

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

February 8, 2024

3:18 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Prax, Chair  
Representative CJ McCormick  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Jesse Sumner  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Genevieve Mina

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Chiropractic Examiners

Ronald Gherman - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Board Of Nursing

April Erikson - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 258

"An Act relating to general relief and burial assistance; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 264

"An Act requiring the Department of Family and Community Services to adopt a uniform screening tool; requiring shelters for runaway minors to screen minors for victimization relating to sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation; requiring the Department of Family and Community Services to screen children in need of aid for victimization

relating to sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation; and relating to the duty of the Department of Family and Community Services to investigate the experiences of missing children in need of aid who have been located."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 258

SHORT TITLE: GENERAL RELIEF & BURIAL ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STAPP

01/16/24	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/12/24
01/16/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24	(H)	HSS, FIN
02/08/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 264

SHORT TITLE: CHILD TRAFFICKING SCREENING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) VANCE

01/16/24	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/12/24
01/16/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24	(H)	HSS, FIN
01/30/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
01/30/24	(H)	Heard & Held
01/30/24	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
02/08/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

RONALD GHERMAN, Appointee  
Board of Chiropractic Examiners  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Chiropractic Examiners.

APRIL ERICKSON, DNP and CRNA, Appointee  
Board of Nursing  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Nursing.

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, introduced HB 258.

HONOUR MILLER-AUSTIN, Staff  
Representative Will Stapp  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** On behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative Stapp, presented the sectional analysis for HB 258.

DEB ETHERIDGE, Director  
Division of Public Assistance  
Department of Health  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions from the committee regarding HB 258.

REPRESENTATIVE SARAH VANCE  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, introduced HB 264 to the committee.

ROBERT BALLINGER, Staff  
Representative Sarah Vance  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions regarding HB 264 on behalf of the prime sponsor, Representative Sarah Vance.

TERRA BURNS, Member  
Community United for Safety and Protection  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Recommended an amendment to HB 264.

MICHELLE OVERSTREET, Founder and CEO  
My House

Matanuska Valley, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke in support of HB 264.

JOE JONES, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke in support of HB 264.

MAXINE DOOGAN, Member  
Community United for Safety and Protection  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke in opposition to HB 264.

DELAYNA WEST, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke in support of HB 264.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:18:29 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:18 p.m. Representatives McCormick, Saddler, Sumner, Fields, Mina, and Prax were present at the call to order.

[3:20:00 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the first order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointee to various boards and commissions.

[3:20:31 PM](#)

RONALD GHERMAN, Appointee, Board of Chiropractic Examiners, described his background and explained how his experience is related to his appointment to the Board of Chiropractic Examiners.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether Mr. Gherman had any suggestions for improving how the Board of Chiropractic Examiners operates and how they serve the community.

MR. GHERMAN explained how important it is that chiropractors are able to do the practice for which they are certified. He is a proponent of sustaining and improving the chiropractic profession in the state by supporting continuing education. He said he recently learned that the Alaska Board of Chiropractic Examiners is highly regarded.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Mr. Gherman whether he receives chiropractic care as a private individual.

MR. GHERMAN responded that he has received chiropractic care since the eighth grade.

[3:24:01 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked Mr. Gherman whether his role on the board is as a public member and how often the board holds meetings.

MR. GHERMAN said the board typically meets three or four times a year. There will be an in-person meeting in Anchorage in the fall of 2024 and another in-person meeting in Juneau the following year.

CHAIR PRAX confirmed that the Board of Chiropractic Examiners is a licensing board and wondered what challenges it faces to having a quorum which result in delayed licensure.

MR GHERMAN explained that the members of the board coordinate with each other to make sure there is a quorum so that people don't have to wait and the colleges that are teaching also do not have to wait. They try to expedite the process.

[3:25:46 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on the appointment of Ronald Gherman. After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[3:26:57 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the next order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointee to the Board of Nursing.

APRIL ERICKSON, DNP and CRNA, Appointee, Board of Nursing, described her background in Alaska as a doctor in nursing leadership, a certified registered nurse, an anesthesiologist, and a professor at the University of Alaska. She also summarized her work with the Board of Nursing.

[3:28:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked about best practices concerning the use of ketamine in mental health treatment.

DR. ERICKSON responded that she actually opened the first ketamine clinic for mental health treatment in the state of Alaska and has helped other practitioners open ketamine clinics. She explained that she works with mental health providers because, as an anesthesiologist, she provides safe ketamine infusion. She pointed out that ketamine has been shown to be very effective for the treatment of depression and post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She has been in contact with the Veteran's Administration (VA) but has not worked with them. She would like to see the treatment become more available to veterans.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS requested additional information about the difficulty veterans have receiving ketamine treatment.

DR. ERICKSON discussed issues with billing for ketamine treatments, particularly about the difficulties in being approved by some insurance companies. Some of her patients described the process with the VA and Tricare as very frustrating.

[3:31:49 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about how the areas of practice are divided up among nurses, registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and Advanced Nursing Practitioners (ANPs).

DR. ERICKSON explained that basically every type of nurse and nurse's aide is under the board's jurisdiction. There are multiple types of RNs.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER inquired about what kinds of issues might come before the board in addition to regulatory functions.

DR. ERICKSON replied that for several years the nursing compact licensure [multi-state licensing] which affects both RNs and APRNs has been a big issue for the board.

[3:33:58 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on the appointment of April Erickson to the Board of Nursing. After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[3:35:07 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 3:35 p.m. to 3:42 p.m.

[3:42:10 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX stated that the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be

forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Ronald Gherman, Board of Chiropractic Examiners; and April Erickson, Board of Nursing. He said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[3:43:06 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:43 p.m.

### **HB 258-GENERAL RELIEF & BURIAL ASSISTANCE**

[3:43:55 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 258, "An Act relating to general relief and burial assistance; and providing for an effective date."

[3:44:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILL STAPP, Alaska State Legislature, described HB 258 as a bill that would consider burial assistance as well as repealing a couple of program items. This is one of the bills which would address issues of processing time within the Department of Health, Division of Public Assistance. It is being proposed for the purposes of efficiency and results-based budgeting. When he looked at this program, he did not find that the level of spending and administrative time needed to administer these aspects of the program, in a results-based system, was an efficient use of state funds. He considered the bill not from the perspective of what it does, but rather how effective the state is at delivering services to the folks the state says it wants to help. He explained that this delivery system is incredibly inefficient, and it is hard to justify a statewide program when there are only three to five people per month using the benefit.

[3:47:21 PM](#)

HONOUR MILLER-AUSTIN, Staff, Representative Will Stapp, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Stapp, prime sponsor presented the sectional analysis for HB 258. She explained that Sections 1-5 add "and burial" to the assistance programs referenced in statute. Section 6(a) deletes the

inclusion of shelter, utilities, hospitalization, nursing, and convalescent care for financial assistance. Section 6(b) adds funeral and burial expenses into statute. Section 7 adds "and burial" to eligible assistance programs. Section 8 gives an effective date of January 1, 2025.

[3:48:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained that people were available both online and in the room to answer committee members' questions.

[3:48:34 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on HB 258. After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony on HB 258.

[3:49:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS said he had questions for Ms. Etheridge, Director, Division of Public Assistance.

[3:49:47 PM](#)

DEB ETHERIDGE, Director, Division of Public Assistance, Department of Health, answered questions posed by members of the committee regarding HB 258.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked about the comparative percentages of rental relief relative to burial relief which went from 12 percent in fiscal year 2020 (FY 20) to 2.7 percent in FY 23 and FY24 and why those changes occurred.

MS. ETHERIDGE explained that there was a small decline in utilization this year because there is a slight backlog in general relief applications. However, year over year, an individual must have a fairly low income in order to qualify and each month they must apply for the benefit. Generally, the division has not seen an increase in utilization for rent or utilities.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS requested additional information about the backlog, specifically who is applying, whether they are non-profits applying in partnership with people, how long it takes, and what kind of shelter they are looking for.

MS. ETHERIDGE explained that an individual applies for the shelter and utility costs on their own behalf, generally. A majority of the applications the division processes for the general relief program are for the burial costs.

[3:52:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER inquired whether the division anticipates a substantial decrease in applications or times spent processing with the removal of some items but having a portion of the program remain in existence.

MS. ETHERIDGE responded that there will be a decrease in applications based on the removal of those categories. However, the number is pretty slight.

REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER asked how much the division anticipates saving by removing these items, for example, staff processing time or hours.

MS. ETHERIDGE replied that the number of hours that would be saved is somewhat nominal in that a majority of applications for the general relief program fall under burial. The processing time for the burial relief program is between 60 and 90 minutes depending on the complexity of the situation.

[3:53:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS questioned where this program fits in the "ecosystem" of other rental assistance programs. He asked who the average person is, who gets general relief; whether it is for people who are waiting for AHFC; and what the typical sequence is for rental relief.

MS. ETHERIDGE replied that general relief is for people who are extremely needy with no access to other programs. Countable resources cannot exceed \$500, and a single person's income cannot exceed \$300. They may likely qualify for other programs.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS inquired whether the threshold of per-day assistance is \$70 dollars.

MS. ETHERIDGE replied that a general relief program is also operated for disabled persons and seniors and HB 258 as presented does not impact that. The senior and disability program has a monthly amount that is authorized.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked Ms. Etheridge what she would do if she wanted to improve the delivery of general relief or rental assistance. He explained he has heard anecdotally that a homeless coordinator finds someone who needs shelter that night. If the shelter is full, then the coordinator puts the homeless person in a hotel. He said he did not know if that is how the program is administered in other parts of the state or whether there are other programs that should be considered and how the programs could be administered as efficiently as possible.

MS. ETHERIDGE responded that she would like to take the question back to her team to discuss.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS explained he could accept the premise that the program could be eliminated if there is a better way to provide rental and utility assistance. He also asked whether there is simply a better delivery system within this program.

[3:57:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA referenced the fiscal note and noted that it was broken down into rent, utilities, miscellaneous, and burial. She requested clarification regarding what was considered miscellaneous in the general assistance program.

MS. ETHERIDGE said she did not have the information regarding the miscellaneous category with her at that time.

[3:57:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP referred to the bill packet, explaining that he had asked the division about the miscellaneous category and was told there weren't any miscellaneous items.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA noted that there were numbers listed under miscellaneous for FY19 through FY23. In addition, she asked Ms. Etheridge whether the different types of general relief were in regulations. She questioned whether the burial assistance, which is currently in regulations, would be moved to statute under the provisions of HB 258. She asked for clarification regarding the difference in general assistance being in regulations versus statute.

MS. ETHERIDGE replied that statutes are an overarching authority, and regulations determine the details of what is allowable in those expenditures.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained his concept which was to add burial assistance on the application form for public assistance. He noted that from a process standpoint, individuals who go to the DP office to get assistance and are checking boxes for programs, if they see the word "burial assistance" listed with the general assistance, they may think, "Maybe I don't have to apply to that program." He opined that people tend to check all the boxes, but fewer people will check that box if it actually says burial assistance.

[4:00:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA called attention to the application which has two boxes, one of which read "burial expenses" and asked whether it is necessary to change the statute to accomplish this burial issue. She also asked if the other benefits such as transportation and fuel could be highlighted on the general relief application.

MS. ETHERIDGE explained that the legislature drives the policy that would become regulation, so articulating burial in the statute would give direction to the division regarding what the application should say and what the funding would be for.

[4:02:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for clarification regarding whether the bill would eliminate assistance.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained the bill does delete the rental and utility assistance under the authorization of general relief. It keeps every other aspect of general relief intact.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER pointed out that rental assistance is 7 percent and utilities is about 3 percent, and burial assistance is 89 percent, so the bill is reallocating resources from where they are not well-utilized to a place where there is definitely a demand.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP replied that the intent is not really about appropriation but rather about reducing administrative burden within the department itself.

[4:04:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER asked about other possible funding requests such as food or clothing.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP explained that the history of general relief is very interesting and is a very old program. Even inside the state statute there is language that mirrors territorial Alaska. He said he wanted to be very surgical in crafting the bill so that he didn't unintentionally interfere with the senior disability services referenced earlier, for example. He told the committee that he was always open to the will of the committee if they think there is some language clean-up.

[4:05:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether there was an alternate way to provide services to a small group of people who benefit from rent and utilities other than spending 90 minutes of staff time processing an application. Also, whether it is possible to change the \$300 amount because a homeless person sleeping in a car potentially has more than \$300 in assets.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP responded that he was open to other modes of delivery, but he also reminded the committee that he advocated results-based budgeting, and he did not believe these programs were delivering that in their current form.

[4:06:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA questioned whether alternatives such as voucher programs to the general relief had been considered.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP replied that there are "different programs for different folks in different walks of life." He described the general relief program as a kind of legacy program which has become outmoded over time and which is no longer performing anywhere near the original intent of the program. He said he was open to suggestions from the committee for other solutions.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked what Representative Stapp sees as the intent of the program and what he wants as an outcome.

REPRESENTATIVE STAPP responded that he was unsure of the original intent.

[4:08:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS directed his question to Ms. Etheridge, asking whether there was another way to restructure the program

so that it is not wasting staff hours while preserving the program.

MS. ETHERIDGE said she would take that query back to the office. In response to an earlier question, she commented that cases are generally processed during business hours.

[4:10:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked how much time it takes to process a general relief application.

MS. ETHERIDGE explained that 60 minutes is ideal. However, the division was required to get income verification because the income limit is so low, and that takes additional time. Burial relief gets more complicated because a person is applying "on behalf of," and there are several calculations and verifications regarding the payment for the burial.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA questioned whether the rent and utility assistance would go out immediately after processing.

MS. ETHERIDGE responded that generally it is a guarantee of payment that goes forward rather than an actual payment.

[4:11:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked how the income of someone living in a car is verified.

MS. ETHERIDGE explained that the division uses a method referred to as "known negative verification," so if a person does say they do not have income, then generally the division takes that as true especially if the person is homeless. However, if the person potentially works day labor or has had employment, then there is an attempt to verify by using a pay stub or calling an employer.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS inquired whether the process differs if a person has kids.

MS. ETHERIDGE responded that a required verification applies to the whole household.

[4:13:24 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX inquired about possible scenarios in which a person would need immediate assistance for that day or that night, commenting that it seems difficult to process immediate relief and asking whether the division does indeed provide immediate assistance.

MS. ETHERIDGE replied that the division will give immediate assistance to the extent that the division has the capacity. Rent is usually the area in which there is immediate need, in the case of eviction or displacement. Utilities generally do not need to be issued that day, so a statement of "agree to pay" works.

[4:14:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA said she agrees with the rationale but worries that eliminating one mechanism for providing assistance puts people in jeopardy. She described a situation that occurred in Representative Fields' district with an individual who was about to be evicted and was trying to find any sort of immediate relief which was very difficult. She wanted to know about other programs for rental and utility assistance but did not want to eliminate options for people who are in very vulnerable circumstances.

[4:15:41 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS requested testimony at the next hearing from other service providers who deal with this situation.

[4:16:04 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced HB 258 was held over.

#### **HB 264-CHILD TRAFFICKING SCREENING**

[4:16:08 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 264, "An Act requiring the Department of Family and Community Services to adopt a uniform screening tool; requiring shelters for runaway minors to screen minors for victimization relating to sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation; requiring the Department of Family and Community Services to screen children in need of aid for victimization relating to sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation; and relating to the duty of the

Department of Family and Community Services to investigate the experiences of missing children in need of aid who have been located."

[4:16:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SARAH VANCE, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 264 to the committee. She explained that the purpose of the bill was for the Department of Family and Community Services to adopt a universal screening tool for children who come into the department and for those who come into contact with runaway children in the state. The intent is to screen for sexual exploitation to make sure that children who come within our state services are being identified if they are being exploited in order to provide them with the services that they need.

[4:17:40 PM](#)

ROBERT BALLINGER, Staff, Representative Sarah Vance, Alaska State Legislature, referenced questions from a previous House Health and Social Services committee hearing regarding HB 264. He explained that staff researched the federal law referred to in that committee hearing which went into effect in 2014. This bill will bring into compliance with that law which requires screening whenever individuals go missing from state care.

[4:19:00 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on HB 264.

[4:19:10 PM](#)

TERRA BURNS, Member, Community United for Safety and Protection, recommended that the committee amend the bill's definition of sex trafficking. She described her background and how it relates to HB 264, explaining that she was trafficked as a minor in Alaska and also did sex work as an adult. She did her graduate research in 2014 at University of Alaska, Fairbanks, on policy recommendations regarding Alaska's sex work, advocating for safety and protection. She requested that the committee amend HB 264 to use the criminal rather than the noncriminal definition for sex trafficking of minors. The youth shelters who use federal funding are tracking information about trafficking of minors in Alaska using the noncriminal definition. However, it is unknown how many minors in Alaska are being sex trafficked, are having survival sex, or are

working in the commercial sex industry. She said that resources are going to the wrong places and the wrong policies. Alaska's youth need evidence-based policy and services that address their needs. She requested that the bill use the criminal definition of sex trafficking.

[4:22:03 PM](#)

MICHELLE OVERSTREET, Founder and CEO, My House, spoke in support of HB 264. She described My House, a homeless youth drop-in center with wrap around services. She explained she supports the screening bill, so trafficked survivors can get the support they need from providers such as My House. Without a screening tool that examines what has been happening with the youth, it is difficult to know who has been trafficked. Without understanding the situation, youth are more likely to be revictimized and end up homeless or incarcerated. A good screening tool with properly worded questions helped My House identify over 50 youth who recognized that they had been trafficked when previously there had been only six. Data from a wide range of input is needed to adequately address the youths' needs and provide the services that they require. She described a situation in which screening helped prevent a sixteen-year-old from being taken and sold in Texas. She also discussed the high rate of child rape in Alaska and means for prevention. Using the screening tool would be hugely impactful for organizations that interact with potential victims.

[4:26:57 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked Ms. Overstreet whether her organization has a set of questions they ask. When she replied in the affirmative, he asked her to forward those to the committee.

[4:28:00 PM](#)

JOE JONES, representing self, said he would like to go on record as being in support of HB 264.

[4:28:28 PM](#)

MAXINE DOOGAN, Member, Community United for Safety and Protection, spoke in opposition to HB 264. She explained that she supported universal definitions, but she specifically wanted to see the criminal definitions put in place. She opposes using the Violence Against Women Act because it results in youth being arrested when they have been forced into prostitution.

[4:30:13 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 264.

[4:30:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS said he had hoped to hear from the Alaska Institute for Justice on this bill to see what they are saying about vulnerable youth. He had read that there was a very sharp rise in child labor trafficking, particularly among migrant children and asked whether this is occurring in Alaska.

[4:31:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE responded that her staff would reach out to the institute regarding children in labor trafficking in Alaska.

[4:31:52 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked about a specific list of questions that should be asked.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE explained that the bill as written does not mandate a specific list of questions. Rather, it encourages the department to expand on the screening they are already doing for trauma. It is recommended that the department collaborate with the Council on Human Trafficking. The bill intentionally does not provide a specific list of questions because of the wide variety of questions that can be asked. There are excellent models that can be provided, but it is up to the will of the committee how to proceed with HB 264.

[4:33:11 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX said the bill would be held for further consideration.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS mentioned to the bill sponsor that he asked Legislative Legal Services to draft an amendment which would add labor trafficking based on the experience of prosecutors who found they could not document sex trafficking but were able to document labor trafficking of the same victim. This would give prosecutors more tools as in, for example, the case of a massage parlor where prosecutors can prove the child

was be held for labor trafficking but could not prove the child had been subjected to sex trafficking.

[4:34:09 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 4:34 p.m.

[4:35:02 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX called the committee back to order and reopened public testimony on HB 264.

[4:35:46 PM](#)

DELAYNA WEST, representing self, spoke in support of HB 264. She strongly encouraged the committee to support this bill and other bills like it for the safety of the children and the women in Alaska's communities.

[4:36:50 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 264.

CHAIR PRAX announced HB 264 was held over.

[4:36:59 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.