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To: Representative Kreiss-Tomkins

Date: March 25, 2021

Re: Support for HB 118 – Access to IDs and Digital Technology for Justice-Involved Alaskans

My name is Ryan Isadore, and I am a Client Resource Coordinator for Gastineau Human Services (GHS). I am writing on behalf of our agency to support HB 118. For over 40 years, GHS has worked with Justice-Involved Alaskans as they re-enter the community.

Regularly, we work with clients who walk out of prison without the basic documentation to verify their identity. They lack Birth Certificates, Social Security Cards, and State ID/Drivers Licenses. These men and women are releasing into a community, a community that often they did not grow up in, looking for a fresh start to rebuild their lives. Without these basic documents, they are unable to find legitimate work, enroll in Medicaid or other services. On a daily basis our staff, and other agencies, assist them with navigating this process. It is often an arduous process, one that without persistence and access to technology, the client would simply give up on. Persons coming out of prison can be undereducated, coping with co-occurring disorders (mental health/substance abuse), experience on-going involvement in the justice system, and lack basic documents to obtain services.

Additionally, expanding inmate access to digital technology would bring tremendous advantages to the individuals and the community at large. We are living in a digital age, whereas having the ability to meet most needs, including education, involves access to technology. Basic computer skills and digital access can no longer be considered optional. Creating a cover letter, a resume, and ensuring a valid email address prior to release would be a productive use of time while the individual is incarcerated. Moreover, 2020 (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) showed the world how technology was vital in being able to connect to family and receive important Medical, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse treatment as well as connect to State and Federal services.

Legislation requiring the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Corrections to provide those documents to persons releasing from incarceration, and allowing incarcerated individuals access to digital technology can only benefit everyone.

Respectfully-

Ryan Isadore

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Isadore', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Client Resource Coordinator