

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 31, 2025

1:31 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Matt Claman, Chair  
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens  
Senator Löki Tobin  
Senator Robert Myers

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 9

"An Act relating to the surrender of infants; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 9

SHORT TITLE: SURRENDER OF INFANTS; INF. SAFETY DEVICE

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MYERS

01/10/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	HSS, JUD
02/20/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/20/25	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
02/25/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/25/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/25/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
02/27/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/27/25	(S)	<Above Item Removed from Agenda>--
02/27/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/13/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/13/25	(S)	Moved CSSB 9(HSS) Out of Committee
03/13/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/14/25	(S)	HSS RPT CS 2NR 1DP SAME TITLE

03/14/25 (S) NR: DUNBAR, GIESSEL  
03/14/25 (S) DP: HUGHES  
03/31/25 (S) JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

THERESA WOLDSTAD, Staff  
Senator Robert Myers  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the sectional analysis for SB 9.

KIM GUAY, Division Director  
Office of Children's Services  
Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 9.

MIKE MCKAY, Maryland State Senator  
District 1  
Annapolis, Maryland

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony on SB 9.

PAMELA SAMASH, representing self  
Nenana, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 9.

FRANCES ROBINSON, Dispatcher  
Anchorage Fire Department  
Municipality of Anchorage  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony on SB 9.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:31:08 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Kiehl, Tobin, and Chair Claman. Senator Stevens arrived shortly thereafter.

**SB 9-SURRENDER OF INFANTS; INF. SAFETY DEVICE**

[CSSB 9(HSS) was before the committee.]

[1:31:38 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 9 "An Act relating to the surrender of infants; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR CLAMAN said this is the first hearing of SB 9 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He invited the bill sponsor and his staff to present the bill.

[1:31:58 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS, speaking as sponsor, introduced SB 9, stating:

Alaska was among the last in the country to pass a safe surrender law in 2008. The law allows a parent to surrender a newborn up to 21 days old to a doctor, nurse, peace officer, firefighter, or any other person who can reasonably be expected to care for the child. Since that bill was passed, nine infants have been safely surrendered, but we have also had infants recently found abandoned in the state, sometimes with the infant found after passing away, two in Anchorage and one in Fairbanks that we're aware of. While we don't know every individual's motivation, we do hear anecdotally that shame and fear of recognition can be barriers to people surrendering their infants safely to a person rather than abandoning them.

SB 9 provides a solution to those problems. Following 22 other states, it creates the legal framework for infant safety devices to be installed at hospitals, fire stations, police stations, health facilities owned or managed by a tribal health organization, or other appropriate facilities. SB 9 defines what an infant safety device is and where it may be installed; they must be:

- Climate controlled.
- Have an automatic lock.
- Be installed in a conspicuous place with appropriate signage.
- Have 24-hour video surveillance.

- Immediately trigger a call to the 911 system to dispatch emergency services in the event that an infant is surrendered.

Mr. Chair, I do also want to quickly note what this bill will not do. It does not mandate installation of these devices. The facilities in question still would have to consent to installing one. The bill does not pay for these devices. We have already been assured that there is private funding available to install them. And, in fact, one reason that we have put forward this bill is because a group in Fairbanks went to the hospital and offered to pay for one of these devices to be installed. They were told no, because the hospital was concerned that the law, as currently written, only allows for safe surrender directly to a person—SB 9 remedies that problem. I also want to note, Mr. Chair, that while my office has been reached out to by different groups in inspiration for the bill, we did not work with any corporation on this draft. My office compared policies from across the nation and chose to have the language in SB 9 mirror language that unanimously passed the Maryland legislature in 2024. Mr. Chair, this is a tool in the toolbox to save lives. With the problem of infants still being abandoned on the side of the road still happening, we hope that adding this tool can help address the problem. Again, thank you for hearing the bill.

[1:34:58 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced Senator Stevens joined the meeting.

[1:35:05 PM](#)

THERESA WOLDSTAD, Staff, Senator Robert Myers, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, paraphrased the sectional analysis for SB 9, version G:

### **SB 9 Sectional Analysis**

"An Act relating to the surrender of infants; and providing for an effective date."

**Section 1: AS 47.10.013 (c) Page 1, Lines 3-15 Page 2, Lines 1-18.**

Authorizes an infant safety device as a location a parent may safely surrender an infant. Establishes

appropriate locations for devices. Authorizes the Commissioner of Family and Community Services to designate other appropriate facilities and locations.

**Section 2: AS 47.10.013(d) Page 2, Line 19-31, Page 3, Lines 1-2.**

Amends AS 47.10.013(d) with conforming statutory references as made in section one.

**Section 3: AS 47.10.013(e) Page 3, Line 3-6.**

Amends AS 47.10.013(e) with conforming language which adds "designated" to authorized facilities.

[1:35:53 PM](#)

MS. WOLDSTAD continued presenting the sectional analysis:

**Section 4: AS 47.10.013 Page 3, Lines 7-31, Page 4, Lines 1 - 17.**

Requires a designated facility to notify the nearest office of the Department of Family and Community Services that an infant has been surrendered. Establishes that the Department shall consider the appropriate size, safety, and ways to minimize unauthorized uses in determining whether to approve a proposed infant safety device. The Department may provide training to employees of a designated facility regarding implementation and compliance with Alaska safe surrender laws. If the Department determines that the surrendered infant is an Indian child, the department shall contact the Indian child's tribe immediately.

Establishes requirements for infant safety devices, including a conspicuous location, climate-control, appropriate signage, an automatic 911 emergency dispatch request system, 24-hour video surveillance system, and automatic security lock. Appropriate signage must include a phone number for a support service for parents in crisis, list of alternatives to using the device, and statement clarifying that device use may lead to involuntary termination of the parent's rights and release of the child for adoption or other permanent placement.

**Section 5: Page 4, Line 18.**

Establishes an effective date for the bill of July 1, 2026.

[1:38:04 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said a similar bill came before the legislature many years ago. He recalled that the earlier bill purposely removed video surveillance to preserve the level of privacy a parent might want and to avoid situations in which a parent would be unwilling to drop off a child if they were identifiable in the video. He asked the bill sponsor to address this concern.

[1:38:31 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS replied that video surveillance refers to the interior of the device for the purpose of monitoring the child. He explained that SB 9 does not propose instituting video surveillance of the parent dropping off the child.

[1:38:56 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked how, if someone uses a safe-surrender device for an infant, the state can be assured that the person surrendering the child has the legal right to do so and has the informed consent of the other biological parent.

SENATOR MYERS replied that if the person dropping off is not the custodial parent, that is kidnapping. He figured that, if a kidnapping occurred, the party responsible for the child would have already made a missing child report. He explained that a kidnapping report would top law enforcement's priority list.

[1:40:10 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked how the assumption is verified that every child surrendered at a safe-surrender device is being relinquished with proper consent. She asked how the individuals retrieving the infant from the device would know that the person surrendering the child had the legal right to do so. She noted the assertion that an improper surrender could constitute kidnapping, but questioned how law enforcement would know to investigate if no report had been filed. She said that based on prior testimony, there are no cameras outside the device and no ability to capture identifying information. She said this creates an assumption, or presumption, that the infant was safely surrendered with the consent of both biological parents, and she asked how that consent can be confirmed.

[1:40:58 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS deferred to the Office of Children's Services (OCS) to respond.

[1:41:07 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN directed the question to Ms. Guay of OCS.

1:41:20 PM

KIM GUAY, Division Director, Office of Children's Services, Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS), Anchorage, Alaska, replied that OCS often encounters children whose caretakers are no longer willing to provide care, and in some cases the agency receives children without knowing where the parents are. She said OCS makes efforts to locate parents in those situations. She stated that if an infant were surrendered in a device, OCS would still be obligated to identify and notify the parents and family members if their identities were known. She noted that when someone other than a parent surrenders a child, parents typically return quickly upon realizing the child is no longer in their care. She said the process would be the same for any child or infant: OCS would take the child into care and identify an appropriate placement. She stated that in past safe-surrender situations, OCS has always been able to determine who the parents are. She said this allows the agency to notify the family and determine what occurred, rather than treating the situation as a kidnapping.

1:42:50 PM

CHAIR CLAMAN sought confirmation that if a grandparent delivered a child to a safe-surrender location at the direction of the parent, that action would constitute permission to surrender the child and would not be considered a kidnapping.

SENATOR MYERS affirmed that would not fall under the status of kidnapping because the parent gave permission. He said it was the parent's intention, so he expressed his belief that would not be a problem.

1:43:33 PM

SENATOR TOBIN noted that in the chair's scenario, the other parent did not give consent.

SENATOR TOBIN asked how OCS finds who the parent of a surrendered child is, and in a case where no information is provided, what the process is to determine a parent's identity. She said a child placed in a safe-surrender device is essentially abandoned, without identifying information, and no way to know from where they came or who they are.

MS. GUAY replied that OCS typically learns the identity of a surrendered infant through community members, or at times a parent will contact OCS to report that they surrendered the child.

[1:44:27 PM](#)

At ease.

[1:44:51 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reconvened the meeting.

[1:45:02 PM](#)

MS. GUAY continued her answer, stating that OCS generally finds out who the parent is through community providers or through direct contact with the parent. She said OCS typically identifies the mother first, and then OCS seeks information about the father or the tribe if the child is Alaska Native.

[1:45:33 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN said SB 9 indicates that a safe-surrender box is intended to ensure the anonymity of the biological parent who surrenders an infant. She sought confirmation that according to OCS testimony, anonymity is not guaranteed because OCS has an obligation to identify the parents.

MS GUAY replied, yes that is correct. She expressed her belief, however, that the box would still provide some anonymity. She stated that most children are surrendered directly to a person, and although not always, OCS usually learns who the parent is through community providers. She said a safe-surrender box could provide more anonymity and reduce the perception of shame some parents feel when they are overwhelmed and not in a good place to parent a newborn.

[1:46:36 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN requested data and research supporting the assertion that parents may feel shame or have related concerns, so the committee can evaluate that information.

MS. GUAY replied that she did not have data available at the moment and was speaking from her twenty-five years of experience in child welfare, during which she has seen parents who want to do right by their babies but who may be struggling with substance use, mental health issues, domestic violence, or lifestyle challenges.

[1:47:19 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked whether state law specifies an age limit for an infant to qualify for safe surrender.

SENATOR MYERS replied that Alaska law specifies 21 days.

SENATOR KIEHL said that when an infant is surrendered directly to a peace officer, firefighter, or first responder, the age of the child is presumably one of the questions on their intake checklist. He asked what procedure applies when a 23-day-old or a four-week-old infant is placed in a safe-surrender box.

SENATOR MYERS said OCS has created a form that is distributed to peace officers and firefighters. If the parents are willing, they would complete the form. It would go in the box with the baby. He deferred to OCS for further detail.

MS. GUAY said OCS would still take the child into custody and attempt to locate a relative or family friend for placement. If that is not possible, the child would be placed with a foster family. She said the infant would enter the child-in-need-of-aid process and that OCS would seek to expedite permanency so the child would not remain in foster care for an extended period.

[1:49:30 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL sought confirmation that the difference is that a parent of a four-week-old child who abandons the infant in the box is subject to prosecution for abandonment, whereas the parent of a twenty-one-day-old child would not.

MS. GUAY replied yes, that is correct.

SENATOR KIEHL asked about the size of the safe-surrender box and who would construct it.

SENATOR MYERS replied that he was aware of at least three companies that manufacture the devices. He said the box is generally designed to fit an infant-sized bassinet similar to those used in hospitals. He stated that it is relatively small but built to accommodate a bassinet and a couple of other pieces of equipment.

[1:50:51 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked whether the safe-surrender box is built to a specific set of standards to ensure it is not too small or otherwise poses a risk to an infant.

SENATOR MYERS replied that the boxes have been in use for some time and were first authorized in Indiana in 2016. He said they have undergone real-life testing. He deferred to OCS for additional details about the safe-surrender box.

[1:51:33 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN directed the question to Ms. Guay.

MS. GUAY replied that she has not personally seen a box, but believes they are designed for infants who are not yet capable of rolling over or moving around too much. She said she does not have enough information to answer the question in full and deferred to the bill sponsor's staff for more details about the device.

[1:52:05 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN directed the question to Ms. Woldstad, the bill sponsor's staff.

[1:52:10 PM](#)

MS. WOLDSTAD replied that she has a copy of the patent. It has been used across the U.S. in multiple states. She said the packet of materials contains examples of other states where these baby boxes are in use. She stated that age limits vary among states and believes one state allows surrender up to approximately two months of age. She explained that the bassinet used in the device is similar to the standard size found in medical facilities. At a facility using the box, a parent would place the infant inside the compartment where the bassinet is located. She said box designs differ and some models do not contain a bassinet but instead use a foam-insulated pad that allows an infant a small amount of mobility. She emphasized that the child is not kept in the box for an extended period. She cited a recent case in Tennessee in which emergency personnel retrieved a surrendered infant within two minutes. She said safety of the child is the priority, which is why SB 9 requires safety features such as climate control, monitoring, and an alarm system.

[1:53:53 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced invited testimony on SB 9 and invited State Senator Mike McKay of Maryland to identify himself for the record and proceed with his testimony.

[1:54:22 PM](#)

MIKE MCKAY, State Senator, District 1, State of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland, gave invited testimony on SB 9. He stated that Maryland has had safe-haven laws for a couple of years. The original law allowed a responsible adult to surrender an unharmed newborn up to ten-days-old. He said the legislature recently expanded that age limit to sixty days and formally enacted the safe-haven program. He said the safe-haven boxes are

monitored twenty-four hours a day and are equipped with an alert system that activates automatically when the box is opened. He explained that the alert notifies the 911 system and immediately dispatches emergency medical services. If the box is located at a hospital or a twenty-four-hour public safety facility staffed by firefighters or emergency medical personnel, those responders are notified to retrieve the infant within minutes. He stated that the boxes are climate controlled to ensure infants are not exposed to unsafe temperatures. He said one point of interest is that the Maryland General Assembly is known to pass bills based on compassion, not necessarily bills that are politically motivated, and this was the case for the safe-haven policy. He said the safe-haven legislation passed unanimously, one hundred thirty-five to zero in the House and forty-five to zero in the Senate. He said that since 2007 Maryland had seven cases in which infants were not safely surrendered but instead were abandoned in unsafe locations and did not survive.

[1:58:17 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN thanked the state senator from Maryland for his testimony.

[1:59:04 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL expressed concern about the potential risks associated with an anonymous drop box, such as a child who is not the appropriate size or age, or an infant who is able to rollover from back to front and becomes caught in the bedding, noting that two minutes may be all the infant has. He asked who the bill sponsor envisions as responsible for establishing standards for response times and minimum facility requirements. He emphasized that the last outcome members want is a situation in which, in an effort to save lives, a device is created that results in the death of a child.

SENATOR MYERS replied that this was part of the reason the bill identified police stations, fire stations, and medical facilities as potential locations. He said the bill included these entities because they already understand safety considerations or, in the case of additional locations, would be approved by the commissioner through regulation. He said these are facilities that maintain oversight sufficient to ensure that a surrender location has adequate emergency medical support and acceptable response times. He noted that fire stations and police stations have personnel on duty, and medical facilities are typically open around the clock, such as hospitals and some clinics. He reiterated that SB 9 does not mandate any facility install a safe-surrender device. He said a facility may decline

if it determines it is not positioned to meet response-time expectations. He noted that a community with slower response times may not view itself as an appropriate location. He said the bill attempts to strike a balance and expressed hope that medical professionals would be aware of response-time limitations if a facility is not open twenty-four hours a day.

[2:02:28 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN referred to page 4, lines 13-15. She asked whether this subsection sufficiently satisfies the requirements under the Indian Child Welfare Act. She further asked how DFCS would determine whether an abandoned infant is a tribal member and, if so, to which tribe the child belongs.

MS. GUAY replied that there is not a specific test to determine which tribe an infant belongs to or whether the child is Alaska Native. She said that based on past infant surrenders, OCS is able to find a parent or family member of the child. She explained that OCS has policies that outline how to determine a child's tribal affiliation and follows the same process for safe-surrendered infants as it does for other children who enter OCS custody. She provided the policy number OCS uses to identify an infant's tribe.

[2:04:11 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked whether that process satisfies the requirements under the Indian Child Welfare Act. She asked whether the department's current procedures fully meet those requirements, or whether complications could arise later due to a surrender in which there is no ability to know who surrendered the child.

MS. GUAY replied that she did not know of a situation in which OCS was unable to find the parents of a surrendered child. She said that sometimes it takes a couple of days, but OCS typically learns who the child belongs to. She stated that OCS at times struggles to identify the father and may need to conduct paternity testing. She noted that in some cases the mother does not know who the father is, resulting in an unknown father. She said those situations would be the same whether the child was safely surrendered or not, since OCS would still attempt to gather information about the parents and then identify relatives and tribes. She said she was not sure if this fully answered the question, but that it was likely the closest explanation she could provide.

[2:05:35 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN said the United Nations opposes these types of boxes because they can perpetuate the perception that children who are surrendered are fatherless, family-less, or without identity, which she said is not the case. She stated that when a child is surrendered, the child has an identity and a right to that identity, which is what the UN articulates. She said every child has a right to know who they are and where they are from. She expressed understanding of the desire to keep an infant alive, noting that a child cannot know who they are if they are not alive. She said, however, that there are many layers to this issue, and she has a lot of discomfort with this particular approach.

[2:06:30 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN said the packet of materials identifies that nine infants have been surrendered since the safe-surrender law was enacted. He asked whether, of those nine infants, the department was unable to identify both parents.

SENATOR MYERS deferred to Ms. Guay.

CHAIR CLAMAN directed the question to Ms. Guay.

MS. GUAY replied that she does not recall, stating that safe surrenders are infrequent, and she does not have all that information on those nine infants. She said, anecdotally, for many of them, OCS was able to identify the mother and father. Some of the infants returned back to the parents after OCS assisted.

CHAIR CLAMAN sought confirmation that she was referring to the infant, that OCS returned infants back to the parents.

MS. GUAY answered in the affirmative. She stated that some infants were returned after OCS put services in place, while others were adopted by family, friends, or through the foster care system.

[2:07:46 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked whether, in her experience, she recalled any cases in which the department was unable to identify both parents. He asked whether, even in situations where a parent gave a child up for adoption and did not wish to be involved in parenting, there had ever been an occasion when the department could not identify both parents.

MS. GUAY replied that she only has anecdotal stories but does not have hard data. There are times when OCS is not able to identify fathers. She recalled horrific situations in which teenagers had infants without their parents' knowledge, and the infants died because the teenagers did not know what to do. These situations are infrequent but have occurred in Alaska. She stated that she does not have hard data on how many safe surrenders involve an unidentified father. She said that as far as mothers, she is fairly confident that in almost every case a mother has been identified.

[2:09:24 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS requested information on how many infants passed away from being abandoned and exposed.

MS. GUAY replied that she does not have hard numbers, but to the best of her recollection, two infants in the last five years. She said that is her best estimate.

[2:10:05 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS replied that his office was aware of three cases since 2013 in which an infant was abandoned and found outdoors. In two of those cases, both in Anchorage, the infants passed away before they were found. He said the third case occurred in Fairbanks in 2022, and the infant was found alive, which he considered remarkable because it was New Year's Eve, the temperature was about zero degrees, and the wind chill was ten below.

[2:10:49 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN brought up the nine safe-surrender cases, stating that OCS was not completely certain about those cases. He asked how it is that the bill sponsor seems to have a better certainty of them than OCS.

SENATOR MYERS replied that he received the information on the nine cases from the department and that he simply requested the numbers. He said his office had not asked whether OCS was able to identify both parents in those cases. He said he could reach out to the department about that.

CHAIR CLAMAN requested that he follow up with the department because he is specifically interested in those nine safe surrender cases. He said those appear to be part of the same structure, and so to the extent that OCS always identifies the parents, he believes that the notion of a true, anonymous, safe surrender, does not, in reality, happen.

CHAIR CLAMAN asked whether it is fairly common for fathers to remain unknown or is OCS fairly successful in finding their identities.

[2:12:32 PM](#)

MS. GUAY replied that OCS often conducts paternity tests to establish who the father is. She said that in a large majority of cases, OCS is able to identify the father. She noted, however, that there are some cases in which the father cannot be identified. She said she did not know the percentage but estimated that in approximately five to ten percent of cases, OCS is unable to identify a father for a child in the family.

[2:13:03 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN asked whether she could recall any cases where OCS was unable to identify the mother.

MS. GUAY replied that she could not recall any case.

[2:13:17 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced invited testimony on SB 9.

[2:14:06 PM](#)

At ease.

[2:14:44 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reconvened the meeting and moved down the agenda to public testimony.

[2:15:18 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN opened public testimony on SB 9.

[2:15:42 PM](#)

PAMELA SAMASH, representing self, Nenana, Alaska, testified in support of SB 9, stating that infant-saving devices exist in several states across the country and that Alaska should have them due to its extreme weather conditions. She said these life-saving boxes provide a very scared or traumatized mother a warm and safe place to surrender her child while respecting her privacy. She said the boxes also contain information explaining the mother's rights and encourage her to obtain medical care. she stated, as a result, the mother and child are respected, cared for, safe, and warm.

MS. SAMASH said SB 9 does not cost the state money and noted that organizations and churches are prepared to help pay for the

boxes. She stated that when an infant passes away due to the elements, many people suffer, but the infant suffers the most. She said the mother will carry the pain for the rest of her life, and first responders will never forget the moment they took the call or responded to the scene. She urged the committee to help prevent another tragedy by supporting SB 9 and encouraging others to do the same.

MS. SAMASH said that when a baby is privately surrendered in an infant-saving device and the person is unknown, an individual who wants to surrender a child secretly faces two choices: a frozen park bench or a warm baby box. She said the broader point is that the infant is likely in danger and whatever is happening at home is not safe. She said the infant needs a warm place where responders will arrive quickly. She stated that SB 9 does not change existing law but provides warmth instead of allowing an infant to succumb to the elements. She emphasized that saving the child's life is the highest priority and that OCS policies apply afterward. She said that if a child freezes to death first, then it is too late.

[2:18:26 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN closed public testimony on SB 9.

[2:18:33 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reopened invited testimony on SB 9.

[2:18:58 PM](#)

FRANCES ROBINSON, Dispatcher, Anchorage Fire Department, Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, provided the following invited testimony in support of SB 9:

I am a dispatcher for the Anchorage Fire Department. I want to thank you for hearing this bill today and thank you to Senator Myers for bringing this bill forward. I appreciate being able to go on record in my support for SB 9. In October 2013, I answered a 911 call for a baby that had been abandoned in a public park and found deceased by a gentleman walking his dog. He had heard the baby crying the night before but had been unable to locate the baby until the following morning. I want to believe that the mother wanted her baby to be found since she left the baby in a public park. SB 9 allows for the expansion of the current safe-haven law and would have provided an anonymous option for this mother to safely surrender her baby in an infant safety device. Despite the current safe-

haven law, Anchorage has had two abandoned infant deaths. The one I experienced in October 2013, and another in November 2024, just one block from our downtown fire station, where they could have safely surrendered the infant. There have been two abandoned infants found in cardboard boxes in Anchorage in 1986 and, in Fairbanks, in inclement weather in December of 2021. These illegal abandonments show us that mothers are seeking to keep their identity secret.

SB 9 does not change the current safe-haven law but allows for the safe surrender of an infant 21 days or less in an infant safety device without fear of being recognized, the stigma associated with the surrender, or the fear of prosecution due to lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of the safe-haven law. It is the only option of safe surrender that offers anonymity. Confidentiality is not anonymity.

The devices are for approved sites and are secure medical bassinets that are monitored and have a temperature-controlled environment to address the concern about blankets. The ones that I've seen are just a fitted sheet; again, they are temperature-controlled. Each box has a resource bag for the surrendering parent that can be catered to each city. They can include medical information, legal rights, and the National Human Trafficking Hotline. They are voluntary and do not require funding by the local, state, or federal government. The states that have these infant safety devices have had a reduction in illegal abandonment. Ultimately, our goal is to save the lives of infants. I believe we can achieve that with the passage of SB 9, expanding the current safety of the law that would allow for safe surrender in an infant safety device. This concludes my testimony, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

[2:21:38 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked what the criminal penalty is for a person who abandons a child who dies.

SENATOR MYERS replied that he does not recollect off the top of his head; however, there is an abandonment law in statute. He deferred to OCS.

[2:22:15 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN directed the criminal law question to OCS and asked her to cite the abandonment statute if she knows it.

MS. GUAY replied that she does not have that information readily available.

SENATOR MYERS said the statute is AS 11.81.500.

[2:22:55 PM](#)

At ease.

[2:23:54 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN reconvened the meeting. He said AS 11.81.500 is a statute that prohibits prosecution for safe surrender; it does not identify the criminal section. He asked the bill sponsor to work on collecting that information before the next hearing.

[2:24:37 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN held SB 9 in committee.

[2:24:56 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:24 p.m.