

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 3, 2022
1:33 p.m.

[1:33:23 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Foster called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Bart LeBon
Representative Sara Rasmussen (via teleconference)
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Bryce Edgmon

ALSO PRESENT

Millie Ryan, Vice President, Key Coalition of Alaska, Juneau; Brenda Stanfill, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Juneau; Don Habeger, Coalition Coordinator, Juneau Reentry Coalition, Juneau; Noah Williams, Self, Juneau; Tom Brice, Self, Juneau; John Sonin, Self, Juneau.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Bill Trembley, Self, Petersburg; Scott Arndt, Member, Kodiak Island Borough Assembly, Kodiak; Robert Purcell, Board of Directors, KBBi Public Radio, Homer; Dave Aplin, Self, Homer; Travis Million, CEO, Copper Valley Electric, Glennallen; Donna Aderhold, Homer City Council, Homer; Becky Meiers, General Manager, KCAW Radio, Sitka; Michelle Mahoney, Sitkans Against Family Violence, Sitka; Bob

Sivertsen, Alaska Commission on Aging, Ketchikan; Janette Bowers, City Manager, City of Seward, Seward; Pat Branson, Mayor, City of Kodiak, Kodiak; Grant Echohawk, WISH, Ketchikan; Suzanne Vuillet-Smith, Secretary of Board of Directors, KHNS Lynn Canal Broadcasting, Haines; Jessica Whitaker, Administrative Operations Manager, Behavioral Health, Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), Wrangell; Tina Russell, Direct Service Coordinator, Advocates for Victims of Violence, Valdez; Tony Jackson, Southeast Alaska for Independent Living (SAIL), Sitka; Mandy Cole, AWARE, Juneau; James Kerr, Chief of Police, Petersburg Police Department, Petersburg; Marilyn Casteel, SAFE, Dillingham; Cindy Sweat, General Manager, KSTK Public Broadcasting, Wrangell; Arika Paquette, Women in Safe Homes (WISH), Ketchikan; Eleanor Hewitt, Self, Ketchikan; Janet Elisovsky, Self, Cordova; Charles Barker, Self, Kodiak; Deb Potter, Self, Skagway; Robert Baty, Chief of Police, Sitka Police Department, Sitka; Joyanna Geisler, Independent Living Center, Homer; Ellen Frankenstein, Artchange Inc., Sitka; Suzi Townsley, Program Director and Lead Advocate, Seward Safe Harbor, Seward; Penny Lample, Kodiak Women's Resource Crisis Center, Kodiak.

SUMMARY

HB 281 APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

HB 281 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 282 APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 282 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#hb281

#hb282

HOUSE BILL NO. 281

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; amending appropriations; making reappropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State

of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

HOUSE BILL NO. 282

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; making capital appropriations and supplemental appropriations; and providing for an effective date."

[1:35:07 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster relayed that the committee would hear public testimony from the communities of Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Glenallen, Valdez, Wrangell, Homer, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Seward, and Tok. He relayed the call in numbers. He reported that the committee would be hearing public testimony on the governor's version of the budget and the committee substitute which would not be released until Friday because of the length of floor session the prior day. However, the changes in the CS were reviewed in the finance subcommittee reports in the previous day. He recessed the meeting until 2:00 p.m.

[1:41:48 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:03:37 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Foster repeated the information he had provided earlier about call-in numbers. He indicated testimony was limited to 2 minutes. He anticipated that the committee substitute (CS) would be provided prior to public testimony the following day. He relayed that budget reports were available on the Legislative Finance Division website. He noted that public testimony was available statewide the following day from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

[2:09:33 PM](#)

Representative Johnson thanked Co-Chair Foster for the explanation. She had some concern with taking public testimony without having the CS in hand and requested an update of the CS changes when it was received.

Co-Chair Foster would provide a simplified summary of the changes in the bill. He noted the numbers section of the CS was under the purview of the finance subcommittees, whereas the language section encompassed the bigger picture (e.g., inflation proofing, Permanent Fund Dividend, school bond debt, etcetera).

Representative Johnson thanked Co-Chair Foster for putting the information on the record.

^PUBLIC TESTIMONY: JUNEAU, SITKA, PETERSBURG, DELTA JUNCTION, DILLINGHAM, GLENNALLEN, VALDEZ, WRANGELL, HOMER, KETCHIKAN, KODIAK, SEWARD, TOK

[2:13:06 PM](#)

BILL TREMBLEY, SELF, PETERSBURG (via teleconference), spoke in support of public broadcasting. He was disappointed the legislature had not been able to override the governor's vetoes of public broadcasting funding for the past three years. He reported that stations had seen state funds cut by close to 50 percent during the former Walker administration, but the funding level had been kept at a certain level for stations to work around; however, that was no longer the case. Some radio stations had been able to keep afloat during the past several years with COVID relief funds from the federal government; however, the federal funding was running out. He shared that some of the smaller stations had not been able to keep up and may be at risk of losing federal grants. He highlighted the many benefits to public radio. He remarked that whenever elections came around, legislators and the administration were quick to get on the radio to talk about policies. He stated it would be nice to have the service supported. He noted that communities had competing concerns to pay for such as housing, health, business, and COVID related costs. He advocated state support for public radio.

[2:16:34 PM](#)

SCOTT ARNDT, MEMBER, KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH ASSEMBLY, KODIAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of school bond debt reimbursement. He mentioned the challenges of receiving only a percentage of a full reimbursement over the past couple of years. He stated that the legislature had approved full reimbursement in the current year, but the community had only been receiving 37 percent since July 1.

He requested full reimbursement for FY 23 going forward. He asked for reconsideration of additional funding to make up for the veto the governor imposed in FY 21. He relayed that Kodiak had been using school maintenance funds to cover the missing funding. He spoke in support of full funding for community assistance.

[2:19:01 PM](#)

MILLIE RYAN, VICE PRESIDENT, KEY COALITION OF ALASKA, JUNEAU, relayed that the Key Coalition advocated for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She thanked the committee for the budget increment to draw 70 people from the waitlist. Additionally, she thanked the committee for the intent language asking the Department of Health and Social Services to develop a five-year plan in collaboration with stakeholders to eradicate the waitlist and report annually to the legislature on progress made. She reported that the waitlist had been an issue for 30 years, but thanks to support from the legislature there was an opportunity to turn the curve.

[2:20:15 PM](#)

BRENDA STANFILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA NETWORK ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT, JUNEAU, provided information about the organization. She thanked the committee for supporting the services the organization provided. She shared that the funding allowed the organization to perform lifesaving services and prevention work. She expressed gratitude that the legislature had covered a \$6 million shortfall in funding the previous year. She shared programs had continued to provide services while navigating COVID. She detailed new systems had been set up to allow for different methods of service delivery during the pandemic. She highlighted the budget included full funding for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) grant line. The organization appreciated the budget support for prevention, new prosecutors, troopers, village public safety officers, the crime lab, and other.

[2:22:51 PM](#)

Representative Rasmussen thanked Ms. Stanfill for her testimony and if the legislature had overlooked any budgetary needs to help support survivors.

Ms. Stanfill responded that flat funding was never the same as the funding from the previous year. She highlighted that with the increase in fuel prices, the increase in the utility cost for the organization's facilities went up. The organization's budget primarily included buildings and people. She shared that the program operated at a lean level. The organization would appreciate it if the legislature took the situation into consideration.

[2:23:52 PM](#)

DON HABEGER, COALITION COORDINATOR, JUNEAU REENTRY COALITION, JUNEAU, relayed that the Juneau Reentry Coalition's mission promoting success after incarceration to reduce recidivism and increase public safety in Juneau. The coalition requested additional funds for behavioral health and treatment and recovery grants including behavioral health prevention and early intervention grants to providers and peer support programs. He reported that reentry had become increasingly challenging in the past couple of years. He elaborated that no-visitation policies in Department of Corrections facilities had disrupted pro-social connections. Additionally, case management pre-planning through traditional in-person relationships had ceased and community treatment providers had reduced capacity. All of the issues presented stressors to successful reentry. He relayed that the investments were warranted to enable individuals to successfully reenter society.

[2:26:15 PM](#)

ROBERT PURCELL, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, KBBI PUBLIC RADIO, HOMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of public radio. He provided information about his background. He highlighted the importance of public radio during emergencies and the recovery of emergencies. He explained that radio provided a much broader service than the emergency broadcast system. He discussed the importance of being able to keep a community informed of emergency situations. He stated that public radio became the avenue for government agencies and nonprofits during recovery periods. He pointed out there was not an alternative

structure for the communication. He believed the state needed to begin contributing to public radio again to provide the stability and security needed in order to provide the service to communities and citizens.

[2:29:05 PM](#)

DAVE APLIN, SELF, HOMER (via teleconference), urged the reinstatement of state funding for the public radio network. He depended on public radio in times of emergencies such as wildfires, tsunami warnings, or earthquakes. He had followed the weekly COVID broadcast from local leaders and institutions to understand what was going on during the pandemic. He stressed that public radio was a critical component of the state's emergency management system. He also relied on radio to keep him up to date on events including politics, fisheries, and tourism. He spoke to the quality of the content. He pointed out that public radio had been operating without state funding for the past three years. He believed it was important to bring the state support back into the picture. He highlighted that state support leveraged federal funding and donations by individuals.

[2:31:57 PM](#)

TRAVIS MILLION, CEO, COPPER VALLEY ELECTRIC, GLENNALLEN (via teleconference), stated the legislature had passed the transportation and infrastructure debt service reimbursement authorization in the early 2000s. He detailed that the beneficiaries had primarily been municipalities, but Copper Valley Electric was included. He reported that the company had received \$351,200 annually as part of the program to help pay off the debt for a project in Valdez. He stated that the entire program had been eliminated a couple of years back. He informed the committee the company's capital budget remained tight and limited. He stated that if the funding was available, the company could find ways to produce additional hydroelectric power for its members. He elaborated that the projects would increase the economic production of renewable electricity for the communities of Copper Basin, Valdez, and surrounding areas. He requested the reinstatement of the program.

[2:33:45 PM](#)

DONNA ADERHOLD, HOMER CITY COUNCIL, HOMER (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for community assistance, community jails, the municipal harbor grant program, and public broadcasting. She communicated the community's support for community assistance at the statutory formula level; however, full recapitalization would require another \$28.2 million. She highlighted that many users of the city jail came from outside the city by state troopers. The community supported the proposal to fund community jails with an additional \$4 million. The community also supported full funding for the municipal harbor grant program. The program helped complete deferred maintenance from when state harbors were transferred to municipal ownership. She stated the program was an effective and equitable mechanism for completing projects, leveraging a 50 percent local share in funded projects. The city also supported funding for public broadcasting. She discussed the important emergency communications provided by public radio. She spoke to the benefits of public radio.

[2:35:52 PM](#)

BECKY MEIERS, GENERAL MANAGER, KCAW RADIO, SITKA (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for public radio broadcasting. She requested funding for public broadcasting to allow stations to continue supporting communities, communications, and emergency infrastructure. She shared that public radio stations worked hard to bolster public safety efforts and the way of life in Alaska. She provided further detail about the benefits of public radio. She shared that public radio had not received state funding for the past three years. She asked for a reinstatement of the funds. She appreciated members' service.

[2:38:03 PM](#)

MICHELLE MAHONEY, SITKANS AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE, SITKA (via teleconference), supported the House budget subcommittee recommendation to use \$3.5 million in general funds to replace the temporary federal funds for grants that supported community-based domestic violence and sexual assault programs statewide, specifically for children and families experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault. She discussed services the organization provided to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The grants they received from the Department of

Public Safety allowed the organization to provide emergency shelter, legal advocacy, and other. She thanked the subcommittee for recognizing the critical nature of the services.

[2:39:37 PM](#)

BOB SIVERTSEN, ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), spoke in support of the House Health and Social Services subcommittee's recommendation to add language to increase funding to grants for home and community based services. He highlighted that state's senior population had increased by 51 percent over the past ten years. Additionally, the cost of living had increased by over 20 percent during the same timeframe. He stated that without additional funding, providers would be asked to do less with less. He elaborated that the funding would support services including meals, homemaking, family caregivers, safety, and more. He referenced the increasing senior population in the coming years. The funding could help provide a higher quality of life for seniors.

Vice-Chair Ortiz thanked the testifier for calling in and advocating for a worthy cause.

[2:41:49 PM](#)

JANETTE BOWERS, CITY MANAGER, CITY OF SEWARD, SEWARD (via teleconference), supported funding for community jails. She highlighted that although the jails were referred to as community jails, they were state jails operated for the state by municipalities. She provided information about the jail located in Seward that operated under a state contract. She relayed that the city had been underfunded for many years. She reported the city was underfunded by 47 percent in 2022. She elaborated that the city had demonstrated its willingness to be a good partner. The city understood that if it stopped operating the jail, the burden would rest entirely on the state. The city understood the Department of Corrections and Department of Public Safety would be negatively affected, and the city did not wish to further burden the departments. However, the city wanted to be funded and for city residents to no longer make up for the funding deficit for the state jail operated by Seward.

[2:43:41 PM](#)

PAT BRANSON, MAYOR, CITY OF KODIAK, KODIAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the subcommittee's addition of \$4 million to increase funding for the regional community jail and pretrial services program under the Department of Corrections. She shared that the city had a jail services contract with the department since 1960 and two years back, new pretrial services had been added. The city's willingness to operate a jail saved the departments a tremendous amount of money. She elaborated that the costs to operate the jail had been underfunded by almost \$200,000 in FY 21. The jail provided a secure detention facility for the Kodiak Island road system and offered a regional solution supporting six surrounding villages. She provided additional detail about the jail. The city also supported full funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS). She provided additional detail about the benefits of AMHS. The city supported community assistance. She personally advocated in support of public radio.

Co-Chair Merrick indicated she and Representative LeBon had traveled to Kodiak and appreciated the city's hospitality.

[2:46:29 PM](#)

GRANT ECHOHAWK, WISH, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), spoke in support for WISH's sexual assault and domestic violence program and any additional community funding for prevention addressing intimate partner violence and substance abuse disorders. He shared that the programs reduced substance use, crime, and high school dropouts. He furthered that the program gave the community the opportunity to prosper and grow by investing as much as possible into the programs. He spoke to the importance of ensuring safety in communities and of providing individuals with the support they need. He thanked members for their service and for offering the funding options for various nonprofits. He highlighted his personal support for public radio and AMHS. He stated the importance of enabling communities to have the ability to grow economically as a result of the ability to transport goods and people on AMHS between Southeast communities.

Vice-Chair Ortiz thanked Mr. Echohawk for his testimony.

[2:49:48 PM](#)

NOAH WILLIAMS, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of public radio and AMHS. He had traveled via the AMHS as a student growing up. He found it distressing to see the ferry system gutted and ferries in disrepair. He stressed the importance of seeing the system restored to its full working order.

[2:51:09 PM](#)

TOM BRICE, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of the subcommittee actions for the University of Alaska. He appreciated the increase and the acceptance of the Board of Regents' numbers. Following three years of extreme austerity he thought it was time to invest in future Alaskans. He highlighted the funding for the medical branch at the University of Anchorage. He also appreciated the support for mariculture. He thanked the committee for its work.

Representative LeBon thanked the former representative for his service to the state.

Representative Wool revealed that when he went to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mr. Brice had been the class president.

[2:53:13 PM](#)

SUZANNE VUILLET-SMITH, SECRETARY OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS, KHNS LYNN CANAL BROADCASTING, HAINES (via teleconference), spoke in support of public radio. She highlighted that public radio had not received state funding for three years. She detailed the specific station represented Haines, Skagway, and Klukwan. She shared that she had worked on the ambulance crew for many years. She pointed out that public radio stations kept residents informed when climate disasters hit. She noted climate disasters were coming with increasing frequency. She referenced a devastating landslide that occurred a little over one year back. She emphasized that the only thing that had held the community together had been listening to the mayor and emergency operations committee daily on the radio. She informed the committee that the radio staff had slept at the station to ensure their own safety and to keep things going. She stressed that without public radio communities could not communicate with each other to learn about local, state, and world events. She noted that the price of oil was skyrocketing, and it was time to support the service.

She noted that pandemic funds had been well used, but the funding had run out. She thanked the committee.

[2:56:30 PM](#)

JESSICA WHITAKER, ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS MANAGER, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM (SEARHC), WRANGELL (via teleconference), spoke in support of increased funding for the behavioral health grants program. She relayed that SEARHC was a current recipient of the comprehensive behavioral health treatment and recovery grant and depended on the funds to help support the cost of providing local psychiatric emergency service response in many of its rural communities in Southeast. The funding helped support the cost of providing services to patients who were not eligible or enrolled in the state's funded Medicaid program. She thanked the committee for its work and time.

[2:58:25 PM](#)

TINA RUSSELL, DIRECT SERVICE COORDINATOR, ADVOCATES FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, VALDEZ (via teleconference), spoke in support of services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. She shared that funding enabled the organization to provide emergency shelter and additional services. She thanked members for their time.

[2:59:17 PM](#)

TONY JACKSON, SOUTHEAST ALASKA FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SAIL), SITKA (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for SAIL. The organization worked to enable disabled individuals to remain in their homes. He shared that over the years SAIL had provided his wife with access to wheelchairs and a stair rail at home to allow her to live at home longer. He urged members to increase the SAIL budget and thanked members for listening.

[3:01:06 PM](#)

MANDY COLE, AWARE, JUNEAU (via teleconference), urged support of the addition of \$3.5 million in general funds to replace temporary federal funds for grants supporting AWARE and other similar agencies. She shared that AWARE had been challenged to provide services over the past several years due to COVID. She shared that isolation had caused problems

for survivors. She reported individuals had avoided shelter, the hospital, and reaching out for help during the start of the pandemic. Over the past year, the need for services had sharply increased. She elaborated that AWARE was overwhelmed by the need for increased behavioral health services. She shared that increased funding for behavioral health and treatment grants and the prevention and early intervention grants would go a long way in ensuring the organization was able to match treatment resources with needs. She emphasized that the need for services impacted clients, program staff, and others. She thanked the committee.

[3:03:21 PM](#)

JOHN SONIN, SELF, JUNEAU, spoke in support of education and public broadcasting. He stated that public radio was his primary source of information. He spoke to the importance of education. He spoke about the importance of ensuring responsible gun ownership. He thought the influx of federal funding would be beneficial for the state. He supported funding for cultural welfare instead of private enterprise.

[3:06:50 PM](#)

JAMES KERR, CHIEF OF POLICE, PETERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT, PETERSBURG (via teleconference), spoke in support of funding for community jails. He shared that current funding from the Department of Corrections was \$173,626 per contract year since 2016. He stressed the amount was only 43 percent of operating costs. He emphasized that since 2016 the Petersburg taxpayers had been forced to pay over \$1 million to operate the state's community jail. He relayed that all bookings into the community jail were state charges. The deficit had resulted in reduced staffing, decreased wages, and the inability to hire and retain qualified personnel. He shared that the Department of Corrections rural community jail contract had specific requirements the city had to follow. He explained proper state funding should be required because community jails were agents of the state. He spoke in support of increased funding for community jails and funding public radio. He noted the two items were valuable public safety resources in Southeast Alaska.

Co-Chair Foster believed funds for public radio had been added to the budget.

Representative Wool answered that the subcommittee had added \$1.5 million to the budget for public radio.

[3:10:18 PM](#)

MARILYN CASTEEL, SAFE, DILLINGHAM (via teleconference), shared information about her work with women, men, and children suffering from domestic violence, sexual assault, and other types of violence. She emphasized that without state funding for shelters across Alaska, especially in rural areas, communities would be in worse shape. She supported funding to increase the safety and protection for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and for 24-hour emergency shelters. She expressed appreciation for past funding. She thanked the committee for its time.

[3:12:02 PM](#)

CINDY SWEAT, GENERAL MANAGER, KSTK PUBLIC BROADCASTING, WRANGELL (via teleconference), asked for reinstated funding for public radio. Public radio had not received state funding for three years, which had put some stations in danger of shutting down broadcast signals. The stations' receipt of federal grants depended on receipt of annual non-federal funding support. She shared the station in Wrangell was required to match \$250,000 annually in non-federal funding in order to qualify for the grant. She stated that the small community of 2,000 residents had been challenged with raising the funding and it had not been able to meet the benchmark every year after losing state funding. She spoke to the importance of emergency services and keeping Alaskans informed.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked what the state annual state funding had been prior to its elimination several years back. He asked whether the \$1.5 million came close to matching the state's previous appropriations [to public radio].

Ms. Sweat answered that she did not have the number for the entire state on hand. She reported that the Wrangell station had received \$130,000 at one point. She elaborated that the amount had first been cut in half and eventually reduced to zero.

[3:14:58 PM](#)

ARIKA PAQUETTE, WOMEN IN SAFE HOMES (WISH), KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), spoke in support the additional funding for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). She shared that WISH served multiple communities across Southeast Alaska. The funding allowed the organization support primary prevention programming and to provide safe shelter and mental health services to children and youth exposed to domestic violence. The programs reduced the likelihood that youth exposed to violence would experience violence over their lifetime. She informed the committee that funding for CDVSA was incredibly important in reducing violence in communities along with other benefits. She thanked the committee.

[3:16:47 PM](#)

ELEANOR HEWITT, SELF, KETCHIKAN (via teleconference), testified in support of the SAIL program. She shared that she is a caregiver for her husband who is a veteran. The program allowed them to stay in their home. She was very grateful for the SAIL program. She urged the committee to include funding in the budget for the program.

Vice-Chair Ortiz shared that Ms. Hewitt was a longstanding community advocate and participant. He thanked her for calling in.

[3:17:57 PM](#)

JANET ELISOVSKY, SELF, CORDOVA (via teleconference), spoke in support of the SAIL program. She shared that she is physically disabled, and the program had enabled her to remain living in her home instead of assisted living. She stated that Cordova was often a forgotten community. She emphasized that the SAIL advocate she dealt with over the years was wonderful. She stressed that her advocate did not get paid enough for her hard work. She pointed out the difficulty of finding help and programs in Cordova. She implored the legislature to consider giving more to the program.

[3:20:10 PM](#)

CHARLES BARKER, SELF, KODIAK (via teleconference), spoke in support of the Independent Living Center. He is a wheelchair confined adult. He shared that the program had provided many resources to help him get out into the

community. The organization had enabled him to live on his own in an apartment, which he had never considered to be a possibility in the past. He listed benefits the program had provided him. He detailed that the program helped disabled individuals get into the outdoors. He emphasized how wonderful the program and its staff were. He thanked the committee.

[3:22:10 PM](#)

DEB POTTER, SELF, SKAGWAY (via teleconference), shared that she was a new assembly member calling on her own behalf. She testified in support of public radio. She elaborated that public radio provided a valuable public safety service in extreme weather events. She spoke about the importance of a fully functional Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) to Southeast communities. She highlighted it was the second year in a row where poor weather prevented travel by plane from Skagway to Juneau. She relayed the community had gone over a month without ferry service, which meant the community had to contract private ferries. She stressed it was necessary to be able to transport people to hospitals and medical services.

[3:24:04 PM](#)

ROBERT BATY, CHIEF OF POLICE, SITKA POLICE DEPARTMENT, SITKA (via teleconference), spoke in support of a \$4 million increase to fully fund community jails. He shared that the services provided by the municipalities had historically been based off of a skewed "man days" formula instead of the true cost of doing business. He communicated that if the state had to provide the same services, it would cost the state more money to build facilities and pay for costs including upkeep and personnel. He explained that communities had been supplementing shortfalls of community jails. For example, Sitka had been operating at a \$200,000 deficit since the budget had been cut in 2016. He thanked the committee for its work. He vocalized support for AMHS, sexual assault awareness, and public radio.

Co-Chair Foster asked which committee member had chaired the corrections subcommittee. He thought it was Representative Edgmon [who was not present]. He asked if the subcommittee added on top of the \$4 million. He thought the subcommittee had added at least \$4 million.

Vice-Chair Ortiz answered it was a consistent number that had been going from year-to-year and it had not been increased.

Co-Chair Foster noted he would look into the issue further.

[3:27:56 PM](#)

JOYANNA GEISLER, INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER, HOMER (via teleconference), supported a \$1.49 million amendment offered by Representative Josephson for independent living centers and senior grant providers. She shared there were four centers for independent living across Alaska. She provided office locations for the Independent Living Center. She detailed that the centers provided services to people and families experiencing disabilities. She shared that the previous year, the organization had provided services to approximately 715 people in the gulf coast region. The services varied based on the particular needs of the client. She provided several examples of clients to illustrate how different the various services were. She shared that the organization had worked with 60 different veterans the previous year in collaboration with the Veterans Administration, enabling the individuals to remain at home and out of nursing homes. She asked for support for the increment. She thanked the committee for its time.

[3:31:08 PM](#)

ELLEN FRANKENSTEIN, ARTCHANGE INC., SITKA (via teleconference), spoke in support of public broadcasting. She shared detail about her work in public broadcasting. She highlighted that Alaskans relied on public radio in a unique way. She asked for resources to support communications and emergency infrastructure needs for public radio. She reported that the station worked hard to support public safety and the Alaskan way of life. She pointed out that oil prices were up, and money was available. She implored the committee to support rural Alaskans by reinstating state support for public broadcasting. She supported funding for sexual assault services and AMHS. She thanked the committee.

[3:33:01 PM](#)

SUZI TOWNSLEY, PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND LEAD ADVOCATE, SEWARD SAFE HARBOR, SEWARD (via teleconference), spoke in support

of funding for sexual assault and domestic violence programs. She listed communities served by the organization in the Seward region. She highlighted that the operating budget included additional funding to support multiple communities statewide with domestic violence and sexual assault work. She shared that program participants struggled with finding affordable housing. The organization looked forward to continuing to work in collaboration with the state and sister organizations to continue removing the many barriers facing survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. She thanked the committee for its recognition of the importance of stable funding for the organization and related programs.

[3:34:42 PM](#)

PENNY LAMPLE, KODIAK WOMEN'S RESOURCE CRISIS CENTER, KODIAK (via teleconference), supported funding for domestic violence and sexual assault. She detailed that the center had 25 beds to shelter women and children and people directly impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault. The center provided outreach and prevention throughout Kodiak and its six villages. She provided information on services provided. She believed the services were extremely important for the community and its residents. She thanked the committee for working to keep the center funded.

Co-Chair Foster there were currently no additional testifiers. He shared that the committee would come back at 3:55 p.m.

[3:37:40 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:58:44 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Foster noted there were no additional testifiers in the room or online.

HB 281 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 282 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Foster reviewed the agenda for the following day.

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ADJOURNMENT

4:00:37 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.