

**CS FOR SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 82(JUD)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/4/11  
Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): SENATOR DAVIS

REPRESENTATIVE Gara

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to the procedures and jurisdiction of the Department of Health and**  
2 **Social Services for the care of children who are in state custody; relating to court**  
3 **jurisdiction and findings pertaining to children who are in state custody; and modifying**  
4 **the licensing requirements for foster care."**

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
7 to read:

8 SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Alaska Foster Family Protection Act.

9 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 47.10.080(l) is amended to read:

10 (l) Within 12 months after the date a child enters foster care as calculated  
11 under AS 47.10.088(f), the court shall hold a permanency hearing. The hearing and  
12 permanent plan developed in the hearing are governed by the following provisions:

13 (1) the persons entitled to be heard under AS 47.10.070 or under (f) of  
14 this section are also entitled to be heard at the hearing held under this subsection;

1 (2) when establishing the permanent plan for the child, the court shall  
2 make appropriate written findings, including findings related to whether

3 (A) and when the child should be returned to the parent or  
4 guardian;

5 (B) the child should be placed for adoption or legal  
6 guardianship and whether a petition for termination of parental rights should be  
7 filed by the department; and

8 (C) **there is a compelling reason that the most appropriate**  
9 **placement for** the child **is** [SHOULD BE PLACED] in another planned,  
10 permanent living arrangement **and the department has recommended the**  
11 **arrangement under AS 47.14.100(p); the findings under this paragraph**  
12 **must include the steps that** [AND WHAT STEPS] are necessary to achieve  
13 the new arrangement;

14 (3) if the court is unable to make a finding required under (2) of this  
15 subsection, the court shall hold another hearing within a reasonable period of time;

16 (4) in addition to the findings required by (2) of this subsection, the  
17 court shall also make appropriate written findings related to

18 (A) whether the department has made the reasonable efforts  
19 required under AS 47.10.086 to offer appropriate family support services to  
20 remedy the parent's or guardian's conduct or conditions in the home that made  
21 the child a child in need of aid under this chapter;

22 (B) whether the parent or guardian has made substantial  
23 progress to remedy the parent's or guardian's conduct or conditions in the home  
24 that made the child a child in need of aid under this chapter;

25 (C) if the permanent plan is for the child to remain in out-of-  
26 home-care, whether the child's out-of-home placement continues to be  
27 appropriate and in the best interests of the child; and

28 (D) whether the department has made reasonable efforts to  
29 finalize the permanent plan for the child;

30 (5) the court shall hold a hearing to review the permanent plan at least  
31 annually until successful implementation of the plan; if the plan approved by the court

1 changes after the hearing, the department shall promptly apply to the court for another  
 2 permanency hearing, and the court shall conduct the hearing within 30 days after  
 3 application by the department.

4 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 47.10.080 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

5 (w) The court shall recognize a presumption that maintenance of a sibling  
 6 relationship, including with a sibling who is related by blood, marriage, or adoption  
 7 through one parent, is in a child's best interest.

8 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 47.10.100 is amended to read:

9 **Sec. 47.10.100. Retention of jurisdiction over child [MINOR].** (a) The court  
 10 retains jurisdiction over the case and may at any time stay execution, modify, set  
 11 aside, revoke, or enlarge a judgment or order, or grant a new hearing, in the exercise  
 12 of its power of protection over the child [MINOR] and for the child's [MINOR'S] best  
 13 interest, for a period of time not to exceed two years or in any event extend past the  
 14 day the child reaches [MINOR BECOMES] 19 years of age, unless sooner  
 15 discharged by the court, except that the department may apply for and the court may  
 16 grant an additional one-year period of custody or supervision past [AGE] 19 years of  
 17 age and additional one-year periods of custody that do not extend beyond the  
 18 person's 21st birthday if continued custody or supervision is in the best interests of  
 19 the person and the person consents to it. An application for any of these purposes may  
 20 be made by the parent, guardian, or custodian acting in behalf of the child [MINOR],  
 21 or the court may, on its own motion, and after reasonable notice to interested parties  
 22 and the appropriate department, take action that it considers appropriate.

23 (b) If the court determines at a hearing authorized by (a) of this section that  
 24 the department has complied with the requirements for release of a child under  
 25 AS 47.14.100(q) and that it is in [FOR] the best interests of the child [MINOR] to be  
 26 released to the child's own custody, or to the care or custody of the child's  
 27 [MINOR'S] parent, guardian, or custodian, it shall [MAY] enter an order to that effect  
 28 and the child [MINOR] is discharged from the control of the department.

29 (c) If a child [MINOR] is adjudicated a child in need of aid before the child's  
 30 [MINOR'S] 18th birthday, the court may retain jurisdiction over the child [MINOR]  
 31 after the child's [MINOR'S] 18th birthday for the purpose of supervising the child

1 [MINOR], but the court's jurisdiction over the minor under this chapter never extends  
 2 beyond the child's [MINOR'S] 19th birthday, except that the department may apply  
 3 for and the court may grant an additional one-year period of custody or supervision  
 4 past [AGE] 19 years of age and additional one-year periods of custody that do not  
 5 extend beyond the person's 21st birthday if continued custody or supervision is in  
 6 the best interests of the person and the person consents to it. The department may  
 7 retain jurisdiction over a child [BETWEEN THE CHILD'S 18TH AND 19TH  
 8 BIRTHDAYS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPERVISING THE CHILD,] if the child  
 9 has been placed in the custody or under the supervision of the department before the  
 10 child's 18th birthday, except that the department may apply for and the court may  
 11 grant an additional one-year period of custody or supervision past [AGE] 19 years of  
 12 age and additional one-year periods of custody that do not extend beyond the  
 13 person's 21st birthday if continued custody or supervision is in the best interests of  
 14 the person and the person consents to it.

15 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 47.14.100(m) is amended to read:

16 (m) Prima facie evidence of good cause not to place a child with an adult  
 17 family member or family friend under AS 47.10.088(i) or under (e) of this section  
 18 includes the failure to meet the requirements for a foster care license under AS 47.32  
 19 and regulations adopted under AS 47.32, taking into account a waiver, variance, or  
 20 exemption allowed under AS 47.32.030(a)(3) and 47.32.032. Prima facie evidence  
 21 of good cause not to place a child with an adult family member or adult family friend  
 22 does not include poverty or inadequate or crowded housing. If the department denies a  
 23 request for placement with an adult family member or a family friend, the department  
 24 shall inform the adult family member or family friend of the basis for the denial and  
 25 the right to request a hearing to review the decision. A non-party adult family member  
 26 or family friend requesting a review hearing under AS 47.10.088(i) or under (e) of this  
 27 section is not eligible for publicly appointed legal counsel.

28 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 47.14.100 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

29 (o) Except as provided in (p) and (q) of this section, the department shall  
 30 continue to search for a suitable adoptive or permanent legal guardianship for a child  
 31 who is in the custody of the state and who is under 18 years of age.

1 (p) The department may recommend to the court another planned permanent  
2 living arrangement for a child who is in state custody only if

3 (1) the child is 16 years of age or older;

4 (2) the department has unsuccessfully made intensive efforts to find a  
5 permanent placement for the child; and

6 (3) the department, after considering reunification, adoption, legal  
7 guardianship, or permanent placement with a fit and willing relative, determines that  
8 there is a compelling reason that the most appropriate permanency plan for the child is  
9 placement in another planned permanent living arrangement, and the department  
10 documents for the court the compelling reason for the alternate plan.

11 (q) The department may release from state custody a child who has been  
12 committed to the custody of the department, before the custody is ordered to end, only  
13 if

14 (1) the child, if the child is over 16 years of age and available, and the  
15 guardian ad litem are notified not less than 30 days before a motion for release is filed  
16 unless the parties agree to a shorter notice period;

17 (2) the department files a motion with the court for release of state  
18 custody that describes the reasons the release is in the best interest of the child; and

19 (3) a court makes a written finding that release from state custody is in  
20 the best interest of the child.

21 (r) When custody of a child who has been committed to the custody of the  
22 department is due to expire, the department shall file a notice of release with the court  
23 30 days before the date of release unless the parties agree to a shorter notice period  
24 and distribute the notice to the parties, including the child if the child is 16 years of  
25 age or older and available.

26 (s) The department shall make reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same  
27 placement if the siblings are residing in the same home when taken into the custody of  
28 the department. If siblings are not placed together after reasonable efforts have been  
29 made, the case supervisor for the division with responsibility over the custody of  
30 children shall document in the file the efforts that were made and the reason separating  
31 the siblings for placement purposes is in the best interest of the children. In this

1 subsection, "sibling" means two or more persons who are related by blood, adoption,  
2 or marriage as a child of one or both parents.

3 (t) As used in (p) of this section, "compelling reason" may include  
4 circumstances in which

5 (1) the child has specifically requested that emancipation be  
6 established;

7 (2) a parent and child have a significant bond, but the parent is unable  
8 to care for the child because of an emotional or physical disability, and the child's  
9 foster parents have committed to raising the child to the age of majority and to  
10 facilitating visitation with the disabled parent.

11 (u) In this section, "another planned permanent living arrangement" means a  
12 permanent living arrangement for a child who is committed to the custody of the  
13 department under AS 47.10.080(c)(1) that is an alternative to permanent placement  
14 with an adult family member, and to reunification, adoption, and legal guardianship.

15 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 47.32 is amended by adding a new section to read:

16 **Sec. 47.32.032. Foster care license; variance.** (a) The department shall  
17 streamline the application and licensing paperwork necessary for a person to be  
18 approved as a foster parent or relative placement to the extent consistent with federal  
19 law.

20 (b) The department shall approve a variance of the applicable building code  
21 requirements for licensure of a foster care home to the extent permitted by federal law  
22 if an applicant does not meet the requirements at the time of inspection and

23 (1) the home design and construction is consistent with homes located  
24 in the community; and

25 (2) the home is otherwise a safe environment for a child.