

February 14, 2020

Jane Winzer
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The Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Legislatures,

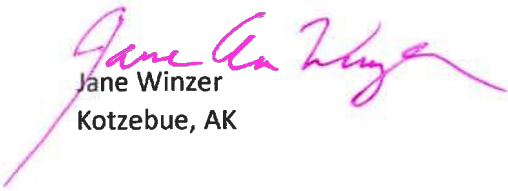
I am writing to express support for Senate Bill SB-101, which was introduced by Senator Donny Olson on March 29th, 2019. This bill would establish March 12 of each year as Ashley Johnson Barr Day, and in addition to honoring her memory, this would create an annual focus on addressing the victimization of children in Alaska.

As the state with the highest incidences of child sexual assault, much more needs to be done to focus Alaskan citizens' attention on mobilization to protect children. We know many of the subsequent problems plaguing our state in terms of suicide and substance abuse are often rooted in the exceptionally high levels of 'adverse childhood experiences' or ACES. However, norms against speaking out and 'causing trouble' still pose a tremendous challenge to addressing the abuse and helping victims and survivors.

Ashley's disappearance, the state and country-wide support that poured in to try to find her, and the subsequent discovery of what had happened galvanized much of Alaska to focus on our need to confront the scourge of child sexual assault. Related victims of Ashley's revealed their own previous experiences and desire to have been heard, believed, and supported. Alaskans have spontaneously remembered Ashley on the anniversary of her birth (wearing purple at state-wide sporting events in her honor).

Creating Ashley Johnson Barr Day would NOT be a small gesture focused on one narrow incident. Rather, creating Ashley Johnson Barr Day would enable us to do much more than honor and remember this one beautiful girl, whose life resonated with Alaskans in ways that "outside" messages about child endangerment never does. Ashley Johnson Barr Day facilitates absolutely imperative discussions about how we will address child sexual assault in Alaska – how we will no longer ask children to silently endure suffering.

We owe it to Ashley and her surviving family, friends, neighbors and all Alaskans to do this.


Jane Winzer
Kotzebue, AK

P.S. If you need to contact me, I can be reached at 907-378-3384