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Good afternoon Chairman Sponholz and members of the House Health and Social Service Committee.

This is a quote I use from a successful comedian to help others understand that just because we are successful, it doesn't mean we have escaped the ravages of child abuse.

Jerrod Carmichael, Comedian and Actor

“All of my life is just me trying to overcompensate for a poor childhood. I buy a lot of shoes, a lot of sneakers. In fact, the next time you see like a young black guy in new shoes, stop and ask him who hurt you. I’m telling you, every pair of Jordan’s comes with a story. Every pair.”

My name is Patrick Anderson, Tlingit/Aleut and licensed as an attorney (inactive) in Alaska. I am a Senior Research Fellow for the Sealaska Heritage institute in the area of childhood trauma and health restoration. I have been engaged in research and advocacy around ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (or ACE’s) since 2008, when I was the CEO of an Alaska Native Rural Health System. As a consequence of my advocacy, I was invited to serve as members of both the American Indian/Alaska Native Task Force on Suicide Prevention and president of the Native American Children’s Alliance (or NACA).

I also suffered 6 ACE's while growing up. According to the original ACE Study, that means I am part of a group with an average 20 year shorter life expectancy than people who have none. And I spent time in the foster care system, both at the Seattle Youth Detention Center, a more terrifying experience than living at home, even given the reasons I was taken from my mother. And in the foster home I stayed in after SYDC, a 6 foot length of garden hose was the method of discipline. The experiences I have had, and there are many more, are the reason I have spent the past 13 years of my life seeking solutions, both through better management, and through addressing the Root Cause of our health and behavioral issues.

NACA is a national organization dedicated to implementation and operation of Child Advocacy Centers (CAC's) in Indian Country. Children who are sexually abused face considerable issues when their case is prosecuted. The pressures of being interviewed, having physical evidence gathered from their body and facing the prospect of testifying are terrorizing events, and we must have services in place that recognize the traumatizing effect of both the criminal act and our systemic response. I have been invited to speak, as President of NACA, about considerations of childhood trauma after sexual assault at the upcoming 33rd International Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, Alabama.

Violence and trauma is also recognized as a huge threat to children worldwide, and has been reported in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on violence against children. Availability of services and mental health treatment is a high priority for the U.N. It should be for our Governor and Legislature as well.

For the long term, the fact is that by being abused, sexually, physically or emotionally, children already have at least one of the 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) that contribute to poor health, negative behavioral and adverse societal issues. For abused children, their likelihood of having multiple ACE's is higher. According to the original study, if you have one, there is an 87% chance you will have a second and a 50% chance you will have 3 or more.

While we cannot stop transmission of trauma that has already been acquired, we can plan appropriate intervention for children and their parents. The first step to planning for intervention is spreading knowledge about the issue, and adoption of appropriate policy guidance through statutes, regulations and relationships among organizations involved with the care of an abused child. Declaring April as a month to highlight the problems with child abuse is a big step to spreading knowledge about child abuse, and I completely endorse enactment of HCR 3.

I also want you to know that Alaska Natives suffer disproportionately from the impact of child abuse and trauma. Information gathered from the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) discovered that Alaska has a rate of ACE's higher than average. For Alaska Natives, 27.9% have 4 ACE's. In the original study, 6% of the population had 4. Another 11% had 5+. I have been working since 2008 to have Alaska Native organizations recognize the huge impact of childhood acquired trauma on our adult population, and to adopt a more compassionate approach to dealing with the problems caused by ACE's. I have also supported HCR 2, addressing ACE's in Alaska, and presented testimony last year during a hearing of this committee. I encourage you to approve HCR 2 along with HCR 3.

As we move forward, I would ask member of this committee to help preserve state and federal programs that address childhood acquired trauma, and to keep an open mind about what is possible. We can have a future with substantially reduced health issues, fewer additions and behavior issues, prison populations, and crime. We can have increased productivity, lowered costs for consumers and greater safety in all aspects of our life. I have been sharing a story of hope and prosperity through addressing the issues that cause childhood trauma since 2008.

Recognizing Child Abuse Prevention Month can help advance that future.

Thank you for considering HCR 3.