

REPRESENTATIVE SARA HANNAN

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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House District 4
Downtown Juneau
Thane, Lemon Creek
Douglas Island, Airport, and
the Mendenhall Valley to
Stephen Richards Drive

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 48 — Civil Legal Services Fund

HB 48 safeguards low-income Alaskans' access to the civil justice system by increasing the funding available for organizations that provide civil legal services to Alaska's most vulnerable populations.

HB 48 amends the statute creating the Civil Legal Services Fund (AS 37.05.590) so that up to 25 percent of court system filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the existing Alaska Civil Legal Services Fund each year to provide access to civil legal aid for low-income Alaskans. Legislation allowing the legislature to appropriate filing fees for civil legal aid was passed in 2018. It was originally set at 25 percent but lowered to 10 percent with the intention of reassessing the need for a higher appropriation later; those contributions are now necessary to support those in need.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) — the only civil legal services organization for low-income people in Alaska — was established in 1967. ALSC assists Alaskans with a range of civil matters including financial abuse, housing, child support, government benefits, and domestic violence protective orders. ALSC is not a state agency; it is a nonprofit charitable 501(c)(3), whose funding comes from a variety of state, federal, and private sources. ALSC strives to serve a growing number of low-income clients. Unfortunately, due to the growing demand and declining support, ALSC has had to turn away hundreds of individuals and families.

HB 48 aims to stabilize funding for ALSC and help ensure that civil legal aid is available to all Alaskans, not just those who can afford it. I urge you to join me in supporting HB 48.