
From: Kathleen Todd [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 02, 2024 1:28 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: SB 104 Legal Services Funding

I urge you to pass this bill out of committee and for the house to join the Senate in passing it into law/regulation. Our legal system is not available to all if they don't have access to lawyers and many among us do not have the money to hire a lawyer when they need one. I will give you an example of a patient I have seen in the past who definitely needed legal expertise and needed it quickly. This patient was in the hospital in Anchorage, very ill, when his own father died. Although he was the heir, other family members showed up to "help" with the estate and started taking various possessions of the deceased. The patient was now disabled, needing a wheel chair and a driver to get around. He was putting his energy into trying to find the money to claim his father's ashes. He had never dealt with a probate situation before. When he finally was able to come home to Valdez, I sent him to the court to try to get the paperwork he needed, but doctors don't know about such things and this guy would have struggled with massive paperwork even if he had a detailed roadmap of what needed to be done and wasn't already worried about loss of mobility, loss of his job, lingering effects of illness, and unexpected expenses. He needed legal help, and as a seasonal worker he didn't have money to hire it. This is the sort of person that we should be supporting through their experience with our legal system. Please pass this bill.

Kathleen Todd MD
Valdez

From: Kokoszka, Jamie J (DOH) <jamie.kokoszka@alaska.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2024 3:08 PM
To: House Finance
Cc: Reinhart, Patrick J (DOH)
Subject: SB 104 Civil Legal Services Fund
Attachments: 2024 Civil Legal Services Fund.pdf

Dear House Finance Committee:

Attention Representatives Edgmon (Co-Chair), Foster (Co-Chair), and Johnson (Co-Chair),

The Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education thanks Senator Dunbar and Representative Wright for bringing forth SB 104 and its companion bill HB 161. The Council, along with members of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) provided its position paper (attached) during their legislative visits in February in support of SB 104 / HB 161. It is our understanding that there is a hearing on this bill before House Finance on May 2nd at 1:30pm. The Council is interested in testifying at the hearing as invited or public testimony if so allowed. The Council stands ready to assist the Legislature in moving the bill forward. Please contact Executive Director, Patrick Reinhart at patrick.reinhart@alaska.gov with questions or comments.

Thank you.



Jamie Kokoszka | Program Coordinator 2
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Join us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/GCDSE

From: Jordan Marshall <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, May 06, 2024 10:19 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: SUPPORT for SB104 Civil Legal Services Fund :: Alaska Regional Coalition

Dear House Finance Committee:

The Alaska Regional Coalition offers its strong SUPPORT for **SB104 Civil Legal Services Fund** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration and passage of the bill, which is scheduled for a hearing in House Finance on Thursday May 9 at 10 a.m. SB104 can play a vital role in providing much-needed legal support to Alaska's most financially vulnerable residents and thus ensure that all Alaskans have fair access to the justice system.

*The **Alaska Regional Coalition** is a consortium of four Alaska Native regional tribal nonprofits and two regional tribes – Tanana Chiefs Conference, Maniilaq, Kawerak, Chugachmiut, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. We are all recognized by the U.S. Indian Self-Determination Act to provide medical, behavioral, social, public safety, workforce development, and judicial supports to the State of Alaska through contracts, compacts, and grants. The coalition represents **70,000 Alaskans and 109 communities** from Ketchikan to Kotzebue.*

Respectfully,

Jordan Marshall

Jordan Marshall
Government Affairs
[REDACTED]

Support Civil Legal Services Fund



What:

HB 161 / SB 104 the “Civil Legal Services Fund” amends AS 37.05.590 so that up to 25% of Court System filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the Civil Legal Services fund each year to provide legal assistance for low-income Alaskans, including those with disabilities that need it. Low-income is defined by an individual who is equal to or below the federal poverty line set for Alaska by federal poverty lines.

- Many Alaskans with disabilities do not have the financial means to afford legal representation or assistance in legal matters, leaving them at an unfair legal disadvantage to address basic human rights and needs.
- People with disabilities who are living on in poverty on a fixed income such as Medicaid Waivers or Social Security, typically do not have enough funds to save money for representation in civil legal matters.
- Alaska Legal Services turns away approximately half of the individuals seeking assistance for civil legal matters each year due to limited resources.
- The target population continues to grow; but the current funding has not kept up with 40 years' worth of inflation to serve this population.

Why is the Civil Legal Services fund important to individuals with disabilities?

Civil Legal Services funds are critical for Alaskans with disabilities who do not have the financial means to receive legal assistance that would allow them to receive justice, or legal assistance leading to healthy, productive, independent, and dignified lives and to participate in education, the labor market, and civic life. The service is necessary for individuals with disabilities who may need legal assistance to help with:

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

- Completing required legal work to obtain a Supported Decision-making Agreement (SDMA)
- Landlord/tenant disputes and resolutions that would prevent homelessness or allow an individual to receive accommodations
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complaints
- Marriage and family needs such as adoptions, guardianship, divorce, child support and custody matters, and leaving a domestic violence situation
- Public benefits such as denial of Medicaid services or other services
- Wrongful termination of employment
- Financial abuse
- Alaska Native law
- Unfair sales practices and consumer fraud, debt collections, creditor harassment, loans and installment purchases

Ask:

Please support the passage of HB 161 / SB 104 the "Civil Legal Services Fund" amending AS 37.05.590 so that up to 25% of Court System filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the Civil Legal Services fund each year to provide legal assistance for low-income Alaskans, which includes individuals with disabilities.

4/26/2024

RE: Support for SB104

Dear Rep. Edgmon, Foster and Johnson, House Finance Co-Chairs:

STAR would like to offer support of SB104, amending AS 37.05.590 (the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund) so that up to 25% of Court System filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the Civil Legal Services Fund each year to provide consistent and timely access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans with critical legal needs.

When AS 37.05.590 was amended in 2018, the original bill sought a contribution of 25% of court fees as a better reflection of the community need. When it was reduced to 10%, there was a commitment to revisit if this did not fulfill funding needs.

Since its passage, community need for legal services has only increased and again, demand far outstrips available resources, and due to inflation, program expenses have increased. It is time to amend the fund so additional revenue is generated to address unmet life-altering civil legal needs for Alaskans in need statewide.

Civil legal aid ensures fairness for all in the justice system. It provides access to legal help for people who cannot afford it otherwise, to protect their livelihood, their health, or their family. Access to justice should not depend on how much money you have.

Countless survivors of domestic and sexual abuse are aided by civil legal attorneys, who would otherwise go without legal counsel. They help survivors retain custody of their children, file for protective orders and fight evictions meant to drive these families into homelessness and destitution, as well as force them into ongoing reliance on their abusive former partners.

The “justice gap” is the difference between the level of legal assistance available and the level that is necessary to meet the needs of low-income individuals. At current funding levels, ALSC must turn away hundreds of families seeking assistance each year due to resource limitations.

STAR urges your support of this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Kindly,



Keeley Olson
Executive Director