suitability for discretionary parole or special medical parole, in conducting parole revocation proceedings, and in the imposition of conditions for release.

However, these principles are not all being served by the Board, which has taken an increasingly punitive approach in recent years. During the past four years, the Board has granted discretionary parole in only 27 percent of hearings held,<sup>1</sup> a dramatic departure from historical trends. Additionally, the Board is not transparent about its activity and decision-making. Even a recent legislative audit found that the Board was unable to provide specific reasons why its parole approval rate decreased.<sup>2</sup>

The changes proposed in SB 62 are needed to ensure that the Board is acting in the interests of Alaska’s public safety. Additionally, considering that it costs the state \$202.21 per day to incarcerate somebody in an institution, compared to \$13.44 per day on probation and parole, the changes are needed to ensure Alaska is using public funds responsibly.<sup>3</sup>

**A wider range of expertise is necessary to assess parole applicants**

The current statutory criteria for appointment to the Board require generally only that members are qualified “to make decisions that are compatible with the welfare of the community and of individual members” and “are able to consider the character and background of offenders and the circumstances in which offenses were committed.”<sup>4</sup> The only specific criterion is that “[a]t least one person appointed to the board must have experience in the field of criminal justice.”

Of the five current members of the Board, all have some experience in the field of criminal justice; four of them worked for the Department of Corrections. Plainly, current law does not guarantee a diverse range of expertise. **Having different experiences at the table would ensure that the Board is best equipped to accurately evaluate whether a prisoner will further their rehabilitation by being on parole and will not pose a danger to the public.**

For example, requiring that the Board include a licensed physician, psychologist, or psychiatrist would help the Board professionally assess an applicant’s mental wellbeing and growth. A member with drug or alcohol

addiction recovery experience would bring an informed view of whether an applicant with a substance misuse disorder has a viable plan to manage the disorder upon release. And a member who is selected as a victim advocate would be well positioned to evaluate how release would affect the welfare of the community. Designating these roles as Board seats would ensure that necessary perspectives are considered when making parole decisions.

Other states have taken similar steps. Oklahoma, for example, requires two members of its parole board to have five years of training or experience in mental health services, substance abuse services, or social work. Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Rhode Island all explicitly guarantee that at least one board member represents a field outside law enforcement.

### **Greater transparency is needed to ensure accuracy and fair consideration**

There are four statutory and 23 regulatory criteria that factor into the Board's discretionary parole decisions.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the Board does not publish any information on how it evaluates and balances these criteria when granting or denying parole applications.

While each applicant must be considered on their own, the Board is inconsistent in its rulings, and we have observed different outcomes for similarly situated applicants. Inconsistent and unexplained decision-making does not serve public safety, because it risks granting parole to people who may still pose a threat of harm to the public, while denying parole to people who are ready to return safely to their communities.

SB 62 would provide more transparency by requiring the Board to prepare an annual report detailing its operations and all parole hearings it has conducted that year, including a summary of the statutory or regulatory criteria the board most frequently used in making its decisions. It would also require the Board to report demographic information that is important to track given longstanding racial disparities in Alaska's prison population. Having this information available to the legislature and the public would add a critical measure of accountability to the Board's parole decisions.

### **Further reforms should be considered**

**We urge the committee to advance SB 62** because its provisions would create a more fair and transparent parole system.

However, we also believe additional reforms should be considered. First, we support a provision to repeal a statutory requirement that **conditions parole release on the Board's determination that release "would not diminish the seriousness of the crime."**<sup>vi</sup> State law currently authorizes the Board to release an applicant on discretionary parole if it determines that a "reasonable probability" exists that this and three other criteria are met. The other three criteria appropriately focus the Board on how the individual has developed in the years since the crime. **The fourth criterion is the only one that looks backward, and gives the Board inappropriate quasi-judicial authority.**

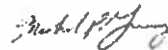
Existing statutes defining crimes, criminal procedure, sentencing ranges, and parole eligibility already establish how serious the state finds certain offenses. The legislature also authorizes each sentencing judge to set a period greater than the statutory minimum that the prisoner must serve before becoming eligible for release on discretionary parole. When a judge declines to set a longer minimum period, it is a judicial determination that, based on the facts of the case, parole release after serving the minimum time mandated by the legislature would not diminish the seriousness of the crime. These sentencing decisions are appropriately within the sphere of the judiciary, as designed in our constitution.

Yet current law — which provides no guidance at all for how the Board should approach the fourth criterion — allows the Board to substitute its views about minimum times to serve for the views of the legislative and judicial branches. Continuing to give the Board this authority erroneously undermines legislative and judicial authority, exceeds the authority of the executive branch, and contributes to inconsistent decision-making.

Additionally, we believe that the legislature should consider measures that increase the number of people the Board considers for geriatric parole and special medical parole. In the last decade, the Board has held just two geriatric parole hearings and 25 special medical hearings.<sup>vi</sup> Alaska's prison population continues to age, and providing healthcare to an aging population is extremely expensive in an institutional setting. The state should do more to identify people who are eligible for these types of parole; it will reduce costs of providing for their care while not presenting a public safety risk.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [mgarvey@acluak.org](mailto:mgarvey@acluak.org).

Sincerely,



Michael P. Garvey  
Policy Director

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<sup>i</sup> Alaska Board of Parole, *Discretionary Hearings 2024* (page 3), available at <https://doc.alaska.gov/Parole/documents/Discretionary%20Hearings%202024.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://legaudit.akleg.gov/wp-content/docs/audits/sunset/ACN%2008-20139-24%20Sunset%20Review%20of%20Board%20of%20Parole.pdf> (page 10)

<sup>iii</sup> Department of Corrections presentation to House Finance Subcommittee (Feb. 11, 2025), available at [https://www.akleg.gov/basis/get\\_documents.asp?session=34&docid=983](https://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=34&docid=983) (page 6).

<sup>iv</sup> AS 33.16.030

<sup>v</sup> Alaska Administrative Code, 22 ACC 20.165

<sup>vi</sup> AS 33.16.100(4)

<sup>vii</sup> <https://doc.alaska.gov/Parole/documents/Discretionary%20Hearings%202024.pdf> (page 5)