



alaska childrens trust

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alaskachildrenstrust.org

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14 February 2017

Rep. Zach Fansler
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 416
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB 106 – Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Representative Fansler,

Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT) extends its support for HB 106 as the availability of civil legal help that Alaska Legal Services provides is critical to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. ACT is the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

ALSC is the largest provider of legal services to families experiencing domestic violence. Each year ALSC serves over 500 families, impacting 1,500 persons statewide. Children are present in the majority of these households. Domestic violence can have a profound impact on the upbringing and livelihood of children -- it is the number one precursor to child abuse and neglect. Simply witnessing domestic violence harms children at every stage of their development. Providing legal services to non-offending parents and children is a critical factor in removing children from an abusive situation. Alaska Legal Services provides an essential service for children at risk of abuse by representing them or their non-offending parents in legal matters that help to provide protection from the offending parent and to stabilize families, including protective order proceedings and custody and divorce proceedings. By preventing domestic violence, ALSC is preventing child abuse and neglect and reducing the impacts of trauma. Furthermore, a recent study showed that ALSC achieves \$2.6 million in savings for state and local communities in costs related to domestic abuse.

ACT strongly supports HB 106 and the finances it would provide to assure that free civil legal services are available to low-income Alaskans, including victims of domestic violence with children in their households. There is an enormous gap between the available funding for these critical services and those who need them. HB 106 is a positive step towards bridging this gap in our judicial system. Thank you for sponsoring this important legislation and protecting Alaska’s children. Together we can prevent child abuse and neglect.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. Storrs
Executive Director

cc – Representative Matt Claman

