

H B

2 3 8

BILL CONTACT/ACTION

DATE	CONTACT/ACTION
4/28	WPKS ✓
	HEBOD
	ADMIN (MIKE ARCHONAKIS) (2700)
	REGINA HART (789-6705)
4/30	NOTIFIED OF MONY TODAY:
	ADMIN, REGINA HART & WPKS

NOTIFIED OF  
4/29 meeting

Alaska Women's Commission

CSHB 238 - Parental Leave

TESTIMONY

Kathy Marshall

Senate Judiciary Committee

April 29, 1986

The Alaska Women's Commission requested the Governor to introduce CSHB 238 because we are concerned about the plight of Alaska's children.

The Alaskan work place has changed dramatically over the past three decades. This change is the result of a number of social forces, the most important of which is the increasing feminization of the work force. The labor force participation of women in Alaska has increased 548 percent since 1950. Approximately 1/2 of the work force employed by the State of Alaska are women. 80 percent are of child-bearing age and it is estimated that 93 percent of these women will become pregnant sometime during their work career. Yet, little has been done to ensure that Alaska's children will receive the care necessary to reach their full emotional, physical, and psychological potential. According to Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, the first four months of life are critical in a child's development. Without the "irrational love", that only a parent or grand-parent can provide, children suffer irreparable harm.

CSHB 238 would increase the amount of leave without pay from 9 to 16 weeks. The Women's Commission believes that increasing leave without pay will strengthen families and provide a benefit to Alaska's children. Since this is leave without pay, there would be no cost to the state. While employees are absent, the state would have the funds to hire temporary employees for the position. Another important fact is that less than 1/2 percent of the time spent on leave without pay last year was taken for maternity purposes. Not many employees can afford to be without a pay check for any length of time. Most utilize accrued leave, which they are entitled to use whether for maternity purposes or some other purpose.

CSHB 238 would also change maternity to parental leave. Under current law only women can take maternity leave. However, there are often circumstances under which the husband may need to take the leave to care for the newborn. We believe this decision should be left to the parents. Here, again, experience indicates that not many men will choose to take parental leave unless it is absolutely

necessary. When Sweden changed its law to guarantee both men and women up to one year of paid leave following the birth of a child, only two percent of the men utilized the benefit in the first year.

The Commission believes this bill promotes the welfare of both Alaska's children and working parents.