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Sponsor Statement

SB 137- An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Parole; and providing for an effective date.

SB 137 extends the Board of Parole termination date of June 30, 2020 until June 30, 2025.

Upon review of the recent Legislative Audit summary and the full audit report of the Alaska Board of Parole, it becomes apparent that in the opinion of our auditors, the Board of Parole is serving the public's interest by effectively evaluating prisoners' likelihood of recidivism and whether a prisoner poses a threat to the public.

The Board of Parole serves an important role in guarding the safety of Alaskans by protecting the general public through the determination of parole-eligible prisoners' ability to become functioning members of society. The significance of the board has increased recently since the passage of HB 49 in 2019. Despite the repeal of SB 91, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of parole applicants due to a requirement that all eligible prisoners be given a hearing regardless of their own desire to apply for parole. This situation has strained the Board of Parole, but it has also revealed our state's reliance on the work of the Board.

Auditors recommend the Legislature extend the board's termination date five years, which is three years less than the eight-year maximum allowed by statute. The reduced extension allows for review of recent changes to the board's statutes, impacts and responsibility revisions related to HB 49 and the need for continued oversight.

We respectfully request your support for this important extension to the Alaska Board of Parole.