

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 24, 2024

1:02 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Sarah Vance, Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Jesse Sumner
Representative Andrew Gray
Representative Cliff Groh

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jamie Allard, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING AWARENESS WEEK

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

TAMI JERUE, Executive Director
Alaska Native Women's Resource Center
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint, entitled "Human Trafficking in Alaska," during the presentation on Human and Sex Trafficking Awareness Week.

BRYAN BARLOW, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation on Human and Sex Traffic Awareness Week.

KELSEY POTDEVIN, Education & Outreach Manager
Alaska Native Justice Center
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint, entitled "Human Trafficking," during the presentation on Human and Sex Trafficking Awareness Week.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:02:41 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives Carpenter, C. Johnson, Sumner, Gray, and Vance were present at the call to order. Representative Groh arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): Human and Sex Trafficking awareness week

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CHAIR VANCE announced that the only order of business would be a presentation on human and sex trafficking awareness week.

[1:05:01 PM](#)

TAMI JERUE, Executive Director, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), presented a PowerPoint, titled "Human Trafficking in Alaska" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. AKNWRC was formed in 2016 to combat domestic and sexual violence occurring at disproportionate rates in Native communities. Both sex and labor trafficking are contributing factors to the long-term issue of missing and murdered indigenous people (MMIP). Trafficking, defined under AS 11.41.360 as compelling or inducing another person to engage in sexual conduct, adult entertainment, or labor in the state by force, deception, or threat of force, is a billion-dollar industry. Since its inception, the National Human Trafficking Hotline has identified 124 cases of human trafficking and 236 victims in Alaska. A National Congress of American Indians study found that 40 percent of women who are victims of sex trafficking identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or First Nations. A Loyola University report found that homeless youth in Anchorage were being trafficked at a rate of nearly 30 percent - more than one in four. The Not Invisible Act Commission developed the following strategies to address the crisis: developing administrative changes to identify, report, and respond effectively to cases; best practices for law enforcement agencies to follow in combating violent crime against Indians within Indian lands; and guidance on how to

address any gaps in services for Indian victims of violent crime. The commission produced several findings involving a lack of available data at all levels of government, insufficient funding, and challenges posed by the jurisdictional framework in Indian country. In addition, a lack of coordination and oversight contributed to the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of the federal government's response to the MMIP and Human Trafficking crisis. Ms. Jerue pointed out that victim blaming keeps victims silent and supporting victims promotes healing and justice.

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MS. JERUE, in response to committee questions, acknowledged that domestic violence and sexual assault were more prevalent than trafficking. She agreed that juvenile runaways were in more danger of being coerced or manipulated.

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BRYAN BARLOW, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety (DPS), in response to committee questions, confirmed that public safety prioritizes finding juvenile runaways and placing them into appropriate care. He urged families to report a missing person immediately, disputing the notion that one must wait 24 hours. He differentiated between a missing juvenile and a runaway, indicating that known circumstances could elevate the urgency of response. He added that there could be a way to enhance response through training and potential changes to policy. Protocols for a missing person involve quickly collecting as much information as possible by dispatch, investigative follow-up on the initial complaint, and listing the missing status in the national database.

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MS. JERUE, in response to a question regarding coercion, acknowledged that Alaska Native youth - and all youth - were susceptible to coercion disguised as affection or understanding, especially to a runaway with a problematic home life. She shared her understanding that Alaska Native youth were approached at a higher rate and that youth with substance abuse issues were easily manipulated.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW added that even the most seasoned public safety professionals are surprised by what people will do to each other, specifically juveniles, in regard to

manipulation. Sometimes that manipulation is performed by family, friends, or persons known to the juvenile.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BARLOW, in response to a question regarding the equity of DPS response time, claimed that even in rural areas, troopers receive dispatch calls, gage the urgency of response, and initiate an investigation immediately.

2:11:16 PM

KELSEY POTDEVIN, Education & Outreach Manager, Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC), presented a PowerPoint, entitled "Human Trafficking" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. ANJC was established in 1993 to address Alaska Native people's unmet needs in the justice system in response to increasingly disproportionate rates of victimization and incarceration. In 2016, ANJC became an affiliate of Cook Inlet Tribal Council. The center offers culturally relevant programming while serving all Alaskans and Tribes and offering community education and outreach. Survivor services include case management and legal services to assist with domestic violence/sexual assault and human trafficking. In addition, ANJC participates in a statewide MMIP group, which is interrelated to trafficking, and provides direct services to families of those missing. The center supports Tribal justice systems by exercising tribal sovereignty and offering resources and facilitation to promote safety in their communities. ANJC focuses on empowerment by equipping people with the knowledge and resources to navigate the legal system and advocates for social justice by encouraging fair and equitable treatment of Alaska Native people within the system.

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MS. POTDEVIN turned her attention to human trafficking by sharing the federal definition from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 22. U.S.C. 7102, and highlighting the words "force," "fraud," and "coercion." The A-M-P Model considers action, means, and purpose to identify human trafficking. Traffickers recruit through seduction and coercion; false job advertisements; peer recruitment; social media; parents selling children; and violence/kidnapping, but the most useful recruitment tactic is meeting a person's unmet need. There are many cultural risk factors, including historical trauma and culture loss; economic isolation; high

rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), homeless youth, and family involvement with the child welfare system. The Covenant House Study from 2014-2017 was the largest study of human trafficking among homeless youth ever conducted. Findings indicated that Native youth were disproportionately affected. A large proportion of trafficking victims were recruited via social media and multiplayer online games and chatrooms. Recognizable signs of trafficking include isolation, changing phones or social media accounts, inconsistent stories, and the inability to speak alone. Ms. Potdevin explained that people don't always see themselves as victims; others may not identify as a victim because their experience may have elements of criminality. Fear of law enforcement or authority figures also plays a role. ANJC is committed to work with statewide partners on combating human trafficking within Alaska and has many resources available for identified victims of human trafficking.

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MS. POTDEVIN, in response to committee questions, stated that many Native nonprofits are running programs that could be considered upstream prevention. She added that solutions are already present within Alaska Native communities, they just need to be accessed.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m.