

Alaskan lawmakers are deceiving themselves if they believe that children in state custody are safe; they are not.

As a mother who raised my children in rural Alaska, with 20 years of experience in public service, including work in the Alaska Court System and briefly for the Office of Children's Services, I wholeheartedly support this bill.

During my tenure as a Protective Service Specialist, I witnessed firsthand the inadequacies of the state's Child Protection/Foster Care system. I can attest that at least three of the children under my care from the Bethel Office of OCS were ensnared in the dysfunction of Alaska's system and were essentially abandoned by it upon placement into psychiatric care, one in Texas and one in Utah. These children are sent to treatment facilities, where they are left alone, only to be checked on when a caseworker gets a chance. It is inhumane.

This bill marks a crucial step towards reforming Alaska's dysfunctional system of Child Protection and Foster Care. HB 363 is just one of many necessary legislative changes that need to occur to protect the most vulnerable members of our state.

I apologize for not being able to testify in person; two minutes is simply not enough time for me to convey the countless stories I've witnessed. I can articulate facts about the dysfunctional system that's failing our children for hours.

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