

# Senator Peter A. Micciche

## Alaska State Legislature

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### **Sponsor Statement**

#### **Senate Bill 174**

*"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Health and Social Services; and relating to the administration of programs for persons with physical and mental disabilities."*

When Alaskans with physical and mental disabilities are able to actively participate in the system of their care, a higher quality of life is achieved as well as a sense of independence. SB 174 will provide a clear pathway to achieve both of these things by allowing the Department of Health and Social Services to take a more flexible approach to administering programs. A positive, person-centered approach should be embedded within all decisions made at both systems design and service delivery levels.

So why establish an avenue for participation? All persons deserve the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Higher quality of life is achieved by encouraging individuals with physical and mental disabilities to participate fully in the social and economic environment of their homes, communities, and the State.

Improved stewardship of public monies requires stakeholder input from a broad cross-section of Alaskan urban and rural communities to ensure effectiveness of program redesign efforts. Five project teams comprised of over 70 people are already working to make this a reality by focusing on areas of person-directed culture change, workforce enhancement, community awareness, legislative engagement, and measuring success. SB 174 does not create the right to self-direct care or supersede laws related to eligibility programs. It will not have a financial impact on the State.

SB 174 does provide a long overdue unifying vision to assure that the available resources, whether great or small, are allocated and applied in a manner that maximizes the contributions to community that Alaskans experiencing disabilities can make, and the flexibility of systems to utilize those resources with responsible stewardship now and in perpetuity.

I urge your support of this legislation.

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