

**HOUSE BILL NO. 304**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

Introduced: 2/28/20

Referred: Health and Social Services, Judiciary

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to psychiatric examination under criminal law and procedure; relating**  
2 **to notice of reasonable cause to believe the defendant has become competent; relating to**  
3 **defendants who are civilly committed; and providing for an effective date."**

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

5 \* **Section 1.** AS 12.47.070 is amended to read:

6 **Sec. 12.47.070. Psychiatric examination.** (a) If a defendant has filed a notice  
7 of intention to rely on the affirmative defense of insanity under AS 12.47.010 or has  
8 filed notice under AS 12.47.020(a), [OR THERE IS REASON TO DOUBT THE  
9 DEFENDANT'S FITNESS TO PROCEED, OR THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE  
10 THAT A MENTAL DISEASE OR DEFECT OF THE DEFENDANT WILL  
11 OTHERWISE BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE CASE,] the court shall appoint at least  
12 two qualified psychiatrists or two **qualified** [FORENSIC] psychologists **or one of**  
13 **each** [CERTIFIED BY THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY]  
14 to examine and report **on** [UPON] the mental condition of the defendant. If the court

1 appoints **two qualified** psychiatrists, the **qualified** psychiatrists may select **qualified**  
2 psychologists to provide assistance. If the defendant has filed notice under  
3 AS 12.47.090(a), the report shall consider whether the defendant can still be  
4 committed under AS 12.47.090(c) [. THE COURT MAY ORDER THE  
5 DEFENDANT TO BE COMMITTED TO A SECURE FACILITY FOR THE  
6 PURPOSE OF THE EXAMINATION FOR NOT MORE THAN 60 DAYS OR  
7 SUCH LONGER PERIOD AS THE COURT DETERMINES TO BE NECESSARY  
8 FOR THE PURPOSE AND MAY DIRECT THAT A QUALIFIED PSYCHIATRIST  
9 RETAINED BY THE DEFENDANT BE PERMITTED TO WITNESS AND  
10 PARTICIPATE IN THE EXAMINATION].

11 (b) In an examination under (a) **or (f)** of this section, any method may be  
12 employed which is accepted by the medical profession for the examination of those  
13 alleged to be suffering from mental disease or defect.

14 (c) The report of an examination under (a) **or (f)** of this section shall include  
15 the following:

16 (1) a description of the nature of the examination;

17 (2) a diagnosis of the mental condition of the defendant;

18 (3) if the defendant suffers from a mental disease or defect, an opinion  
19 as to the defendant's capacity to understand the proceedings against the defendant and  
20 to assist in the defendant's defense;

21 (4) if a notice of intention to rely on the affirmative defense of insanity  
22 under AS 12.47.010(b) has been filed, an opinion as to the extent, if any, to which the  
23 capacity of the defendant to appreciate the nature and quality of the defendant's  
24 conduct was impaired at the time of the crime charged; and

25 (5) if notice has been filed under AS 12.47.020(a), an opinion as to the  
26 capacity of the defendant to have a culpable mental state which is an element of the  
27 crime charged.

28 (d) If the examination under (a) **or (f)** of this section cannot be conducted by  
29 reason of the unwillingness of the defendant to participate in it, the report shall so state  
30 and shall include, if possible, an opinion as to whether the unwillingness of the  
31 defendant was the result of mental disease or defect.

1 (e) The report of the examination under (a) **or (f)** of this section shall be filed  
2 with the clerk of the court, who shall cause copies to be delivered to the prosecuting  
3 attorney and to counsel for the defendant.

4 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 12.47.070 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

5 (f) If there is reason to doubt the defendant's fitness to proceed, or there is  
6 reason to believe that a mental disease or defect of the defendant will otherwise  
7 become an issue in the case, the court shall appoint at least one qualified psychiatrist  
8 or one qualified psychologist to examine and report on the mental condition of the  
9 defendant. If the court appoints one qualified psychiatrist, the qualified psychiatrist  
10 may select a qualified psychologist to provide assistance.

11 (g) In an examination under (a) or (f) of this section, the court may order the  
12 defendant committed to a secure facility for the purpose of the examination for not  
13 more than 60 days or a longer period that the court determines is necessary for the  
14 examination and may direct that a qualified psychiatrist or qualified psychologist  
15 retained by the defendant be permitted to witness and participate in the examination.

16 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 12.47.100(b) is amended to read:

17 (b) If, before imposition of sentence, the prosecuting attorney or the attorney  
18 for the defendant has reasonable cause to believe that the defendant is presently  
19 suffering from a mental disease or defect that causes the defendant to be unable to  
20 understand the proceedings or to assist in the person's own defense, the attorney may  
21 file a motion for a judicial determination of the competency of the defendant. Upon  
22 that motion, or upon its own motion, the court shall have the defendant examined by at  
23 least one qualified psychiatrist or **qualified** psychologist, who shall report to the court  
24 concerning the competency of the defendant. For the purpose of the examination, the  
25 court may order the defendant committed for a reasonable period to a suitable hospital  
26 or other facility designated by the court. If the report of the **qualified** psychiatrist or  
27 **qualified** psychologist indicates that the defendant is incompetent, the court shall hold  
28 a hearing, upon due notice, at which evidence as to the competency of the defendant  
29 may be submitted, including that of the reporting **qualified** psychiatrist or **qualified**  
30 psychologist, and make appropriate findings. Before the hearing, the court shall, upon  
31 request of the prosecuting attorney, order the defendant to submit to an additional

1 evaluation by a **qualified** psychiatrist or **qualified** psychologist designated by the  
2 prosecuting attorney.

3 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 12.47.100(h) is amended to read:

4 (h) In a hearing to determine competency under this section, the court may, at  
5 the court's discretion, allow a witness, including a **qualified** psychiatrist or **qualified**  
6 psychologist who examined the defendant, to testify concerning the competency of the  
7 defendant by contemporaneous two-way video conference if the witness is in a place  
8 from which people customarily travel by air to the court, and the procedure allows the  
9 parties a fair opportunity to examine the witness. The video conference technician  
10 shall be the only person in the presence of the witness unless the court, at the court's  
11 discretion, determines that another person may be present. Any person present with  
12 the witness must be identified on the record. In this subsection, "contemporaneous  
13 two-way video conference"

14 (1) means a conference among people at different places by means of  
15 transmitted audio and video signals;

16 (2) includes all communication technologies that allow people at two  
17 or more places to interact by two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously.

18 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 12.47.110(b) is amended to read:

19 (b) On or before the expiration of the initial 90-day period of commitment, the  
20 court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether or not the defendant remains  
21 incompetent. If the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the defendant  
22 remains incompetent, the court may recommit the defendant for a second period of 90  
23 days. The court shall determine at the expiration of the second 90-day period whether  
24 the defendant has become competent. If, at the expiration of the second 90-day period,  
25 the court determines that the defendant continues to be incompetent to stand trial, the  
26 charges against the defendant shall be dismissed without prejudice, and continued  
27 commitment of the defendant shall be governed by the provisions relating to civil  
28 commitments under AS 47.30.700 - 47.30.915 unless the defendant is charged with a  
29 crime involving force against a person and the court finds that the defendant presents a  
30 substantial danger of physical injury to other persons and that there is a substantial  
31 probability that the defendant will regain competency within a reasonable period of

1 time, in which case the court may extend the period of commitment for an additional  
 2 six months. If the defendant remains incompetent at the expiration of the additional  
 3 six-month period, the charges shall be dismissed without prejudice, and continued  
 4 commitment proceedings shall be governed by the provisions relating to civil  
 5 commitment under AS 47.30.700 - 47.30.915 [ IF THE DEFENDANT REMAINS  
 6 INCOMPETENT FOR FIVE YEARS AFTER THE CHARGES HAVE BEEN  
 7 DISMISSED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION, THE DEFENDANT MAY NOT BE  
 8 CHARGED AGAIN FOR AN OFFENSE ARISING OUT OF THE FACTS  
 9 ALLEGED IN THE ORIGINAL CHARGES, EXCEPT IF THE ORIGINAL  
 10 CHARGE IS A CLASS A FELONY OR UNCLASSIFIED FELONY].

11 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 12.47.110 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

12 (f) If commitment proceedings under AS 47.30.700 - 47.30.915 are instituted  
 13 against a defendant in addition to the proceedings under this section, the proceedings  
 14 under this section shall have no effect on the proceedings under AS 47.30.700 -  
 15 47.30.915.

16 (g) Nothing in this section is intended to limit or prohibit an evaluation facility  
 17 or designated treatment facility from administering medication or treatment authorized  
 18 under AS 47.30.772.

19 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 12.47 is amended by adding a new section to read:

20 **Sec. 12.47.125. Determination of sanity after dismissal of charges.** (a) If  
 21 charges are dismissed under AS 12.47.110(b) against a defendant admitted to a  
 22 designated treatment facility, and a psychiatrist or psychologist has reasonable cause  
 23 to believe that the defendant has become competent, the psychiatrist or psychologist  
 24 shall notify the prosecuting authority and the court.

25 (b) The defendant may be charged again for an offense arising out of the facts  
 26 alleged in the original charges if the notice in this section is provided

27 (1) any time after the dismissal under AS 12.47.110(b) if the original  
 28 charge was a class A felony or unclassified felony; or

29 (2) within five years of the dismissal under AS 12.47.110(b) for any  
 30 other offense.

31 (c) Upon the filing of charges for an offense arising out of facts alleged in the

1 original charges, the court shall appoint at least one qualified psychiatrist or qualified  
2 psychologist to examine and report on the mental condition of the defendant. If the  
3 court appoints a qualified psychiatrist, the qualified psychiatrist may select a qualified  
4 psychologist to provide assistance. The court may order the defendant committed for a  
5 reasonable period to an evaluation facility or order continued admission to a  
6 designated treatment facility. The qualified psychiatrist or qualified psychologist shall  
7 file a report with the court under AS 12.47.070(c).

8 (d) Upon the filing of the report described in (c) of this section, the court shall  
9 hold a hearing, after due notice, as soon as conveniently possible. At the hearing,  
10 evidence as to the mental condition of the defendant may be submitted, including  
11 reports by the qualified psychiatrist or qualified psychologist and the licensed  
12 psychiatrist or licensed psychologist who had reasonable cause to believe that the  
13 defendant had become competent. For any charges filed for an offense arising out of  
14 facts alleged in the original charges, the prosecuting authority bears the burden of  
15 proving the defendant is competent to understand the nature of the proceedings against  
16 the defendant and to assist in the defendant's own defense.

17 (e) If at the hearing described in (d) of this section the court determines that  
18 the defendant is presently mentally competent to understand the nature of the  
19 proceedings and to assist in the defendant's own defense, appropriate criminal  
20 proceedings may proceed against the defendant.

21 (f) If at the hearing described in (d) of this section the court determines that  
22 the defendant is still presently mentally incompetent, the court shall recommit the  
23 defendant under AS 12.47.110.

24 (g) A finding by the court that the defendant is mentally competent to stand  
25 trial in no way prejudices the accused in a defense based on mental disease or defect  
26 excluding responsibility. This finding may not be introduced in evidence on that issue  
27 or otherwise brought to the notice of the jury.

28 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 12.47.130 is amended by adding new paragraphs to read:

29 (7) "designated treatment facility" has the meaning given in  
30 AS 47.30.915;

31 (8) "evaluation facility" has the meaning given in AS 47.30.915;

1                   (9) "qualified psychiatrist" means a licensed physician who is a  
2 psychiatrist trained in forensic competency assessment, or a psychiatrist receiving  
3 forensic training and is practicing under the supervision of a psychiatrist with  
4 expertise in forensic psychiatry;

5                   (10) "qualified psychologist" means a licensed psychologist trained in  
6 forensic competency assessment, or a psychologist receiving forensic training and is  
7 practicing under the supervision of a psychologist with expertise in forensic  
8 psychology.

9       \* **Sec. 9.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
10 read:

11           **APPLICABILITY.** This Act applies to procedures occurring and notices filed on or  
12 after the effective date of those sections, for offenses occurring before, on, or after the  
13 effective date of this Act.

14       \* **Sec. 10.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2020.