

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 10, 2025

1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Andrew Gray, Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Mia Costello
Representative Jubilee Underwood

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Chuck Kopp, Vice Chair
Representative Sarah Vance

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): ALASKA REENTRY PARTNERSHIP

- HEARD

PRESENTATION(S): UPDATE ON PRISONER ID LEGISLATION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

TERI TIBBETT, Coordinator
Alaska Reentry Partnership
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the Alaska Reentry Partnership presentation.

TRAVIS WELCH, Director
Division of Health and Rehab Services
Department of Corrections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions about trauma treatment for incarcerated women.

BARBARA MONGAR, Coordinator
Mat-Su Reentry Coalition
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Alaska Reentry Partnership presentation.

ROB FETTER, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Alaska Reentry Partnership presentation.

MARSH OSS, Coordinator
Fairbanks Reentry Coalition
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the Alaska Reentry Partnership presentation.

JAKE WYCKOFF, Deputy Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Corrections
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the Update on Prisoner ID Legislation presentation.

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Asked questions during the Update on Prisoner ID Legislation presentation.

ZANE NIGHSWONGER, Director
Division of Institutions
Department of Correction
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the Update on Prisoner ID Legislation presentation.

JONATHAN PISTOTNIK, Reentry Program Manager
Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the Update on Prisoner ID Legislation presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:00:45 PM](#)

CHAIR ANDREW GRAY called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Representatives Costello, Eischeid, and Gray were present at the call to order. Representatives Underwood and Mina arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): Alaska Reentry Partnership

[1:01:47 PM](#)

CHAIR GRAY announced that the first order of business would be the Alaska Reentry Partnership presentation. He stated that the Alaska Reentry Partnership is a statewide coalition that brings together regional reentry coalitions, justice-involved individuals, family members, case managers, service providers, local businesses, and public agencies. Their mission is to promote successful reintegration for Alaskans at all stages of the justice system—pretrial, incarceration, and reentry—through direct assistance, community education, and advocacy. The partnership consists of eight regional reentry coalitions in Anchorage, Mat-Su, Fairbanks, Kenai, Juneau, Dillingham, Nome, and Ketchikan.

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TERI TIBBETT, Coordinator, Alaska Reentry Partnership, presented a PowerPoint, titled "Alaska Reentry Partnership" [included in the committee packet]. She said the reentry partnership is a collaboration of individuals, organizations, community advocates, and public entities that support success before, during, and after incarceration. She introduced presenters and partners, and described a graphic that showed the rate of recidivism within three years of release. She outlined the following reentry efforts from 2015 to 2025 on slide 5 [original punctuation provided]:

- Community Reentry Coalitions Operate in Eight Alaskan Communities
- Division of Behavioral Health establishes Reentry Program, Reentry Case Managers
- Treatment in Prisons and Halfway Houses, and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Reentry Unit Established and Operates in the Department of Corrections (DOC)
- SB 119 - Requires DOC to Provide State ID Before Release.

- AHFC Reentry Housing Funds
- Therapeutic Courts Expansion
- Peer Support
- Mental Health Clinicians in DJJ
- Crisis Stabilization Efforts
- Holistic Defense In Rural Areas
- Trust Beneficiaries In Corrections Study
- Trauma Treatment for Incarcerated Women in DOC
- Training for DOC Mental Health Staff
- APIC (Assess Plan Identify Coordinate)
- Discharge Planning in DOC
- Discharge Incentive Grants
- Reentry Simulations, and more.

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MS. TIBBETT shared the following information on Alaska reentry data on slide 6 [original punctuation provided]:

- Between 2015 and 2024, Alaska's recidivism rate dropped from 63.17% in FY15 to the lowest point, 54.32% in FY23, and 54.59% in FY241
- Alaska does not currently have qualitative data to show correlation between reentry efforts and recidivism reduction, however information is being tracked and analysis could be forthcoming.
- Data challenges include Alaska's varying definitions of what is "reentry," what is "success," and how to measure success. DOC analyses three-year data, and reentry coalition case managers track only up to six months after release.
- "...[T]he risk of re-offending may lessen over time as individuals successfully re-establish themselves in the community..."²

[1:16:00 PM](#)

TRAVIS WELCH, Director, Division of Health and Rehab Services, Department of Corrections (DOC), in response to a question from Representative Mina about trauma treatment for incarcerated women in DOC, said the program is a pilot project to provide trauma treatment to a small cohort of women in Highland Mountain Correctional center and Bethel. He said expanding the program to the male population had not been considered.

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BARBARA MONGAR, Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition, spoke to the importance of reentry services for justice involved individuals and public safety. She said the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is constantly engaging the community through reentry simulations, community wide meetings, and the annual reentry summit in order to educate community organizations and stakeholders and create solutions. Building and maintaining strong partnerships is also a vital part of the coalition's work to provide necessary resources for a smooth transition back into the community. She described the role of a reentry case manager, and said the largest areas of need are housing, employment, treatment, and transportation.

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MS. MONGAR, in response to a series of committee questions, reported that it takes at least 30 days after applications are submitted to receive the benefits, which is why its important that these steps are completed before release. She stated that case managers help with client transportation to mandated appointments, but the geographic size of the Mat-Su creates difficulties.

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ROB FETTER, representing self, shared his personal story as a justice involved individuals. He explained that without these programs, he may not be sitting in front of the committee today. He emphasized the importance of HB 35 to inmates who are releasing from prison.

[1:32:12 PM](#)

MARSH OSS, Coordinator, Fairbanks Reentry Coalition, shared her personal story as a justice involved individual. She reported that the types of services requested by clients include housing, utilities, driver's licenses, insurance, union dues, business licenses, mini grants, household items, birth certificates, Social Security cards, Tribal identifications, referrals for treatment assessments, individual counseling services, veteran services, clothing vouchers, referrals to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), back tax, returning home vouchers, and setting up rental café portals. She expounded on her duties and noted that 40 of the 67 clients she served since

August 1, 2024, have traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) or developmental disabilities, adding that these factors are shown to correlate with a higher recidivism rate. In closing, she said changes made by state agencies in how they partner with treatment entities and communities have extended the life of those suffering from mental health and substance use disorders.

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MS. OSS, in response to committee questions, recommended the following improvements: include coalition coordinators and case managers in the training academy for DOC; allow peer support training in DOC facilities for justice involved individuals; embed peer support specialists in agencies that work with justice involved individuals; implement programming in facilities to address TBIs to help reduce recidivism; and pass HB 35, as education has been proven to reduce recidivism.

PRESENTATION(S): Update on Prisoner ID Legislation

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CHAIR GRAY announced that the final order of business would be the Update on the Prisoner ID Legislation.

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REPRESENTATIVE GRAY invited Senator Myers to participate in the committee discussion. He said Senate Bill 119, which passed the legislature in 2023, requires DOC to issue a state identification card to individuals upon their release from custody. The goal of this law is to reduce barriers to employment, housing, and reentry services by ensuring that every returning citizen has valid identification.

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JAKE WYCKOFF, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Corrections (DOC), explained that in October 2023, DOC started producing ID cards for every person releasing from prison who wishes to have one. The ID cards, which are valid for six months, include a photo, basic descriptors, and a notation that prohibits the purchase of alcohol. Since the program's inception, DOC has issued just under 10,000 ID cards. He reported that 370 people chose not to take an ID upon release.

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MR. WYCKOFF, in response to a question about lost ID cards, said DOC replaces lost ID cards for anyone who needs one at no cost to the individual.

[1:46:02 PM](#)

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, Alaska State Legislature, asked why a person would not want a DOC issued ID.

MR. WYCKOFF responded he had no idea why someone would choose not to receive an ID. In response to additional committee questions, he reiterated that the IDs issued by DOC are valid state IDs and were intended, in part, to be used as a "prerequisite" for a driver's license or another state identification card. He suggested that a public service announcement may help educate employers about the prisoner IDs.

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ZANE NIGHSWONGER, Director, Division of Institutions, Department of Correction (DOC), in response to a question from Senator Myers, shared his understanding that DOC has re-communicated the importance of making the prisoner ID program a priority at each institution.

MR. WYCKOFF, in response to a question about how DOC can better help individuals leaving incarceration succeed, put an emphasis on infusing reentry into the community in a way that absorbs the justice involved person with wraparound services that "take them the way home."

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JONATHAN PISTOTNIK, Reentry Program Manager, Anchorage Reentry Coalition, in response to a final question about the coalition's priorities, said continued collaboration with community partners is key to solving these issues.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.