

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

March 24, 2023

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Cathy Giessel

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Löki Tobin

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA VICTIMIZATION SURVEY RESULTS

- HEARD

SENATE BILL NO. 104

"An Act relating to appropriations to the civil legal services fund."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 53

"An Act relating to involuntary civil commitments."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 104

SHORT TITLE: CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) DUNBAR

03/15/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/15/23	(S)	JUD, FIN
03/20/23	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/20/23	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/24/23	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

DR. INGRID JOHNSON, Assistant Professor
Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the results from the 2020 Alaska Victimization Survey.

Senator Forest Dunbar, District J
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 104.

Arielle Wiggin, Staff
Senator Forest Dunbar
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the sectional analysis for SB 104 on behalf of the sponsor.

Nikole Nelson, Executive Director
Alaska Legal Services Corporation
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony on SB 104.

PATRICK REINHART, Director
Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 104.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:57 PM](#)

CHAIR MATT CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Giessel, Kaufman, and Chair Claman.

PRESENTATION: ALASKA VICTIMIZATION SURVEY RESULTS

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CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of the Alaska Victimization Survey Results.

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DR. INGRID JOHNSON, Assistant Professor, Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), Anchorage, Alaska, began the presentation on slide 2, "Overview and history of AVS."

- Provides estimates for the lifetime and annual prevalence of rape and physical intimate partner violence against women in Alaska.
 - Documents the scope of the problem over time.
 - Increases awareness about the problem and fosters the collective movement to address these types of violence.
 - Validates the experiences of the victim-survivors and lets them know they are not alone, not unseen, and not forgotten.
- Conducted statewide surveys in 2010, 2015, and 2020 with the goal of conducting survey every five years.
 - 13 regional surveys were conducted 2011 - 2015
 - Overall, almost 13,000 women in Alaska have participated in these surveys
- Joint effort between the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA; funders) and the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center (research implementation).

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DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 3, "AVS Methodology."

- General methodology (all iterations)
 - General population survey of adult women residing in Alaska.
 - Respondents randomly selected and contacted by landlines and cell phones.
 - Survey modeled after the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) administered by the U.S. CDC.
 - Questions about victimization are "behaviorally specific" and include a wide range of violence

against women beyond just rape and physical intimate partner violence

- o Survey procedures are designed to maximize the safety and confidentiality of respondents.
- 2020 Survey data collection methods
 - o Washington state survey team
 - o Phone surveys conducted from July - November 2020
 - o 2100 participants
 - o Each case was weighted to match proportions in general adult Alaska female population (265,572) using three strata: Geographic region, race/ethnicity, and age

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 4, "Lifetime and past year estimates of physical intimate partner violence and rape." She detailed the graph depicting types of violence in the past year and over a lifetime. She pointed out two of the main types of violence studied, physical intimate partner violence and rape. She clarified that rape was referred to as sexual violence in the past. Sexual violence is a broad term used to encompass sexual harassment, sexual assault without penetration and other unwanted sexual activity or innuendo. She remarked on the importance of precise vocabulary related to victimization. When an Alaska Victimization Survey (AVS) report refers to sexual violence, it pertains to alcohol or drug involved sexual penetration or forcible sexual penetration.

DR. JOHNSON stated that 48 percent of adult Alaskan women reported physical intimate partner violence in their lifetime. She added that 7 percent of adult Alaskan women experienced physical intimate partner violence in the past year. She stated that 40.5 percent of adult Alaskan women experienced rape in their lifetime while 3.4 percent of adult Alaskan women experienced rape in the past year. The final column on slide 4 displayed adult Alaskan women who experienced intimate personal violence, rape or both with 57.7 percent reporting the composite in their lifetime, and 8.1 percent reporting the composite in the past year.

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 5, "Changes over time: 2010-2020." The slide depicts various experiences over a lifetime and in the past year. She stated that the lifetime rates of physical intimate partner violence and rape were similar in 2010 and 2020. She clarified that approximately 50-60 percent of adult Alaskan women experienced intimate partner violence and or rape in their lifetime. She added that reports over the past year decreased slightly. From 2010 to 2015, they remain static at 8.1 percent of adult Alaskan women reporting interpersonal violence, rape or both. She recalled past questions about the difference between lifetime rates and past-year data. She stated that a spike in incidents within the five-year reporting period led to the increase in lifetime rates. She noted that similar results are observed in national victimization data, which is obtained on an annual basis.

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DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 6, "Comparing Alaska's prevalence to national prevalence." She spoke further about national data comparisons. She explained that data is collected annually through the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). The table compared AVS rates to NISVS rates for physical intimate partner violence and rape in both lifetime and past year categories for 2010 and 2015. She pointed to the green-shaded column displaying the proportional difference between Alaska and the nation. Alaska's prevalence for physical intimate partner violence is 1.4 times greater than the nation's over a woman's lifetime and 2.4 times greater in the past year. The lifetime incidence of rape in Alaska in 2010 is 2.0 times higher than the national average, while the past year data is 3.9 times greater. The rates displayed for 2015 are similar.

DR. JOHNSON clarified that several groups conduct the surveys nationally. She stated that the AVS and the NISVS are similar, but not exactly the same.

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DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 7, "New results: Experience and self-labels and help-seeking behaviors."

Primary prevention (preventing from happening in first place) is "the ideal."

However, secondary and tertiary prevention (addressing VAW once it has happened to prevent it from happening

again and to alleviate its impacts) are unfortunate but pertinent concerns.

Secondary and tertiary prevention usually require those who have experienced Violence Against Women (VAW) to disclose or seek help...

...which usually requires them to label or define the experience as a problem and/or themselves as victims.

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 8, "Research questions."

1. What percent of Alaskan women who have experienced violence label those experiences using violence against women (VAW) labels?
2. What percent of Alaskan women who have experienced violence label themselves as victims or other victimization-related identity in relation to those experiences?
3. Is the use of experience- or self-labels related to perceiving a need for services and/or talking to the police?

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 9, "Experience and self-labels."

If survey participants indicated that they had experienced one of the many forms of victimization in the survey (including partner psychological aggression and sexual harassment), they were given the following prompt and questions:

Before we conclude the survey, we want to ask a few final questions about how you define the things that you told me have happened to you and how you think about yourself in relation to those experiences.

- Do you use any specific terms to define those things that happened to you?
 - If needed: For example, do you use terms like... rape, stalking, or violence?
- Do you use any specific terms to define yourself in relation to those things that happened to you?
 - If needed: For example, do you use terms like... victim, survivor, person who has been harmed?

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DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 10, "Intimate partner violence (IPV) label prevalence." She described the table beginning with the different forms of IPV: physical aggression, psychological aggression, coercive control and entrapment. She explained that women might be categorized in multiple samples. She clarified that people experiencing one type of violence are often experiencing other types of violence victimization, known as poly-victimization.

DR. JOHNSON called attention to the purple outlined box on slide 10. She stated that 17 percent of women used the term "domestic abuse or violence" and only 4.4 percent used the term "intimate partner abuse or violence." She continued with the green box displaying 25 percent of women using no specific terms to label abusive experience. She noted that the rate was higher for those experiencing psychological aggression or coercive control and entrapment.

DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 10 and self-labels. She pointed to the red outlined box with the terms "victim" or "survivor". She stated that only 6.7 percent of women experiencing physical aggression use the term "victim" while 29.2 percent use the term "survivor." She concluded that the blue box depicts the percentage of people using no specific terms to label themselves, which was higher than those using terms to label experiences.

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 11, "Stalking label prevalence."

- Experience labels
 - 9.6% labeled their experiences as stalking
 - 9.3% labeled their experiences as sexual harassment
 - 23.4% did not use any specific terms to label their experiences
- Self-labeling
 - 11.6% used the label victim
 - 26.6% used the label survivor
 - 8.9% used the label victim-survivor
 - 42.3% did not use any specific terms to label themselves

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 12, "Sexual violence label prevalence." The table detailed sexual violence measures. She stated that sexual violence includes a wide range of behaviors including unwanted or uninvited sexual situations such as sexual harassment or non-consensual flashing. She added that alcohol or drug involved rape, forceable rape and sexual experiences involving pressure or coercion also fall into the category of sexual assault. She highlighted the purple box depicting low results for women who use the terms "sexual assault" and "sexual violence." She moved to the green box depicting no specific terms to label experiences that range from 18.6 percent up to 30 percent. She pointed out the blue box categorizing up to 51 percent of women using no specific terms to label themselves. She added that the term "survivor" was the preferred label chosen by women experiencing sexual violence.

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 13, "Summary of Results."

- Experience-labels
 - Minimal agreement on terms used to label experiences
 - Most common experience label: ~1/4 of women who had experienced alcohol-or drug-involved rape used term rape
 - Even among those who experienced physical partner aggression, ~1/6 used term abuse and ~1/6 used domestic abuse/violence
 - ~1/4 of IPV victims, 1/4 of stalking victims, and 1/5 to 1/4 of sexual violence victims did not use any specific terms to label their experiences.
- Self-labels
 - Most common self-label was survivor, with 1/4 to 1/3 endorsing this label
 - Roughly 1/10 used the self-label victim across all subsamples
 - ~2/5 to 1/2 of IPV victims, 2/5 of stalking victims, and 1/3 to 1/2 of sexual violence victims did not use any specific terms to label themselves

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DR. JOHNSON moved to slide 14, "Experience and self-labels and perceiving a need for services and/or talking to the police."

Both applying some kind of label to one's experiences with VAW and applying a label to oneself in relation to those experiences approximately doubled the odds of perceiving a need for formal services.

The significance of self-labels seemed to be driven by the "survivor" label, as using a "victim" label was not related to need perceptions, but a "survivor" label doubled (or even tripled) the odds of perceiving a need for formal services.

Applying some kind of label to one's experiences with VAW almost doubled the odds of talking to the police, and, again, use of the "survivor" self-label significantly increased the odds of talking to the police.

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DR. JOHNSON continued with slide 15, "Is the use of experience or self labels related to perceiving a need for services and or talking to the police." She remarked that her research showed that applying a label to one's experiences and applying a label to oneself doubled the odds of perceiving a need for formal services. If labels are used to identify experiences or self, women were twice as likely to perceive a need for formal services. She theorized that the significance of the self-label was driven by the survivor label, which doubled the odds of perceiving the need for formal services. She added that applying a label to experiences doubles the odds of talking to police. Using the survivor self-label also increased the odds of talking to the police. She stressed the relationship between labeling and perceiving a need for services and talking to the police.

DR. JOHNSON offered to respond to questions or comments.

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SENATOR KAUFMAN wondered if the label or personality type led to the perceived need for services or police intervention. He wondered about the benefits of coaching a person to label experiences or self.

DR. JOHNSON responded that causality was difficult to prove. She stated that the survivor identity is strengthened by seeking help. She wondered about different conclusions drawn from those identifying as survivors. She remarked that labeling abuse is not necessarily empowering. She stated the clear link between experience labels and seeking help. Establishing causality with the results is impossible because of the nature in which the

questions were asked. She acknowledged the difficulty in providing legislative recommendations. She spoke about qualitative work linking self-labeling to seeking help. She reported talking with a woman who was sexually assaulted by her husband who did not recognize the crime until she watched a television show about sexual assault. She stated that qualitative evidence suggests that the label precedes reporting or help seeking.

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SENATOR KIEHL noticed that the categories failed to sum to 100 on slide 10.

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DR. JOHNSON replied that respondents can select several labels. She mentioned other labels that were discarded because there were too few respondents who used them. The answers with too few respondents were not included in the material presented. She stated that 25 percent did not use specific terms, while the other 75 percent did, but some terms were used by so few people that they were discarded from the presentation and therefore the sum total.

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SENATOR KIEHL sought guidance for policy within the survey. He asked about variations among age groups, ethnic groups or regions that might provide additional guidance.

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DR. JOHNSON replied that the data were from 2020 and largely from Anchorage. She stated that she was unable to provide region-specific data. She offered to separate the data by age breakdown. She offered to search different demographic variables and the relation to label use.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked if she was able to provide the information during today's meeting.

DR. JOHNSON replied that she would send the information to Senator Claman's office.

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SENATOR KIEHL expressed intrigue about the data. He agreed with the value of prevention. He expressed appreciation for Dr. Johnson's guidance about the best legislative effort to address the problem of intimate partner violence and rape.

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CHAIR CLAMAN asked about slide 5 and the drop in lifetime reporting of intimate partner violence, rape, or both in 2015. He interpreted the drop as a positive trend but noticed an increase again in 2020. He asked if the committee could draw optimistic conclusions from the drop noted in 2015.

DR. JOHNSON responded that she became the principal investigator in 2019. She stated that she was not as involved in the 2010 and 2015 data collection. She revealed that the 2010 survey compiled a smaller sample than the 2015 and 2020 surveys. She noted that the largest sample was in 2015, which led to more reliable estimates. In regard to optimism, she opined that the problems are not worse. She acknowledged the many factors that influence crime and victimization levels. She interpreted possible improvement but noted the downsides to collecting data only once every five years.

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CHAIR CLAMAN referred to a recent crime statistics presentation offered by Troy Payne with the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center that illustrated that sexual assault data remained consistent over the last 50 years. He asked if Dr. Johnson's paper was available for committee review.

DR. JOHNSON remarked about her research stating the prevalence of labels published in February 2023. Another paper related to labels and their influence on help-seeking is under review. She offered to share the published paper with the committee.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked about the research and concrete steps for the legislature to improve sexual violence statistics.

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DR. JOHNSON replied that primary prevention against women has thin research. She explained the difficulty involved in publishing high-quality studies on prevention efforts. She spoke about federal funding for research prevention efforts that focus on community and societal level solutions. She spoke about bystander intervention programs and individual prevention efforts. The efforts impact those people engaging in the programs. She suggested efforts to make changes on a community or societal level.

DR. JOHNSON revealed that she was developing research related to nightlife and sexual violence. Sexual assault is highly correlated with alcohol. She plans to focus on certain forms of

sexual violence. She admitted that researchers hesitate to make recommendations in areas where research is thin. She spoke about secondary and tertiary prevention that involve investing in currently existing victim services. The services offer free counseling and other mental health aid including trauma therapy. She stated her best recommendation was to check in with the victim service providers to learn more about their needs.

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CHAIR CLAMAN wondered if language shifts related to victim versus survivor terminology might enable greater reporting of sexual abuse and harassment.

DR. JOHNSON found the comment interesting.

CHAIR CLAMAN interpreted that the survey findings suggested consideration of terminology changes.

DR. JOHNSON agreed that the survey findings suggest rethinking the terminology used when labeling self or experiences related to abuse. She added that victim services advocates utilize the newer terminology while many victims are unaware of the advantages of labeling self or experiences related to abuse. She pointed to the public awareness aspect of the language terminology issue. She wondered if community awareness might help society recognize violence as violence. She acknowledged that intimate personal violence is difficult for victims to label. She wondered if repeated messaging about labels of violence might help people recognize abuse.

CHAIR CLAMAN thanked Dr. Johnson for the presentation. He appreciated the repetition when it comes to the subject of violence against women in Alaska.

SB 104-CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUND

[2:15:55 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 104 "An Act relating to appropriations to the civil legal services fund."

[2:16:30 PM](#)

Senator Forest Dunbar, District J, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska sponsor of SB 104, stated that this legislation increases funding for the Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC). He shared his story about interning with ALSC while attending law school. During his time with the corporation, he

witnessed the work offered to people unable to afford civil legal representation or services. He compared Alaska Legal Services Corporation to a public defender for civil law. The services include elder advocacy, public benefits, consumer protection, family law and housing advocacy. He added that ALSC is the state's largest provider of free civil legal services for survivors of domestic violence.

SENATOR DUNBAR mentioned a child custody case he worked on as an intern with the corporation. He shared that he considered the case the most important legal work he participated in. He noted that the corporation sees increased demands for time and services while the funding is lower than it was 40 years ago. He remarked that state investment in the corporation decreased over time. He explained that SB 104 takes a percentage of court filing fees and directs it toward ALSC. The initial contribution involved 25 percent of court filing fees, which was negotiated down to 10 percent with the agreement that the fee percentage would be revisited. He stated that 10 percent of court filing fees provides insufficient contributions to ALSC for support of Alaskans in need of legal aid.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that Ms. Nelson and Ms. Meade were present to respond to questions.

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Arielle Wiggin, Staff, Senator Forest Dunbar, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska provided the sectional analysis for SB 104.

Section 1: amends AS 37.05.590 Civil Legal Services Fund so that up to twenty-five percent, instead of ten percent, of Court System filing fees can be appropriated by the Legislature to the existing Civil Legal Services Fund each year.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that he was a member of the legislature when the initial bill addressing state contribution to ALSC was passed.

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SENATOR KAUFMAN wondered why the percentage of court filing fees was negotiated down to 10 percent.

SENATOR DUNBAR deferred the question to Ms. Nelson.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked Ms. Nelson to answer the question before she provided invited testimony.

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Nikole Nelson, Executive Director, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Anchorage, Alaska informed the committee that the change in filing fee contribution from 25 to 10 percent was negotiated in an attempt to stabilize the funding source, with a commitment to revisit the issue if 10 percent was inadequate. She acknowledged that Senator Claman carried the bill during his time serving in the House to explore whether 10 percent of court filing fees was an adequate contribution to ALSC. She stated that 10 percent is an adequate contribution to provide legal services to eligible Alaskans.

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SENATOR KIEHL requested a better orientation to the total funding picture.

MS. NELSON replied that the state appropriation is not ALSC's only source of revenue. The total budget of \$7.5 million comes from various sources. She noted that the corporation receives federal funding, local contributions, fundraising contributions, private donations and the state contribution. She clarified that the state contribution derived from court filing fees represents a small portion of the organization's total funding. She pointed to the criticality of the state contribution for meeting community needs.

MS. NELSON furthered that the state appropriation is divided into two sources, a general fund appropriation from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) of \$400 thousand and 10 percent of court filing fees. Together the state contributes less than 10 percent of ALSC's total funding.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked how the additional resources serve communities.

MS. NELSON pointed to a study by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority showing that for every dollar invested in ALSC, a five-to-one return to state and local economies was seen. Efforts to help people avoid homelessness and domestic violence provide cost savings to state and local communities. The study also showed that for every \$100 thousand investment (2012 dollars), ALSC can serve another 182 individuals. She stated

that greater inflation increases programmatic costs, so a boost in state dollars helps meet the increased costs. She reminded the committee about the Community Justice Worker Program discussed in a recent Senate Judiciary Standing Committee presentation. She stated that the program was the first of its kind in the nation. She reminded the committee that the program trains new lawyers to provide limited-scope legal assistance to those in need. She explained that additional funding would allow ALSC to actualize the new program.

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CHAIR CLAMAN moved to invited testimony on SB 104.

MS. NELSON provided invited testimony on SB 104. She explained the civil justice crisis in Alaska. She noted that the state and federal constitutions guarantee due process and protection under the law. The civil justice system is facing a crisis due to the gap between people able to receive civil legal help and those who cannot. She explained that the gap reached a crisis level because existing funding has not kept pace with community needs.

MS. NELSON continued that ALSC is a nonprofit organization with the mission to ensure fairness for all in the justice system irrespective of a person's income or distance from the courthouse. She noted that ALSC provides legal help for people seeking aid with health, safety and family needs. The corporation provides individual legal advice and form drafting. She added that the corporation provides community education and clinics. She spoke about the variety of people seeking legal services from ALSC. She added that veterans are regularly helped when benefits are denied.

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MS. NELSON continued to describe the program and all of the services. She added that ALSC helps people keep their homes and ensures that access to justice does not only happen on the road system. She stated that the study showed successful outcomes and eighty percent of cases do not go to court. She stated that ALSC is forced to turn 50 percent of qualified applicants away because of lack of staffing and resources.

MS. NELSON continued that ALSC is on the forefront of fighting the epidemic of domestic violence by serving over 1000 survivors of domestic violence. She added that ALSC helped over 2500 seniors and veterans by protecting them from financial and physical abuse and assisting them with processes like wills, probate and powers of attorney. She noted that ALSC helped over

700 families avoid losing their homes. The corporation ensures that access to justice exists off and on the road system.

MS. NELSON revisited the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority study referenced earlier, which showed that ALSC achieves successful outcomes for clients 86 percent of the time. She added that 80 percent of cases resolve without going to court, which saves system resources. She repeated that ALSC turns 50 percent of eligible people seeking legal assistance away. She stated that the target population grows each year while funding remains the same. She noted that ALSC received funding of \$1.2 million in 1984 to serve a target population of 40 thousand. In 2022, ALSC received funding of \$681 thousand to serve a population that tripled to 128 thousand.

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MS. NELSON furthered that the state spent \$81 dollars per person in 1984 and \$5 per person in 2023. She noted that the legislature amended ALSC in 2018 with widespread bipartisan support. She remarked that ALSC is grateful for the state appropriation, but the amount available fluctuates wildly from zero to \$360 thousand. She acknowledged that economic times are challenging, but passage of SB 104 ensures the priority of justice for all.

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SENATOR KAUFMAN asked how client eligibility for legal aid is established.

MS. NELSON replied that income information is gathered to determine eligibility. She mentioned that the Federal Legal Services Organization regulates the comprehensive screening process. The income data is documented and audited annually to comply with regulations.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that Senator Dunbar referenced the large number of survivors of domestic violence represented by ALSC. He recalled a statistic related to access to legal services increasing chances that a person will leave an abusive relationship. He wondered about additional studies with similar findings.

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MS. NELSON replied that multiple studies support the benefits of providing an attorney to a survivor of domestic violence. Legal assistance is one of the most effective ways to end the cycle of abuse. She mentioned that the Attorney General of Alaska

supported the creation of a large group of pro bono attorneys to help address the epidemic of sexual assault and domestic violence.

CHAIR CLAMAN requested the seminal research mentioned by Ms. Nelson. He shared that while domestic relations cases were challenging, he personally found one to be the most rewarding case in his career.

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CHAIR CLAMAN opened public testimony on SB 104.

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PATRICK REINHART, Director, Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education, Homer, Alaska, testified in support of SB 104. He stated that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. He spoke about an "I have rights" campaign to teach people with intellectual and developmental disabilities how they can report elements of harm. The council refers people to ALSC and the disability law center of Alaska for support. He stated that both organizations struggle to keep qualified attorneys. He appreciated the committee for hearing the bill and Senator Dunbar for his sponsorship.

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CHAIR CLAMAN closed public testimony on SB 104.

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SENATOR GIESSEL remarked that her mother was an attorney who offered pro bono work to seniors. She expressed concern about the fiscal note and the difficulties ahead with the finance committee. She wondered if offering the funding through the finance subcommittee might be a better option.

SENATOR DUNBAR replied that he was not a member of the finance subcommittee. He asked finance committee members listening to the meeting to fund ALSC. He recognized the significance of the fiscal note but believed that the bill provides an appropriate use of court fees. He stated that using fees from the legal system to provide access to the system was appropriate.

CHAIR CLAMAN clarified that the Senate Judiciary Committee requested the fiscal note, and Senator Kiehl was the chair of the Senate Judiciary Finance Subcommittee.

SENATOR GIESSEL wondered if the fiscal note could be a zero fiscal note since the court already collects the filing fees.

CHAIR CLAMAN responded that all fees collected go to the general fund.

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SENATOR KIEHL agreed with Chair Claman about collected fees and the general fund. He added that the civil legal services fund appropriation is a language appropriation, which is not appropriate for consideration by the finance subcommittee.

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CHAIR CLAMAN held SB 104 in committee for further consideration.

[2:45:04 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:45 p.m.