

# Memorandum

Alaska Court System

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**TO:** The Honorable Click Bishop  
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee

**FROM:** Doug Wooliver  
Deputy Administrative Director  
Alaska Court System

**DATE:** April 26, 2022

**SUBJ:** HB 155 - Court Visitors Moving to the Court system

This memo further explains the court system's fiscal note on HB 155, which the Senate Finance Committee heard yesterday, April 25, 2022.

House Bill 155 transfers the court visitor program for guardianship cases from the Office of Public Advocacy to the Alaska Court System. As part of that transfer, OPA transferred to the court the money it currently spends on the program. Members asked why the court's fiscal note was for more money than OPA was transferring. The difference is \$104,700, which would fund a staff person to better manage the visitor program.

One of the shortcomings of having the court visitor program in OPA rather than the court system is that, because visitors serve as experts to advise judges, OPA has been reluctant to implement training that would be much more appropriately provided by the court itself. A new staff person will develop and conduct that much-needed training. Additionally, the staff will schedule the visitor appointments; assist in the hiring of visitors; audit the reports filed by visitors to ensure compliance with the training, statutes, and court rules that apply to their work; and to help oversee the program as the number of cases continues to grow along with our aging population.

In earlier testimony OPA stated that if HB 155 doesn't pass they too will have to hire an additional staff person, as the work associated with this growing program cannot continue to operate without dedicated staff support.

Thank you for hearing the bill, and please contact me if you have any further questions.

