



Sponsor Statement

HB 259 An Act Establishing the Council on Human and Sex Trafficking

"An Act establishing the Council on Human and Sex Trafficking; and relating to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault."

House Bill 259 emerges as a critical initiative, proposing to establish the Alaska Council on Human and Sex Trafficking permanently through State Statute. The Council, established by Administrative Order 328, plays a pivotal role in combating the exploitation of Alaskans. By formalizing its existence in statute, the commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by human trafficking is strengthened.

The Alaska Council on Human and Sex Trafficking plays a vital role in the ongoing battle against human trafficking, a heinous crime driven by coercion, force, and fraud. This council operates on multiple fronts, starting with the crucial task of raising awareness about the pervasive issue of human trafficking. By shedding light on the deceptive tactics employed by traffickers, the council aims to empower communities with the knowledge to recognize and combat this form of exploitation.

Additionally, the council engages in extensive research to provide comprehensive reports on the prevalence of trafficking in Alaska, offering valuable insights into the diverse forms of exploitation. These reports serve as a foundation for informed decision-making and strategic planning. Importantly, the council doesn't stop at awareness and research; it actively proposes solutions to protect victims. By identifying and advocating for measures that can disrupt the operations of traffickers and provide support to survivors, the council contributes significantly to the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking, a significantly troubling concern, often goes unnoticed in Alaska and the United States. According to a 2017 study, one in four women at Anchorage Covenant's House had been trafficked for sex, with 42% being Alaska Natives. However, human trafficking is significantly underreported due to the intense trauma victims experience, hindering them from seeking help.

House Bill 259 not only recognizes the pervasive issue of human trafficking but also acknowledges the critical role the Council plays in combating it. Ensuring the Council's permanence in statute signifies a long-term commitment to eradicating human trafficking in Alaska. The Council's continuous presence will enhance the coordination, resources, and strategies necessary for an effective response to this complex problem. By addressing the ever-present threat of human trafficking, House Bill 259 reaffirms Alaska's dedication to safeguarding the well-being and rights of all its residents.