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**The Honorable
Representative Les Gara
Alaska State Capitol
Room 500
Juneau, AK 99801**

Re: SUPPORT HB 126

Dear Representative Gara,

I am writing to express the support of Friends of Alaska CASA (FAC) for House Bill 126. This bill, as you know, will help foster youth transition more successfully from state care to independent living.

Currently 38% of foster youth aging out of the system end up homeless.

This bill attempts to remedy this reality through several assistance measures, including extending foster care to age 21 and allowing for reentry into care until age 21 if a youth is emancipated or voluntarily leaves care after turning 18.

Additionally, HB 126 reflects a larger national movement among children's advocacy groups to extend foster care to 21 years of age. In fact, 30 states already provide this option. Extending foster care will allow youth to better prepare themselves for independent living, and avoid common problems (such as homelessness and dependence on public assistance) faced by foster youth aging out of the system.

Allowing former foster youth to reenter care after leaving voluntarily will support youth in their pursuit of higher education or vocational training.

Extending foster care and allowing reentry will improve foster youths' chance of success as they transition to independent living.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "RZ", written in a cursive style.

Ryan Zinn
Executive Director