

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 9, 2018

2:42 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator David Wilson, Chair  
Senator Cathy Giessel  
Senator Peter Micciche  
Senator Tom Begich

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Natasha von Imhof, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 208

"An Act establishing the month of March as Sobriety Awareness Month."

- MOVED SB 208 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 208

SHORT TITLE: MARCH: SOBRIETY AWARENESS MONTH

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GARDNER

02/19/18	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/18	(S)	HSS, STA
04/09/18	(S)	HSS AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR BERTA GARDNER Sponsor  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 208.

JACOB TATUM, Staff  
Senator Berta Gardner  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented SB 208 on behalf of the sponsor.

TIFFANY HALL, Executive Director  
Recover Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 208.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[2:42:27 PM](#)

**CHAIR DAVID WILSON** called the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:42 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Micciche, and Chair Wilson. Senator Giessel joined shortly thereafter.

**SB 208-MARCH: SOBRIETY AWARENESS MONTH**

[2:42:46 PM](#)

**CHAIR WILSON** announced the consideration of SB 208.

[2:43:03 PM](#)

**SENATOR BERTA GARDNER**, Alaska State Legislature, sponsor of SB 208, said sobriety is important to Alaska because alcohol and substance abuse have negative impacts every year. Everyone is affected. According to a McDowell report, the estimated cost of drug and alcohol abuse to the Alaska economy was over \$3 billion in 2015. It is not possible to quantify the cost in human pain, damaged families, to children, and to communities. Sobriety Month helps by giving Alaskans an opportunity to recognize, promote, and celebrate sobriety. By focusing on the solution, SB 208 gives Alaskans an opportunity to celebrate those who have achieved sobriety.

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**JACOB TATUM**, Staff, Senator Berta Gardner, Alaska State Legislature, presented SB 208 on behalf of the sponsor. He noted the importance of permanently recognizing March as sobriety month. SB 208 celebrates and promotes tens of thousands who lead healthy lives free of mind and mood-altering substances. He reminded members that Alaska suffers some of the highest substance abuse rates in the nation. SB 208 fosters a culture conscious of the state's multifaceted substance abuse challenges and how they can ultimately be overcome. Sobriety has been recognized as a youth protective factor strongly correlated with lower rates of future substance abuse and positive life outcomes. By recognizing a month for sobriety, the hope is to

reestablish positive social norms and send a message to young people that the majority of their peers do not abuse alcohol and drugs.

MR. TATUM said SB 208 is the product of the contribution of many people and organizations. Sobriety Awareness Month started in 1989 with an Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) resolution that started the AFN sobriety movement. Musher and activist Mike Williams spearheaded the Ididapledge and ran the Iditarod in 1992 carrying 10,000 signatures pledging sobriety. The legislature first recognized Sobriety Awareness Month in 1995. Alaska was the first state in the union to recognize sobriety as a lifestyle. In 1996 Alaska adopted statutory language recognizing and appreciating citizens' life of sobriety. From 1996-2006, the legislature passed resolutions to recognize March Sobriety Month. SB 208 permanently recognizes this month. By reducing the harm of substance abuse, SB 208 is ultimately about improving the quality of life for Alaskans, their communities, and their families.

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CHAIR WILSON opened public testimony on SB 208.

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TIFFANY HALL, Executive Director, Recover Alaska, supported SB 208. She said the country and especially Alaska have a culture of drinking. Alaska has the statistics to show it is among the top in sexual assault, domestic violence, and suicide. It is not a part of Native culture to drink excessively. Connections to one's traditional values and cultural values is a protective factor. She thanked AFN for initiating sobriety month. She was just in Kiana at a youth-led prevention conference that Recover Alaska helped to sponsor. What she heard there and in communities around the state is that youth are tired of adults drinking all the time and of the perception that youth drink all the time. Research shows that 78 percent of youth do not drink alcohol and they want role models in sobriety. Sobriety Awareness Month helps to fulfill and promote that purpose.

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CHAIR WILSON closed public testimony on SB 208.

[2:51:44 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to report SB 208, Version 30-LS1470\A, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

2:52:01 PM

CHAIR WILSON found no objection and SB 208 moved from the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Wilson adjourned the Senate Health and Social Services Standing Committee at 2:52 p.m.