

From: Lisa Alexia

Sent: Saturday, March 12, 2022 10:22 PM

To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz <Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov>; Rep. James Kaufman <Rep.James.Kaufman@akleg.gov>; Rep. DeLena Johnson <Rep.DeLena.Johnson@akleg.gov>

Subject: Request amendment to HB 31 (oppose)

Hello,

As a psychiatric physician assistant who provides health care in rural Alaska as well as Anchorage, I write with professional, academic, and personal knowledge of the impact that Alaska's long dark mornings have on human health, mental health, and safety. I respectfully request that you reconsider your approach to eliminating the clock change and advocate instead for permanent Standard Time. Eliminating the clock change is important—we can agree on that—but please understand that making DST permanent would worsen the quality of life and health outcomes for a majority of Alaskans.

Permanent Daylight Saving Time is federally prohibited. It would delay Juneau sunrise to 9:46am (past 8am 4.1 months), Anchorage sunrise to 11:15am (past 8am 5.7 months). On St. Paul Island, sunrise on winter solstice would not take place until nearly noon! This may not seem like a big deal in Eastern Alaska, but as someone who has worked in Western Alaskan communities, and Anchorage, (where most of our state population resides), I can tell you that the delayed clock time is a big problem. Long dark mornings for much of the year, and extended evening light in the spring, wreak havoc on schoolchildren and entire communities who struggle with getting enough sleep when they must convince children to go to bed early in April in May when it is light late, and to wake hours before dawn for most of the school year—not because they are far north, but because of the displacement of the civil clock from true sun time. Alaska lost most of its time zones in the 80s and this has disproportionately affected the health and safety of Western Alaska (including Anchorage and Fairbanks). HB 31 would worsen an already difficult situation. Permanent DST would force earlier waking relative to sunrise, further misalign clocks from circadian rhythms during the winter when Alaskans most need morning light, and chronically deprive sleep.

For Alaska in particular, our high rates of cancer, diabetes, unintentional injury, suicide, homicide read like a treatise on all the harms of displaced circadian rhythms and the sleep deprivation it causes. If Alaska were to implement to permanent Standard Time, we might finally make some headway on improving some of these public health issues. But if HB31 were to pass and the state went to permanent DST, these public health problems (for which AK is already notorious in the nation and the world) will worsen.

Permanent DST has failed before with loss of life. The National Education Association, National School Boards Association, National Safety Council, National PTA, American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Society for Research on Biological Rhythms, The American College of Chest Physicians, and many others urge permanent Standard Time as best for health, safety, and prosperity. Please consider amending this bill to advocate for permanent Standard Time.

Eliminating the clock change can happen at a state level by eliminating DST completely and just remaining on standard time. Arizona and Hawaii do this. It's time Alaska does the same. Eliminating the clock change to convert to DST actually would take longer because you will be waiting for federal action.

For more details on the importance of making Alaska Standard Time permanent, here is a link to a commentary I wrote about this issue a couple of years ago:

<https://www.adn.com/opinions/2020/02/21/make-alaska-standard-time-permanent/>

If I can be of further information or assistance, I would be happy to do so.

Thank you,
Lisa Alexia, PA-C, CAQ Psychiatry