



March 5, 2021

Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
C/O The Honorable Representative Matt Claman  
State Capitol Room 118  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Letter of Support for HB 105: Detention of Minors

Dear Representative Claman,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska. The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services (A.S. 47.30.661, A.S. 44.29.100).

AMHB/ABADA is in full support of the provision of this bill to allow the Commissioner of the Department of Correction (DOC) to enter into agreements with the Department of Health and Social Service (DHSS) for the detention and care of minors who are waived into the adult criminal justice system.

Alaskans under the age of 18 who are waived and incarcerated into DOC are required to be separated from all other offenders which could result in placement in Administrative Segregation Units. In these units these youth are often isolated and have limited privileges and programming options. They are housed in these units out of concern for their safety, not because of their behaviors or other contributing factors usually ascribed to adults in these units.

Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities are staffed and structured to hold juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior and assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent recidivism. DJJ offers rehabilitative and restorative justice services to youth in their custody, including mental health and substance use programs, high school and college classes, anger management programs, job skills training, workforce development and much more.

Waived minors that can be detained and held in DJJ facilities instead of DOC facilities would greatly benefit from these services and be allowed to interact with other youth their own age within the facility. Because adolescent brain development does not stop till the mid-20's, Alaskan youth involved in the justice system need rehabilitative services to help them build valuable skill sets to help reduce the chance they will re-offend in the future and to support their cognitive development.

Sincerely,

Beverly Schoonover  
Executive Director