

**SB**

**82**

<TARGET><BILL>SB 82</BILL><SUBJECT>SB  
82</SUBJECT><COMM>HJUD27</COMM></TARGET>



# Alaska State Legislature

Senate  
Health & Social  
Committee  
Chair  
•  
Senate  
Education Committee  
Vice-Chair



Legislative Council  
Vice-Chair  
•  
Senate  
Transportation  
Committee  
•  
Senate  
Labor & Commerce  
Committee

Senator [Bettye Davis@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Bettye_Davis@legis.state.ak.us)  
<http://www.aksenate.org/>

## Senator Bettye Davis

Date: March 23, 2011  
To: Representative Carl Gatto  
Chair, House Judiciary

From: Senator Bettye Davis *BD*

RE: **Request for Hearing - SB82 – Foster Care Licensing/State Custody “An Act relating to the procedures and jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Social Services for the care of children who are in state custody; relating to court jurisdiction and findings pertaining to children who are in state custody; and modifying the licensing requirements for foster care.”**



Representative Gatto,

You currently have in your possession SB82 – Foster Care Licensing/State Custody. SB82 mirrors HB33, a bill that was originally introduced by Representative Les Gara. I was asked to introduce legislation that mirrored HB33 in an effort to get this important bill moving and hopefully passed.

SB82 modifies various provisions in Title 47, making small but very significant changes that prioritize the needs of youth in foster care. This legislation addresses permanent planning for children in custody under “Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA);” modifies licensing procedures; outlines court requirements for release or termination of custody by the courts; outlines “compelling reason” standards for youth with APPLA permanency goals; and provides a provision to support placement of siblings into the same foster home.

This legislation is supported by the department and carries a zero fiscal note. I would greatly appreciate your consideration in scheduling this important bill for hearing as soon as possible. Please contact Celeste Hodge at 465-4906 if you have any questions.

Thank you.

# Alaska State Legislature

Senate  
Health & Social  
Committee  
Chair  
•  
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Legislative Council  
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Senator Bettye Davis at [legis.state.ak.us](mailto:legis.state.ak.us)  
<http://www.aksenate.org/>

## Senator Bettye Davis

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### SENATE BILL 82-*"Foster Care Licensing/State Custody"*

SB 82 modifies various provisions in Title 47, which prioritizes the needs of children in state custody. This legislation seeks to:

1. Achieve Permanency for Older Children in Foster Care)

Permanency for children in OCS custody is best achieved through reunification with the child's parent, or failing that option, through adoption or guardianship. If these three options are not available, another form of permanency is through APPLA ("Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement"). This bill seeks to make sure the APPLA option is not chosen unnecessarily by providing guidelines for both OCS and the court as to when APPLA should be used.

2. Presumption to Keep Siblings Together

Although OCS attempts to keep siblings together when they enter foster care, this bill creates a statutory presumption that siblings be placed in the same home when possible and when such a placement is in the siblings' best interests. When the children cannot be in the same home, this bill requires an OCS supervisor to document in the file the efforts made and the reason for the separation.

3. Early Release of Custody

When OCS files a motion to release a child from state custody before the custody order expires, this bill requires OCS and the court to take extra steps to ensure that the child and guardian ad litem have ample notice of the motion and that the release is in the child's best interests.

4. Foster Home Licensing Variance Process

If a potential foster home cannot meet the building codes required to be a licensed foster home, this bill will allow a variance to be granted if the home is consistent with construction of other homes in the community and is otherwise a safe environment for the child.

5. Streamlining Application Process for foster parents

This bill requires that paperwork required for foster parent licensing be streamlined as much as possible.

6. Housekeeping

The bill includes changes to the statute providing for retention of jurisdiction by a court to make it consistent with last year's legislation to extend departmental custody or supervision to age 21.

Session: (January - April)

State Capitol, Room #30, Juneau, AK 99801-1182 Phone: (907) 465-3822 · Fax: (907) 465-3756 · Toll Free: (800) 770-3822

Interim: (April - December)

716 West 4th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501-2133 · Phone: (907) 269-0144 · Fax: (907) 269-0148

## LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES  
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY  
STATE OF ALASKA

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Mail Stop 3101

State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

### MEMORANDUM

January 7, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Sectional Summary (Work Order No. 27-LS0203\D)

**TO:** Representative Les Gara  
Attn: Amanda Metivier

**FROM:** Jean M. Mischel  
Legislative Counsel

You have requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill.

As a preliminary matter, note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents. If you would like an interpretation of the bill as it may apply to a particular set of circumstances, please advise.

**Section 1.** Provides a short title for the bill.

**Section 2.** Amends the court findings required for establishing another planned permanent living arrangement for a child in state custody.

**Section 3.** Adds a presumption in favor of placement of a child in state custody with a sibling.

**Section 4.** Makes changes to the court jurisdiction provisions pertaining to the age of a child in state custody up to the person's 21st birthday, consistent with HB 126, passed by the 26th Legislature.

**Section 5.** Amends the evidentiary standard for placement of a child in state custody by the Department of Health and Social Services ("department") to take into account a foster care license waiver, variance, or exemption.

**Section 6.** Requires the department to continue a search for an adoptive parent or guardian except as provided in this section. Requires the department to enroll a child in state custody in a reading program in certain circumstances. Modifies the requirements and adopts a "compelling reason" standard for the department to recommend another planned permanent living arrangement for a child in state custody. Provides a "reasonable efforts" standard for placing children with siblings. Defines terms.

Representative Les Gara

January 7, 2011

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**Section 7.** Provides for a foster care license variance in certain circumstances and requires the department to simplify licensing paperwork.

JMM:ljw

11-010.ljw

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA cost # codes  
 2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Bill Version CSSSSB082(JUD)  
 Fiscal Note Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Publish Date \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier (file name) SB082CSSL(JUD)-DHSS-FLSW-03-19-12 Dept. Affected Health and Social Services  
 Title Foster Care Licensing/State Custody Appropriation Children's Services  
 Allocation Front Line Social Workers  
 Sponsor Sen. Davis  
 Requester House HSS Committee OMB Component Number 2305

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

	FY13 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY13 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY13</b>	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants, Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

FUND SOURCE		(Thousands of Dollars)					
1002	Federal Receipts						
1003	GF Match						
1004	GF						
1005	GF/Prgm (DGF)						
1037	GF/MH (UGF)						
1178	temp code (UGF)						
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

POSITIONS							
Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

CHANGE IN REVENUES							

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY12) operating costs \_\_\_\_\_ (separate supplemental appropriation required)  
 (discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY13) costs \_\_\_\_\_ (separate capital appropriation required)  
 (discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version (if initial version, please note as such)

Updates narrative to current version of the bill.

Prepared by Christy Lawton, Director  
 Division Office of Children's Services  
 Approved by Nancy Rolfzen, Assistant Commissioner  
DHSS Finance & Management Services

Phone 465-3191  
 Date/Time 3/19/12 12:00 PM  
 Date 3/19/2012

**FISCAL NOTE**

**STATE OF ALASKA  
2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**BILL NO. CSSSSB082(JUD)**

**Analysis**

CSSSSB 82 has zero fiscal impact on the Department of Health and Social Services. This bill addresses permanent planning for children in custody under "Another Planned, Permanent Living Arrangement "(APPLA); modifies licensing procedures; outlines court requirements for release or termination of custody by the courts; outlines "compelling reason" standards for youth with APPLA permanency goals; provides a provision to support placement of siblings into the same foster home; and adds a new provision requiring the streamlining of the foster parent application process and the approval of building code variance requests under specified circumstances. No additional costs are anticipated.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

*The Forum for America's Ideas*

**Richard Moore**  
*Senator*  
*Massachusetts Senate*  
*President, NCSL*

**Tim Rice**  
*Executive Director*  
*Illinois Legislative Information System*  
*Staff Chair, NCSL*

**William Pound**  
*Executive Director*

**To:** Amanda Metivier, Aide to Alaska Rep. Les Gara  
**From:** Amy Taylor, NCSL Intern and Kelly Crane, NCSL  
**Date:** November 17, 2010  
**Subject:** Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Following is information on state legislation around Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement as a permanency goal for children in foster care. Also, below is information on states that allow for the reinstatement of parental rights (a strategy states may use to reduce the use of APPLA as a permanency option).

➤ **State Legislation**

**New York:**

2005 N.Y. Laws, SB 5805, Chap. 3: Specifies the required contents of permanency hearing reports to the court. Describes acceptable permanency goals. Provides that the permanency goal of "another planned permanent living arrangement" must include a significant connection to an adult who is willing to be a permanency resource for the child.

2007 N.Y. Laws, SB 4551, Chap. 327: Clarifies that the plan of "another planned permanent living arrangement" must include documentation of the child's significant connection to an adult who is willing to be a permanency resource for the child.

New York FCA §§1089(c)(1)(v), 1089(d)(2)(i)(E) can be retrieved at:

**Alabama:**

Section 12-15-315 of the Alabama Code: States that if the juvenile court determines the permanent plan shall be placement in another planned permanent living arrangement, the Department of Human Resources must document to the juvenile court a compelling reason for determining that it would not be in the best interests of the child to return home, be placed for adoption with no identified resource or with the current foster parent, or be permanently placed with a relative, with a transfer of legal and physical custody to the relative or with a transfer of physical custody to the relative but with the Department of Human Resources retaining legal custody, be placed with a kinship guardian, or be placed in adult custodial care.

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E-mail [info@ncsl.org](mailto:info@ncsl.org)

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**Connecticut:**

Sec. 4. Section 46b-129 of the Connecticut Code: Orders that at a permanency hearing the court shall approve a permanency plan that is in the best interests of the child or youth and takes into consideration the child's or youth's need for permanency. Another Planned living arrangement can be ordered by the court, provided the Commissioner of Children and Families has documented a compelling reason why it would not be in the best interest of the child or youth for the permanency plan to include a different permanency goal. (Sec. 4. Section 46b-129 of the 2010 supplement to the general statutes)

**West Virginia:**

Section 49-6-5 of West Virginia Code: Orders that a child may be placed in another planned permanent living arrangement, but only in cases where the department has documented to the circuit court a compelling reason for determining that it would not be in the best interests of the child to follow one of the other permanency options. (Section 49-6-5. Disposition of neglected or abused children)

➤ Reinstatement of Parental Rights

Several states have also passed legislation that allows for the reinstatement of parental rights following termination of parental rights. The laws were developed in response to children who were aging out of the foster care system and re-establishing ties with parents and family members.

**Legislation for Reinstatement following Termination of Parental Rights**

State	Statute or Code	Who Can File Motion or Petition	Who Must Be Notified
Alaska	<u>Alaska Stat. § 47.10.089</u>	A person who has voluntarily relinquished the child.	
California	<u>Cal. Welfare and Institutions Code § 366.26</u>	Child for whom court has determined that adoption is no longer the permanent plan.	Social worker or probation officer, child's attorney, child's tribe, if applicable, former parent
Hawaii	<u>Act 135, 2010 Session Laws</u>	Child who is 14 or older; child's GAL; department	Former parent; child's GAL; department; child's resource family
Illinois	<u>705 Ill. Comp. Stat. 405/2-28 and 705 Ill. Comp. Stat. 405/2-34</u>	Dept of Child and Family Services on behalf of 13 years or older child	Parties to the Juvenile Court proceeding

DATE  
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Louisiana	<u>La. Child. Code Ann. art.</u> 1051	Child in foster care over the age of 15.	Parents, foster parents, CASA volunteer.
Nevada	<u>Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann.</u> § 128.160, 128.170	Child or legal custodian or guardian of child	Parents, child's legal custodian or guardian, person or entity that petitioned for TPR, child's attorney
New York	<u>N.Y. Fam. Ct. Act.</u> §§ 635-637	Attorney, Guardian of child age 14 or older	Court may issue summons to child, guardian and custodian, respondent in TPR proceeding.
Oklahoma	<u>Okla. Stat.</u> Ann. tit. 10 A. § 1-4-909	Child 15 or older	Department, child's attorney, child, former parent, foster parent or relative guardian, GAL, child's tribe
Washington	<u>Wash. Rev. Code Ann</u> §13.34.215	Child 12 or older, or younger if good cause is shown	Department, child's attorney, child, former parent, existing parent, current caregiver, child's tribe.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance!

*Amy Taylor*  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
Children and Families Program

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

**SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR**

350 Main Street, Room 412  
P.O. Box 110660  
JUNEAU, AK 99811-0660  
PHONE: (907) 465-5829  
FAX: (907) 465-2204

November 19, 2010

The Honorable Les Gara  
Alaska House of Representatives  
716 W. 4th Ave. Suite 310  
Anchorage AK. 99501-2133

Dear Representative Gara,

In light of the postponement of our scheduled meeting regarding the status of 2010 foster care reform efforts I wanted to update you on the issues. I look forward to meeting with you in the near future, and to working with you to further improve the lives of Alaska's children and youth in foster care.

In advance of a meeting, I want to touch on some of the points you raised and inform you of some of the progress that has been achieved since your letter of October 12.

Regarding the implementation of the provisions of HB 126, a small number of youth in the past have been released from foster care when continued care would have been to their benefit. Changes in our IL procedures, effective October 1, 2010 have made Regional Independent Living Specialists (RILS) responsible for developing transition plans for all youth age 17 and older. In light of HB 126, transition plans will be revised to include a thorough review of continued support and future requirements if the youth chooses to re-enter custody at a later date.

Recent federal changes to the Fostering Connections Act, allows states to pursue federal reimbursements for foster care for youth to age 21. However, the federal requirements indicate that should states choose to accept reimbursement for youth to age 21, the states must also open this option to youth to age 21 for the adoption and guardianship subsidy programs as well. HB 126 is currently funded with general fund and anticipated federal reimbursement amounts. OCS will implement HB 126 extended foster care using only general funds until it can be determined whether or not existing general fund will adequately support the program or extended adoption and guardianship subsidies will be pursued.

It has been, and continues to be the policy of OCS to utilize transportation funds to allow foster youth who move between placements to stay in their original school for the remainder of the school term. The additional \$80,000 for FY 11 will assist us in implementing this policy further.

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

350 Main Street, Room 412  
P.O. Box 110660  
JUNEAU, AK 99811-0660  
PHONE: (907) 465-5829  
FAX: (907) 465-2204

Since we received your letter an RFP, *Mentoring for Independent Living* was posted on November 4, 2010. Although the service area is statewide, the proposal evaluation committee will favor those proposing to serve two or more population centers. The deadline for proposals has been extended to December 10, 2010.

In the Fall, 2010 40 youth received funding to attend the University of Alaska, AVTEC and other colleges out of state. Through coordination with the University of Alaska, nine supplemental tuition waivers were issued to youth attending the University of Alaska. This was in addition to the 10 Presidential Tuition Waivers, for a grand total of 19 tuition waivers.

Additional waivers will be issued for the Spring, 2011 semester. Regional Independent Living Specialists contacted all youth who received a waiver and are providing case management services. The RILS are utilizing the additional funds to provide occupational and post secondary training opportunities to youth both in and out of custody. We currently have youth utilizing these funds at UAF Community & Technical College and in UAF's Nurse Aide Program. Meetings have taken place with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to create coordination of services to utilize funds for Career Exploration and to provide for Apprenticeship and On-the-Job training opportunities for foster care youth.

I understand your concern with the case load of the four RILS and share your belief that two additional staff will positively impact the outcomes of youth coming out of care. Posting of these jobs is anticipated to take place in the near future.

Regarding the housing assistance funds, to date a total seven youth have utilized these funds for a total of 28 months of housing assistance. We are continuing to make efforts to promote this assistance and are contacting all youth out of care, in each region of the state.

With respect to the formal *FosterWear* cards, they have been printed and sent out to all licensed providers. Cards for unlicensed providers have been sent to the field offices as well. We regularly print *FosterWear* information in the Alaska Center For Resource Families (ACRF) newsletter and Izabel Bower's is currently working on a "print mailer" that will be sent out after the holidays.

I am also looking forward to working with you on the new initiatives you outlined in your letter. Dee Pearson and Mike Sobosinski of UAA have discuss peer mentorship in general and will be meeting again to discuss this service delivery more in depth. Dee is exploring a pilot project for peer mentorships for youth attending the University Fall, 2011.

# STATE OF ALASKA

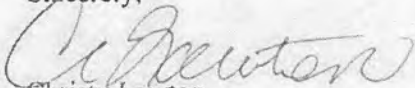
DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

**SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR**

350 Main Street, Room 412  
P.O. Box 110660  
JUNEAU, AK 99811-0660  
PHONE: (907) 465-5829  
FAX: (907) 465-2204

The above is a brief update on the status of some of the initiatives and programs that OCS is working on. I greatly look forward to exploring in more depth at our next meeting these subjects and any others you would like to talk about in our efforts to improve the lives and futures of Alaska's children and young people.

Sincerely,



Christy Lawton  
Acting Director

Cc: Tracy Spartz Campbell, Deputy Director  
Dec Pearson, Independent Living Coordinator



**Covenant  
House  
Alaska**

Crisis Center • Community Services Center • Transitional Living

March 30, 2011

Senator Bettye Davis  
State Capital Room 30  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Davis,

Thank you for introducing SB 82, a bill focused on improving Alaska's foster care program and protecting children to the best of our ability. Covenant House Alaska (CHA) serves Alaska's homeless and at-risk youth through our Crisis Center, Transitional Living Programs, Healthcare and Educational/Employment Support. CHA appreciates your commitment to keeping Alaska's youth as safe and healthy as possible.

SB 82 enacts the following changes to protect foster care youth:

- (1) SB 82 requires the department to seek permanency for all youth and, if positive permanency plans are unsuccessful, imposes substantive and procedural protections around planning for youth to be placed in another planned permanent living arrangement;
- (2) SB 82 simplifies the application process to become a foster home and allows the department to waive strict compliance with building code requirements for foster and relative placements if the placement is in the child's best interest and is otherwise preferable and safe; and
- (3) SB 82 requires the department to make all reasonable efforts to place siblings together.

All of the changes listed above evince strong policy underpinnings. Specific to CHA's population of homeless and runaway youth, the provisions regarding waiving strict building code compliance for relatives' homes and placing siblings together are particularly noteworthy. Research indicates that foster care youth who are placed with siblings in the home of a relative or family friend, usually in a familiar community, tend to run away less frequently.

These statutory changes may be viewed as measures targeted to prevent youth homelessness.

And, just as important, if a youth comes to Covenant House from the foster care system who qualifies for extended court supervision, it appears that this legislation would allow CHA to work with the department to continue to provide services for the youth.

Thank you for your efforts at protecting Alaska's vulnerable children. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions or provide further feedback on SB 82.

Sincerely,

Deirdre A. Cronin  
Executive Director

Advisory Board on Alcoholism  
and Drug Abuse



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD  
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
431 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 200  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
(907) 465-8920

February 23, 2011

Representative Les Gara  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 500  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for HB 33

Dear Representative Gara,

On behalf of the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the commitment that you and your co-sponsors have made to improving the lives of Alaskan children in foster care. HB 33 continues that process of system improvement, and we support the small but very significant changes that better prioritize the needs of foster children.

Being removed from your home, even when that home is not a safe or healthy environment, is traumatic. Being removed from your home and then separated from your brothers and sisters compounds the initial harm caused by abuse or neglect exponentially. While we know this from research and study, the Boards recognized fully the devastating effect this separation has on foster children when we heard from youth involved in the 2011 Youth Policy Summit. No child should have to beg, plead and fight for years to see a brother or sister, and yet we heard how this is the case for far too many youth who grow up in foster care.

HB 33 also prioritizes family connections as an important source of strength, support and resiliency for children and youth who experience abuse or neglect by making family placements easier in rural Alaska. Too often children in rural Alaska are placed with foster parents in urban communities rather than with relatives in villages, with the justification that the rural homes fail to meet foster care licensing standards. How can an aunt in a village where no one has running water ever hope to care for a niece or nephew who is in need, if there is no reasonableness standard in determining a safe physical environment for placement? HB 33 provides that element of reason to family placement decisions.

We are grateful for your continued advocacy for Alaska's children and are glad to be able to support HB 33.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart  
Executive Director

cc: Representative Bill Thomas  
Representative Bob Herron  
Representative Berta Gardner

January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

Representative Les Gara  
State of Alaska  
State Capitol, Room 500  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Gara:

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) – Alaska Chapter, a membership organization that represents over 500 social workers across the State of Alaska, supports The Alaska Foster Family Protection Act.

The mission of NASW is to enhance the effective functioning and well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its work and through its advocacy. The Alaska Foster Family Projection act upholds this mission by ensuring that Alaska's most vulnerable children can more easily transition into safe and permanent homes. The increase in the number of rural foster care placements is especially crucial so youth in rural Alaska can continue to live in their home communities. Research demonstrates that youth from rural communities, and specifically Alaska Native youth, have more promising futures when they are able to maintain connection with their communities and tribes.

Thank you for your consistent attention to child welfare issues in Alaska. We look forward to working with you on behalf of children and families in our state.

Sincerely,



Meg Loomis, MSW  
Executive Director



January 26, 2011

The Honorable Les Gara  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capital  
Juneau, AK. 99801-1181

RE: HB 33: Stability and Opportunity for Foster Youth

Dear Representative Gara,

The members of the Alaska Behavioral Health Association would like to inform you of their support for this legislation. Its intent is consistent with the goals and values of the members that provide services in our state and also provides opportunities to expand a system that is currently incapable of meeting the needs of youth.

Our providers have experienced tremendous difficulties in placing children and youth back in their home communities when a foster home is required due to the home situation of the biological parents. Frequently, homes may be available but they don't meet the more ridged codes and standards that govern construction in metropolitan areas. While no one would ever want a child placed in an unsafe environment, we are aware that minor code violations can be prohibitively expensive to repair and a foster home can be lost.

We hear reports from providers that it often takes up to six months or more from the time a family begins the application process and they are finally able to accept a child in their home. We appreciate the careful attention to ensure that a child is placed in a safe environment; however, redundancy and over-attention can become a barrier rather than a safe guard.

Thank you for your commitment to foster children and working to make their lives better.

Sincerely,

Donn Bennice, Ph.D.  
President



Alaska Baptist Family Services  
Anchorage, AK

Alaska Children's Services  
Anchorage, AK

Alaska Family Services  
Palmer, AK

Covenant House of Alaska  
Anchorage, AK

Family Centered Services of Alaska  
Fairbanks, AK

Juneau Youth Services  
Juneau, AK

Kenai Peninsula Community Care  
Center  
Kenai, AK

Maniilaq Association  
Kotzebue, AK

Nome Children's Home  
Nome, AK

North Slope Borough Children's  
Services  
Barrow, AK

North Star Behavioral Health  
Anchorage & Palmer, AK

Presbyterian Hospitality House  
Fairbanks, AK

Providence Behavioral Health  
Systems  
Anchorage, AK

Residential Youth Care  
Ketchikan, AK

Searfc  
Sitka, AK

The Boys and Girls Home of Alaska  
Fairbanks, AK

The Salvation Army Booth Memorial  
Home  
Anchorage, AK

Youth Advocates of Sitka  
Sitka, AK

March 7, 2011

Senator Bettye Davis  
Alaska Senate  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: SB 82: Stability and Opportunity for Foster Youth

Dear Senator Davis,

Alaska Association of Homes for Children (AAHC) thanks you for introducing legislation to improve the service delivery of foster care. Several agencies within our association provide foster care and many of the youth we serve benefit from this critical service.

Unfortunately, we all have witnessed children on long waiting lists for a viable foster care placement for various reasons. The intent of SB 82 provides concrete solutions to streamline the process for foster parents, develop resources for children, and reinforce the goals related to permanency planning.

Placing children in rural areas poses additional challenges related to numerous licensing issues. It can be extremely difficult finding foster homes that meet state licensing requirements. Licensing variances for homes failing to meet specific codes when indicated would provide opportunities for families to open up their homes to provide care for foster children.

Foster care provides for a very cost effective way of helping children. Allowing more families to commit to the many Alaskan children waiting for a quality home creates a win win opportunity for all. AAHC truly appreciates your continued efforts to assist with the foster care system in Alaska.

The provisions within your bill would provide a wise investment in the health and wellbeing of Alaska's children.

Thank you,

Brad Ohs  
AAHC President

cc: Representative Les Gara





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[www.denalifs.org](http://www.denalifs.org)



February 8, 2011

Representative Lcs Gara  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Gara:

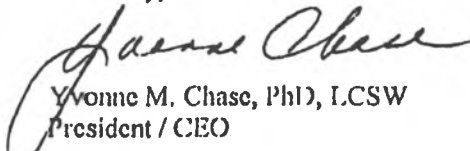
I am writing in support of HB33, the legislation you have proposed relating to foster care in Alaska. Denali Family Services (DFS) is a community mental health agency that provides therapeutic foster care to many children in the custody of the State / Office of Children's Services. DFS is also a child placement agency and in that role, processes foster home applications and licenses foster home in cooperation with OCS (i.e., the license is still a State foster care license). As an agency licensing foster homes, we support using the variance for homes in rural communities as long as the home is a safe environment and there are adequate ways to exit the home in case of a fire.

Denali Family Services serves many adolescents who are moving from care to independence and I am especially pleased to see the language changes that will make extending foster care to age 21 easily accessible for youth who want to take advantage of that opportunity. For youth who do not have a support system in place, those additional three years can make a huge difference in their maturity and readiness to survive on their own.

With regard to the application process for foster parents, DFS has significantly reduced our paperwork requirements in the last two years. In addition, effective this fiscal year, DFS will be utilizing a new foster parent training curricula (Presley Ridge). This curricula offers foster care providers in-depth, specialized training and OCS has agreed that DFS' foster parents who complete the Presley Ridge training will not have to take the OCS CORE training. This change will provide foster parents with more specialized training while maintaining the total hours at a number (per year) that is manageable.

On behalf of Denali Family Services, I am writing in support of HB33. Should you need additional information, please feel free to contact me at 907-222-2322.

Sincerely,

  
Yvonne M. Chase, PhD, I.CSW  
President / CEO

## Melanie Lesh

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**From:** Laughlin, Wilda J (HSS) <wilda.laughlin@alaska.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 03, 2012 12:42 PM  
**To:** Thomas Obermeyer; Melanie Lesh  
**Cc:** Spartz Campbell, Tracy A (HSS); Harris, Naomi E (HSS); Lawton, Christy (HSS)  
**Subject:** RE: SB 82 // foster care licensing

Correction: Christy will be available for questions. She does not plan to have written testimony. Thanks.  
w.

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**From:** Laughlin, Wilda J (HSS)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 03, 2012 12:11 PM  
**To:** Obermeyer, Thomas S (LAA); Lesh, Melanie G (LAA)  
**Cc:** Spartz Campbell, Tracy A (HSS); Harris, Naomi E (HSS); Lawton, Christy (HSS)  
**Subject:** SB 82 // foster care licensing

Please be advised that Christy Lawton, Director of the Office of Children's Services, will be testifying in Juneau on SB 82, foster care licensing, at the House Judiciary Committee hearing Wednesday, April 4 at 1 pm.