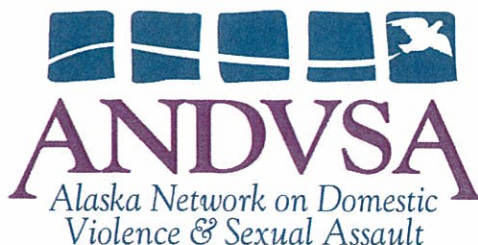


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January 30, 2012

Honorable Steve Thompson
State Capitol, Room 428
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB 299 Letter of Support

Dear Representative Thompson:

On behalf of our 18 member victim service agencies that provide direct services to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Alaska, we thank you for introducing HB 299 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. When a victim makes a decision to leave their abuser and go to the safety of a friend's house or shelter, it is just the beginning of a long journey to obtain safety and basic needs for the victim and their children. In order to succeed, a victim must meet the basic needs of economic support, protective orders for safety, gaining temporary custody of the children and safe and permanent housing. Without the assistance of an attorney, victims can lose custody of their children and fail to receive economic support. This significantly increases the risk of greater violence when the victim has no other choice but to return to the abuser for economic support and to protect the children from the abuser, who obtains custody.

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 the availability of funding. HB 299 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.

Thank you for sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Peggy Brown, Executive Director

cc: Lisa Mariotti, Policy Director

Member Programs

Anchorage AWAIC, STAR Barrow AWIC Bethel TWC Cordova CFRC Dillingham SAFE
Fairbanks IAC Homer SPHH Juneau AWARE Kenai LeeShore Center Ketchikan WISH Kodiak KWRCC
Kotzebue MFCC Nome BSWG Seward SCS Sitka SAFV Unalaska USAFV Valdez AVV