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February 7, 2011

Senator Lesil McGuire  
State Capitol – Room 125  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Letter of Support for SB 62

Dear Senator McGuire:

On behalf of the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault and the women and children that we serve, we thank you for bringing forth SB 62 to provide a consistent funding stream for civil legal services.

Civil legal services are a critical piece to helping end domestic violence in Alaska. Studies have found that civil legal services are the most effective means of ending violence in victim's lives. Why? Because when a victim makes a decision to leave her abuser and goes to a friend's house or shelter, she is just beginning her journey to obtain safety and basic needs for her and her children. In order to succeed, she must meet the basic needs of economic support, protective orders for safety, gaining temporary custody of her children, and safe and permanent housing. Without the assistance of an attorney, victims can lose custody of their children, fail to receive economic support and increase their risk of greater violence. The result too often is that victims return to abusers for economic support and to monitor the interactions between the abuser, who gains custody, and the children.

While there are many attorneys in Alaska that volunteer time and resources to assisting victims, the demand for civil legal services far exceeds the available resources. The Network's Pro Bono program works closely with Alaska Legal Services Corporation to assist victims in finding attorneys, but they too are limited by availability of resources. SB 62 will insure that a consistent funding stream is available for the legislature, in their discretion, to appropriate to those organizations that serve low-income Alaskans. SB 62 will insure that these Alaskans are provided with services necessary to protect their guarantee of "equal rights, opportunities, and protection under the law" as declared by the Alaska Constitution.

Thank you for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



Peggy Brown, Executive Director  
cc: Lisa Mariotti, Policy Director

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Member Programs

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