

Kodiak Area Native Association



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February 26, 2014

Dear Senator Coghill, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judiciary,

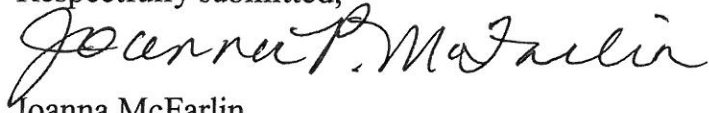
Kodiak Area Native Association's Child Advocacy Center respectfully submits this letter of support for the passage of CSSB 171, regarding Multidisciplinary Child Protection Teams (MDTs).

Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) are much more successful in addressing child abuse allegations by providing the children and family multiple professionals whom work collaboratively for their benefit. The child and family get a team of professionals with expertise and specific training to provide and coordinate services, plan the investigation, and support the family throughout the lengthy process. One agency working with the family at a time, is disjointed, often lacks in collaborative communication and can be duplicative which further traumatizes the family and child. Lack of communication between agencies often results in lower prosecution rates overall as well as more trauma and fatigue for the child and family which often result in reduced participation on their part. Working as a team is important for children and families no matter whom the perpetrator may be. Currently the MDT is only provided protection by AS 47.14.300 if there is an in home perpetrator and The Office of Children's Services (OCS) is involved to determine if the parent is being protective. With CSSB 171, it will allow us to work as a team with protection provided by AS 47.17.14.300 for the benefit of children and families regardless of the relationship of the perpetrator to the child and corresponding OCS involvement. CSSB 171 will allow the MDT to work together in any investigation of child maltreatment.

Secondly, AS 47.17.010 and AS 47.17.033(c), statutes relating to child abuse investigations, address avoiding multiple interviews for children involved in an investigation of child abuse. Often, there are child centered reasons to have more than one non duplicative interview. At times children are afraid and need time to build rapport to be brought back to talk about the concerns on another day. CSSB 171 emphasizes the word duplicative to eliminate repetitive interviews covering the same information. Not to eliminate interviews that are needed to go over new information or to give the child more opportunities to either feel safe and ready to tell what happened or to go over the extent of the abuse over separate interviews.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanna P. McFarlin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joanna McFarlin

Kodiak Child Advocacy Center Director

Kodiak Area Native Association

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