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April 3, 2014

House Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Members of House Judiciary Committee:

CITC supports passage of Senate Bill 64 because this legislation provides important new innovations to turn around Alaska recidivism rates, save money and make the state safer. As many have stated already, even our new prison will be beyond capacity soon unless we find a way to address the substance abuse and addiction that leads to so many offenses and violations of probation or parole. CITC specifically supports the evidence based 24/7 and PACE programs that grew out of the work of the DOC's Re-Entry Task Force, the Justice Commission, the recidivism reduction fund, which is visionary for long term sustainability and represents strategic investments for the state, and the felony threshold for property related crimes. CITC particularly supports the section clarifying credit for time served in residential programs that contribute to reducing recidivism as well.

CITC has been operating Chanlyut, a rehabilitation program for men recently released from prison, homelessness or substance abuse, for the past six years. Chanlyut is modeled on the successful Delancey Street program from California, and operates on the principle that reinforcing accountability for actions, learning a strong work ethic and responsibility for others is key to turning lives around, without the use of professional staff. Chanlyut is a 24/7 residential program located in Anchorage. Since the start of the program, CITC has served over 175 men and has saved the state millions of dollars by housing residents who otherwise would have been in a correctional facility, and has many success stories. Our graduates leave the program having earned everything they have themselves: they have been clean and sober for two years, they have a job and the wherewithal to set themselves up with tools, apartment, vehicle etc., for which they have saved in the last months of their residency. Key to the positive impact of the program is both the mandatory work component in the Chanlyut run businesses and the complete responsibility each man has for the maintenance of the house and the program. In fact, income from those Chanlyut businesses supports 35% of program expenses. We describe it as learning to live life on life's terms without the use of drugs or alcohol and with taking responsibility for their lives through honest work. Our requirements and expectations for behavior are so high that we have had residents who requested to go back to jail rather than complete the program.

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Given CITC's experience, the opportunities offered in SB 64 align with Chanlyut and we strongly support the bill. However, we suggest one change in the recidivism reduction grant program section:

The requirement for treatment for programs qualifying for the Recidivism Reduction fund should be qualified with the language "if required by assessment" in Section 33.30.045 (c)(3). For example, if an inmate received treatment inside the institution, he or she may not need treatment during the transition. This requirement can be a huge burden, both for programs and for employment schedules for those working in the community. Under the circumstances, only those who really need it should be occupying space in already full programs.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if CITC can provide further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gloria O'Neill", written over a horizontal line.

Gloria O'Neill
President and CEO