

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 23, 2025

2:01 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
Senator Forrest Dunbar  
Senator Robert Yundt

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 103

"An Act relating to certified nurse aide training; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 49

"An Act relating to workplace violence protective orders; relating to the crime of violating a protective order; relating to the powers of district judges and magistrates; amending Rules 4 and 65, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 9, Alaska Rules of Administration; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 103

SHORT TITLE: CNA TRAINING

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) GRAY-JACKSON

02/19/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/25	(S)	L&C, FIN
04/23/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 49

SHORT TITLE: WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) CLAMAN

01/22/25 (S) PREFILE RELEASED 1/17/25  
01/22/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/22/25 (S) STA, JUD  
03/13/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
03/13/25 (S) Heard & Held  
03/13/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
04/10/25 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
04/10/25 (S) Moved CSSB 49(STA) Out of Committee  
04/10/25 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
04/14/25 (S) STA RPT CS 1NR 1DP 3NR NEW TITLE  
04/14/25 (S) AM: KAWASAKI  
04/14/25 (S) DP: GRAY-JACKSON  
04/14/25 (S) NR: WIELECHOWSKI, BJORKMAN, YUNDT  
04/14/25 (S) JUD REFERRAL REMOVED  
04/14/25 (S) L&C REFERRAL ADDED AFTER JUD  
04/23/25 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

DEIRDRE GOINS, Staff  
Senator Elvie Gray-Jackson  
Alaska State Legislator  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the sectional analysis for SB 103.

MAUREEN TOWNSEND, Board Member  
Alaska Chapter  
Alzheimer's Association  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 103.

MICHELLE CASSANO, Member  
Alzheimer's Association  
Akron, Ohio

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 103.

KAY PAKRISTO, Outreach Director  
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 103.

BREANNA KAKARUK, Staff  
Senator Matt Claman  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 49 on behalf of the sponsor.

BREDNA STANFILL, Executive Director  
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence  
and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 49.

EILEEN ARNOLD, Executive Director  
Tundra Women's Coalition  
Bethel, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 49.

### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[2:01:38 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Dunbar, Yundt and Vice Chair Merrick.

### **SB 103-CNA TRAINING**

[2:02:31 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 103 "An Act relating to certified nurse aide training; and providing for an effective date."

[2:02:58 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON speaking as the sponsor presented SB 103 as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Currently in Alaska, Certified Nurse Aides, also referred to as CNA's, go through training programs that meet federal and state standards, but we've heard a growing recognition that these standards need to evolve to reflect the increasing complexities of patient care in Alaska. Our population is aging, and our CNAs are relied on to be well trained, not only in physical care, but also in emotional and cognitive support.

One area for improved training would be in dementia and Alzheimer care, client communication, and recognizing the psychosocial and emotional needs of patients experiencing these conditions. These symptoms

are being overlooked because we are not properly training our nurse aides to identify the symptoms sooner.

This bill before us today would strengthen training requirements to ensure that all certified nurse aides in our state are equipped with the necessary skills to provide high quality, compassionate care. Enhancing training standards is the least we can do for our aging population in Alaska.

Most, if not all of us, have experienced the terrors of Alzheimer's and dementia firsthand, and by modernizing training requirements, Senate Bill 103 will help build a more skilled workforce, which will in return improve patient outcomes, and ensure that Alaskans receive the highest level of care.

Many states across the country are implementing laws requiring dementia and Alzheimer's training for Certified Nurse Assistants, and SB103 would align Alaska with those high-quality standards of patient care.

[2:04:51 PM](#)

DEIRDRE GOINS, Staff, Senator Elvie Gray-Jackson, Alaska State Legislator, Juneau, Alaska, presented the sectional analysis for SB 103:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Sectional Analysis - Version A**

**Section 1- Adds a new subsection to AS 08.68.331.  
Certification of Nurse Aides**

(c) Regulations adopted under (a)(1) of this section establishing standards for a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) training program must require that the program

(1) be conducted in a manner ensuring clients receive safe and competent care; and

(2) train a certified nurse aide to

(A) form a relationship, communicate, and interact competently with a client;

(B) demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional, social, and mental health needs of a client through skillful and direct interactions;

(C) assist a client in reaching and maintaining independence;

(D) support and promote the rights of a client;

(E) demonstrate the skills of observing and monitoring a client during caregiving, as well as reporting those observations to enable the assessment of the health, physical condition, and well-being of a client;

(F) demonstrate knowledge of the abilities and care needs of a client;

(G) use a problem-solving approach when providing care;

(H) use techniques that ensure and preserve the respect, values, choices, and dignity of a client;

(I) demonstrate knowledge of client assessment and care planning best practices;

(J) use effective communication skills, including while communication with a client with psychosocial needs or Alzheimer's disease, dementia, a mental illness, an intellectual disability, or another cognitive disability or impairment;

(K) provide care to a client who is cognitively impaired or has a decline in cognitive function related to dementia; and

(L) demonstrate basic knowledge of Alzheimer's disease, dementia, dementia-related behaviors, and the activities of daily living; in this subparagraph,

"activities of daily living" means eating, dressing, grooming, bathing, and toileting.

**Section 2** - This Act takes effect January 1, 2026.

[2:06:30 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK announced invited testimony on SB 103.

[2:06:43 PM](#)

At ease.

[2:07:05 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK reconvened the meeting.

[2:07:19 PM](#)

MAUREEN TOWNSEND, Board Member, Alaska Chapter, Alzheimer's Association, Soldotna, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 103. She stated that even with her CNA training she felt unprepared for the challenges she experienced working in the dementia wing. She said better training could have helped her work with dementia patients. She stated that her experience in the dementia wing led her to switch careers because she felt like training would not prepare her to work as a CNA.

[2:08:47 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR asked Ms. Townsend where she received her CNA training.

[2:08:58 PM](#)

MS. TOWNSEND responded that she went to Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) located in Soldotna.

[2:09:06 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT asked what the CNA training requirements are and how are they affected by SB 103.

[2:09:27 PM](#)

MS. TOWNSEND replied she completed six months of CNA training.

[2:09:45 PM](#)

SENATOR YUNDT asked what changes she would make to CNA training.

[2:09:56 PM](#)

MS. TOWNSEND responded she would like to see more training on managing behavioral challenges because she felt unprepared to handle or de-escalate patients in distress.

[2:10:58 PM](#)

MICHELLE CASSANO, Member, Alzheimer's Association, Akron, Ohio, testified by invitation on SB 103 and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

I'm a retired nurse, and I support Senate Bill 103. I care deeply about quality dementia education and person-centered care training for CNAs because my husband, Larry, deserved better care.

He had Alzheimer's, and our family made the difficult decision to place him in a facility here in Anchorage. While it is a respected facility, and of higher quality than some others in Alaska, their staff were still very uneducated about dementia and person-centered care. Subsequently, Larry was frequently unnecessarily transported to Emergency Services, which averaged \$14,000 at least once a month, mostly very late or in the middle of the night. Larry did not need emergency care. He was exhibiting normal, non-emergency dementia behaviors and needed to simply be put back to bed. The lack of quality education of Alaska's CNAs is a burden to emergency rooms, a poor use of resources, and terribly upsetting to patients and families.

CNAs trained in dementia care can effectively manage challenging behaviors and ensure the safety and security of our loved ones. The educational content outlined in Senate Bill 103 would give families peace of mind, knowing that their family member is in capable hands, even in difficult situations. CNAs trained in dementia care can recognize early signs and symptoms of cognitive decline. This enables timely interventions and support services, potentially slowing the progression of dementia.

I was later able to get my husband into a facility with better trained and experienced staff, who understood common dementia behaviors, like lying on the floor when tired, they helped him avoid falls and gave him the personal care he needed. He spent two years at that new facility with educated staff without one hospital visit. CNAs are an important part of the healthcare team, and all of Alaska's CNA programs should cover person centered care, signs and symptoms

of dementia, and content on responding to challenging dementia-related behaviors. Further CNA's want to have the skills needed to care for their patients, resources are available...I even took a series of classes called Savy Care Giving and used online resources during our long journey.

[2:15:48 PM](#)

KAY PAPAKRISTO, Outreach Director, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 103 and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

I'm here today to speak in strong support of Senate Bill 103, which will help ensure that Certified Nurse Aides across Alaska receive essential dementia training.

The importance of dementia training is something many of us come to learn about through personal experience. Prior to working with our agency, one of our ARA team members had her parents in different dementia care homes. Her parents required about the same level of care and, in both settings, CNAs were reported to be kind, caring, and deeply committed to their work but the **difference in the quality of care was profound**. In one home, the father was treated with dignity, largely because his dementia care needs and challenges were anticipated. In the other home, lack of dementia understanding and training led to missed signs, misinterpreted behavior, and unnecessary stress – not just for the mother, but for other residents and staff too.

Speaking of staff, I was invited to observe a VA hospital where young CNAs and nurses on [the] dementia wing were feeling overwhelmed and unsafe. Many of the veterans were living with dementia alongside other complex conditions, like PTSD, which just make things even more complex. With proper dementia training, CNAs can anticipate needs, respond with confidence, and create a calmer, more supportive environment. Good training doesn't just help CNAs feel more prepared – it ensures they are safer, more capable in their roles, and recognized as essential members of the care

These stories are not isolated – they reflect a statewide need. SB 103 is a simple, cost-effective, and meaningful step in the right direction. It supports our CNA workforce by giving them what they need to succeed. It strengthens our healthcare system, supports those who provide direct care, and honors the people for whom they care.

[2:19:14 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK held SB 103 in committee.

[2:19:19 PM](#)

At ease.

**SB 49-WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTIVE ORDERS**

[CSSB 49(STA) was before the committee.]

[2:20:25 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK reconvened the meeting and SENATE BILL NO. 49 "An Act relating to workplace violence protective orders; relating to the crime of violating a protective order; relating to the powers of district judges and magistrates; amending Rules 4 and 65, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure, and Rule 9, Alaska Rules of Administration; and providing for an effective date."

[2:20:52 PM](#)

BREANNA KAKARUK, Staff, Senator Matt Claman, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 49 on behalf of the sponsor:

[Original punctuation provided.]

A few years ago, a member of the legal community contacted our office about a situation where a former employee made a credible threat that he intended to go into the employer's worksite and shoot as many people as he could. When the attorney representing the employer tried to obtain a restraining order, she realized that to protect the employer, she would need to file a civil lawsuit and ask for a temporary restraining order. That process takes several days to complete and often costs thousands of dollars. In contrast, people seeking a domestic violence protective order can usually get the court order within one day.

Senate Bill 49, modeled after Alaska's domestic violence protective order process, allows an employer to file a petition for a protective order against an individual under two circumstances: first, an individual has committed an act of violence against an employer or employee at the workplace and second, an individual made a threat of violence against the employer or employee that may be carried out at the workplace. A violation of the provisions of the protective order would be the crime of violating a protective order, which is a class A misdemeanor.

Senate Bill 49 will prohibit attorney fee awards against the petitioner in domestic violence restraining order proceedings, stalking and sexual assault protective orders, and ex parte protective orders.

We worked closely with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault on our legislation last year that is now Senate Bill 49 to ensure that this legislation provides employers with a more effective way to protect their workplace without reaching into the personal lives of their employees.

Eleven states have laws providing for the issuance of protective or restraining orders that are specific to workplace violence. Utah is the most recent addition to this list, which passed a workplace violence protective order law in 2023.

[2:23:05 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK announced invited testimony on SB 49.

[2:23:21 PM](#)

BREDNA STANFILL, Executive Director, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), Juneau, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 49. She stated ANDVSA represents 24 statewide member organizations, including 19 in rural Alaska and 16 off the road systems; these networks provide direct support to survivors. She highlighted that shelters often face safety threats along with the victims. She said SB 49 would allow organizations to seek protection when credible threats arise, without disclosing if someone is being sheltered. She shared an example from Emmonak Women's shelter, where staff were harassed from just outside the property line—legal action wasn't possible, but SB 49 would offer needed options.

[2:26:20 PM](#)

EILEEN ARNOLD, Executive Director, Tundra Women's Coalition (TWC), Bethel, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 49. She stated that workplaces like TWC, which shelter victims from abusers, are sometimes directly threatened. Tools like SB 49 are needed to protect both staff and residents. She said that in her 10 years as director, there have been a few unforgettable times when she put staff on high alert. She gave an example of a situation when TWC was threatened by an abuser of a victim staying at TWC. Many victims don't get protective orders for reasons such as distrust of law enforcement, fear it will not help, past orders not being served, and concern the protective order might reveal their location. She stated that programs like TWC need tools to set boundaries with people who use violence—to send a clear message that it's not acceptable and to protect those living and working in our women shelters.

[2:30:29 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR MERRICK held SB 49 in committee.

[2:30:53 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Vice Chair Merrick adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:30 p.m.