

SB

180

<TARGET><BILL>SB 180</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
180</SUBJECT><COMM>HJUD29</COMM></TARGET>

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

716 W 4th Avenue
Anchorage AK 99501-2133
907-269-0181



State Capitol
Juneau AK 99801-1182
907-465-4843
800-892-4843

North to the Future

Senator Cathy Giessel
Senate District N

Sponsor Statement CSSB 180 (JUD) version I

“Parent-Guardian/Child: Temporary Power of Attorney”

Senate Bill 180 seeks to establish an alternative to placing a child into the foster care system. It allows parents to execute a power of attorney over their minor child **for no more than one year** to another person in order to prevent the child from needing to enter the foster care system.

It allows parents or guardians, who are struggling, to seek help with unemployment, homelessness, addiction, etc. without the concern of losing their child(ren) or being held liable for abandonment, abuse or neglect of the child while they work through these challenges. This bill allows a parent or guardian to execute a power of attorney for no more than one year for their child to be cared for by another person. There are provisions in this bill that allow for military parents or guardians, as well as incarcerated parents to execute a power of attorney for their children. The parent or guardian maintains all their parental rights with the power of attorney.

This bill also creates an exemption for nonprofit organizations that operate programs to assist parents in finding temporary care for a child to be exempt from licensing and other requirements with the Office of Children’s Services when operating the program.

I urge you to support this bill that will help keep families together, keep children safe and help prevent abuse and neglect.

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Sectional Analysis

version I

SB 180 "Parent-Guardian/Child: Temporary Power of Attorney"

Section 1: Amends AS 13.26.020 (Delegation of powers by parent or guardian)

This section removes the delegation of powers over minors from this section. This section now only applies to the delegation of powers over an incapacitate person by a parent or guardian.

Section 2: Adds a new section under AS 13.26

This creates a new section (AS 13.26.023 Delegation of powers over minor child) for the delegation of powers over minors. Gives parents or guardians the authority to execute a power of attorney to delegate to another person one or more powers regarding the care or custody of the minor child. With the exception of the marriage or adoption of the child, performance of an abortion or the termination of parental rights to the minor child. Parent or guardians have the right to revoke the power of attorney at any time. The power of attorney lasts for no more than one year, however a new power of attorney can be executed at the end of the one year period. Parents or guardians in the military may execute a power of attorney for greater than one year if the parent is on active duty, the power of attorney is then equal to the length of the active duty plus 30 days. No compensation will be given for the duration of the power of attorney. The form for a parent or guardian appointing an attorney-in-fact for their child is provided in this section. Designation of a power of attorney does not terminate parental rights or obligations of the parent or guardian to the minor child, however it does not constitute abandonment, abuse or neglect, unless the parent fails to retake custody after the power of attorney expires and fails to execute a new one. Under a power of attorney a child is not considered in foster care and the attorney in fact is not considered to be providing foster care under AS 47.32. Definitions are provided at the end of this section.

Chair Senate Resources Committee | Vice-Chair Health & Social Services | Vice-Chair Labor & Commerce

Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov

Section 3: Amends AS 25.23.060(c) (Execution of consent; consent as power of attorney)

This section amends AS 25.23.060(c) to insert references to the new section added in AS 13.26 which was created in Section 2 of this bill.

Section 4: Amends AS 25.23.060(c) as amended by sec. 1, ch. 93, SLA 2008.

This section amends AS 25.23.060(c) as amended by sec. 1, ch. 93, SLA 2008 to insert references to the new section added in AS 13.26 which was created in Section 2 of this bill.

Section 5: Amends AS 47.10.086(a) (Reasonable efforts)

This section allows the department to distribute information to the parent or guardian of a child in need of aid about community based family support services including the use of a power of attorney to select an individual to care for the child temporarily.

Section 6: Amends AS 47.32.020(a) (Requirement to obtain a license)

This section adds in a reference to the newly created subsection in section 6 of this bill.

Section 7: Adds a new subsection to AS 47.32.020 (Requirement to obtain a license)

This section adds a new subsection that exempts nonprofit organizations that operate a program to assist parents in finding temporary care for a child from the licensing and other requirements of this chapter when operating the program.

Section 8: Effective Date

This section ties the effective date of Section 4 of this bill to sec. 1, ch. 93, SLA 2008.

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Senate District N

Explanation of Changes Version W to I

SB 180 “Parent-Guardian/Child: Temporary Power of Attorney”

A concern was raised by the Office of Children’s Services about original language on page 5 lines 14-18 about the language being too broad. This language was removed.

New language was added on page 7 of the bill adding 2 new sections: one section creating an exemption for nonprofit organizations that operate a program to assist parents in finding temporary care for a child to be exempt from licensing and other requirements under the Office of Children’s Services while they operate the program.

Amendments were offered in the Senate Judiciary committee to address concerns of committee members:

The word “property” was removed from page 2, line 3 and from page 3, line 13. This was to address the concern that an individual holding a power of attorney over a minor child could gain access to that child’s Permanent Fund Dividend.

Page 2, line 9, subsection (b) was amended to clarify that either parent maintains their ability to revoke the delegation of powers regardless of which parent executed it.

Legislative Legal found a drafting error that needed correcting. There were missing references to the newly created AS 13.26.023 instead of the previous reference. The correction included creating a new section due to an existing delayed effective date clause with one of the missing references.

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2016 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 180
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SB180-DHSS-FLSW-2-20-16
Title: PARENT-GUARDIAN/CHILD:TEMP. POWER OF
ATTY
Sponsor: GIESSEL
Requester: Sen Giessel

Department: Department of Health and Social Services
Appropriation: Children's Services
Allocation: Front Line Social Workers
OMB Component Number: 2305

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2017 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2017 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
Total Operating	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

None								
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

Change in Revenues								
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2016) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2017) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 09/01/16

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Not applicable; initial version.

Prepared By: Christy Lawton, Director
Division: Office of Children's Services
Approved By: Sana Efir, Asst. Commissioner, Finance and Management Services
Agency: Health and Social Services

Phone: (907)465-3170
Date: 02/20/2016 12:20 PM
Date: 02/20/16

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB180

Analysis

Senate Bill 180 seeks to establish an alternative to placing a child into the foster care system.

For parents who may be struggling with unemployment, homelessness, addiction, etc., this legislation offers parents the option to execute a power of attorney over their minor child, for no more than one year at a time, to another person in order to prevent the child from needing to enter the foster care system.

The department does not foresee a fiscal impact from this proposed legislation.

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SECTIONS

Commentary

Alaskans can do much to protect our children, and that's more than a platitude

Donna Walker, Charity Carmody | February 3, 2016

Much attention is being paid to the state's fiscal challenges, as it should be. Although we as community members can play an active role in promoting solutions and communicating with our legislators, the decisions are largely out of our control.

There is, however, a major crisis happening in our state that we as individuals can change. I am speaking of our child welfare crisis.

There are currently more than 2,800 children in foster care and in the custody of the State of Alaska. There are more than 90 children who are legally free for adoption with no adoption plan in place. We do not know exactly what is causing the drastic increase in these numbers, but we do know that it is not simply the fault of the Office of Children's Services. This is a community problem and, just like our budget crisis, we did not get here overnight. It will take significant effort and sacrifice from all of us to change our future.

There is a new, exciting program that is designed to prevent child abuse, neglect and children having to go into foster care. It is called Safe Families for Children Alaska. It is preventative in nature and aspires to keep families together and children out of foster care by supporting families in crisis. Safe Families is a movement of the faith-based community that returns the community to the forefront of caring for the most vulnerable group of people in society, at-risk children and their struggling parents.

Safe Families for Children hosts vulnerable children and creates extended family-like supports for desperate families through a community of devoted volunteers motivated by compassion to keep children safe and ultimately together with their families. It expands the community safety net by providing parents in need -- on their own, or at the recommendation of a case worker -- a loving sanctuary where they can safely place their children in times of crisis. Host families, prompted solely by compassion and hospitality, are screened, trained and serve without compensation.

Beacon Hill is the local nonprofit that operates Safe Families for Children Alaska. They began hosting children on Jan. 1 of this year in Anchorage and the Valley, and have since hosted four children in safe families around the community -- resulting in these children not having to go into foster care. Alaska is the 37th state to operate Safe Families for Children. Since 2003, Safe Families for Children has hosted more than 22,000 children nationwide without one report of harm. It has reduced foster care placements by more than 50 percent in some areas.

Local churches and Beacon Hill operate Safe Families for Children Alaska with no funding from the federal or state government. There are many ways to be involved. You can volunteer to provide transportation for a child to see their parents, provide meals, buy groceries, host a child in your home or be support for someone who does. Gov. Bill Walker and Donna Walker are planning to attend Beacon Hill's benefit concert, "Tribute to Nat King Cole," at Williwaw, 601 F St. in Anchorage on Feb. 12 at 7 p.m. It is a big band extravaganza with food and dancing. Tickets can be purchased for \$25 at <http://williwawsocial.com/concertsandevents-1/>.



OPINION: Beacon Hill program is at work helping to keep Alaska's children safe while keeping families together - and we can all help.

Pixabay

It is often said that our children are our future. This is absolutely true, and if we don't begin to intervene and prevent child abuse before it starts, the burden to our Department of Corrections, Department of Health and Social Services and Department of Education will be more than we can bear. Changing our future happens one child and one family at a time. We can do this. We are compelled to care.

If you are interested in volunteering for Beacon Hill and Safe Families for Children Alaska, please call 907-222-0925 or visit www.beaconhillak.com.

If you are interested in learning more about foster care or adoption, contact Alaska Center for Resource Families at (907) 479-7307 or www.acrf.org.

Donna Walker is Alaska's first lady. She is an attorney and former Office of Children's Services caseworker, and honorary chair of Alaska Children's Trust.

Charity Carmody is president of Beacon Hill and an Anchorage business owner.

The views expressed here are the writer's own and are not necessarily endorsed by Alaska Dispatch News, which welcomes a broad range of viewpoints. To submit a piece for consideration, email commentary(at)alaskadispatch.com. Send submissions shorter than 200 words to letters@alaskadispatch.com or click here to submit via any web browser.

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Rising foster care numbers make it hard to help kids in need

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Crime & Justice

Dramatic spike in foster children overwhelming state agencies

Lisa Demer | February 13, 2016

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A surprising spike in the number of Alaska children in foster care appears rooted both in a heroin epidemic and a more aggressive response by a state agency to reports of endangered children, state officials say.

The rise, which escalated two years ago, is overwhelming offices beyond the agency most directly involved: the Alaska Office of Children's Services.

A state representative from Fairbanks on Friday proposed legislation to make it more difficult for the state to take children from their parents because of reported abuse or neglect. A national child welfare activist who pushes reforms to keep children at home says Alaska has long been an outlier, taking away higher percentages of children than almost any other state.

But others say the foster children are coming from families with deep troubles who need help. The heroin factor is bringing middle-class families into the child welfare system that typically stay out of the government's control, according to the head of the state Office of Public Advocacy.

The cases land in court and quickly grow beyond the family to include state-appointed lawyers for parents and advocates for children, state civil attorneys and judges, state caseworkers and tribal workers.

"The whole system is being overloaded," said Christy Lawton, director of OCS, Alaska's child protection agency.

In four years, the number of Alaska foster children has jumped 50 percent, from 1,860 in January 2012 to more than 2,800 at the start of this year, according to the agency's figures that Lawton presented to a state House budget subcommittee earlier this month. In just the last two years, the number has grown by 750 children.

It costs the state an average of \$19,000 a year per foster child, much of that for subsidies to foster parents to cover the costs of another child in the home, according to OCS. The figure doesn't reflect salaries for the agency's staff.

"The numbers are agonizing because the system was stressed when we had 1,700 children to deal with," said state Rep. Les Gara, a Democrat from Anchorage who grew up in foster care in New York.

Gara, who serves on the House Finance Committee and is on the budget panel that oversees OCS, helped secure an additional 26 OCS workers for the current budget year. This year, Gara said, he's just trying to prevent cuts.

Child protection agencies around the country struggle with the right strategy. If they take away children who could be left safely at home, families can be damaged without good cause. But too much emphasis on keeping families intact may lead to children being hurt or killed.

Gov. Bill Walker is asking the Legislature for \$151 million to run OCS for the coming budget year, which starts July 1. That's about \$1.5 million more than the current annual budget at a time of plunging Alaska oil revenues and expected cuts to many agencies.

Number of children in foster care 2012 - 2016



Source: Office of Children's Services
PAMELA DUNLAP-SHOHL / Alaska Dispatch News

OCS toughened its approach after an alarming rash of infant deaths as well as findings that children were being repeatedly abused or neglected despite reports to OCS, Lawton said. Some of the babies were sleeping in unsafe bedding or with a parent who had been drinking.

"We were alarmed that bad things were happening to kids," Lawton said.

Four years ago, the problem of repeat mistreatment was worsening, statistics showed. Almost 18 percent of children for whom OCS confirmed abuse or neglect in the 2013 budget year were repeat victims in the space of a year, she said. That's hundreds of children and was double the national benchmark of 9 percent.

Another problem was happening at the very start, Lawton said. Workers handling initial reports of abuse and neglect were finding that 60 percent or more didn't rise to the level of sending out an investigator. The staff screened out nearly two-thirds of the reports before anyone even put eyes on a child. In most other states, that's the portion of cases that were investigated, she said.

Advocates complained some children were facing severe neglect and serious abuse "and basically nothing was happening," said Richard Allen, director of the state's public advocacy agency.

In 2012, Lawton and her top managers traveled the state to work with field managers and supervisors on an examination of cases screened that were investigated further and those that were not. They wanted the workers taking the initial call to critically consider key factors such as behavior patterns and the age of the child.

OCS now is investigating more than half the reports of children in danger. Managers also are doing more to guide front-line workers in cases with infants and young children. In Anchorage, which has seen some of the biggest increases in foster care, OCS is testing an approach in which a manager oversees key decisions in cases involving children under age 5 when there have been at least five prior reports of abuse or neglect.

The percentage of children found to have been repeatedly abused or neglected dropped nearly 2 percentage points from 2014 to 2015.

Drugs ahead of children

All of that attention is sweeping more families into the system.

"These are worthy cases," said Allen, whose agency includes attorneys who represent parents and court-appointed guardians who advocate for a child's best interests. "It's not a matter of a child not wearing clean clothes."

Heroin has been increasingly showing up across most of Alaska, law enforcement officials say. Public health officials point to a disturbing rise in heroin deaths and overdoses.

Its destructiveness is ripping into families, Allen said. Attorneys, guardians and judges all have told him that heroin addiction is a big factor in many children's cases.

"You are seeing a demographic of folks that we didn't normally see before," Allen said. "We're seeing middle- and sometimes even upper-middle-class people who are hopelessly addicted to these opiates and they are neglecting their children."

OCS's electronic case management system tracks substance abuse but doesn't yet break out heroin or other drugs as distinct categories, so there's no hard data documenting heroin's contribution to the rise in foster children, Lawton said. But anecdotally, it's a factor, field workers say.

Parents gripped by the drug may not make sure there's food in the house, Allen said. They may not get their children to school.

They "are putting their drugs ahead of everything else, including the children," Allen said. "Just basic parenting is falling by the wayside because there is this terrible problem."

A model: Alabama

Caseloads at OCS are about double the recommended 12 to 15 per worker. But other agencies are reeling, too, and are expecting cuts, not additional staff.

"We're downstream," Allen said. "Every time OCS takes a child into custody, we activate two to five professionals. Every time."

Caseloads for the court-appointed guardians have grown 58 percent over the past year and now average 120 children, he said.

At the Alaska Public Defender Agency, which also represents parents whose children are in state custody, child protection caseloads statewide went up 43 percent in 2015 compared to the year before, said Quinlan Steiner, the state public defender.

"In Anchorage it went up 60 percent," he said.

Yet for the coming budget year, his agency is facing a cut of \$700,000 or more, which would mean the loss of 10 attorneys, he said.

Attorneys can help design a case plan that will help parents get back on the right track and regain their children. But with too many cases, they end up "triaging what we do," Steiner said.

More children are coming into foster care than leaving. Some are in the system for two years or more, Lawton said.

This year's budget request includes an extra \$9 million to subsidize more adoptions and permanent guardianships to get children out of foster care and into permanent homes, Lawton said. About half the money would come from state funds.

The proportion of Alaska children taken from parents for years has ranked at or near the top of all states, said Richard Wexler, executive director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, which pushes programs to keep families intact with intensive help if needed.

He pointed to the example of Alabama, which a quarter-century ago was the subject of a class action lawsuit for its failures in child protection. Its societal challenges run deep, just like in Alaska.

"Generations of poverty. All sorts of legacies of discrimination. And yet Alabama takes away children at a vastly lower level than Alaska," Wexler said.

Alabama's child safety record now is one of the best, according to independent monitors. Its rate of repeat abuse is about 1.5 percent, far below Alaska's 15.6 percent, a figure that Lawton cited as an improvement.

Detailed case plans tailored to individual families are making a difference there, Wexler said.

On Friday, state Rep. Tammie Wilson, R-North Pole, introduced a bill that aims to make it harder for the state to remove children, and to require more help be provided to reunify families.

Legislation sponsored by Gara, the Anchorage legislator, takes a different approach. His bill aims to speed up the journey through foster care, recruit more foster parents, and provide more help for foster children. It has cleared all House committees and is awaiting debate on the House floor.

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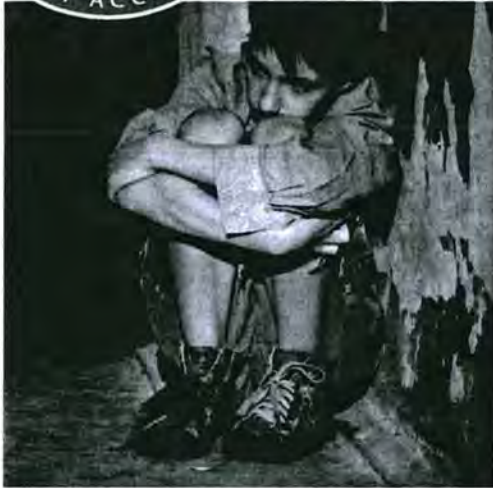
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Government-Run Foster Care Is Failing Kids

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THE TRAGEDY

400,000 children languish in foster care across the country. 70 percent of them are there because of neglect, not from sexual or physical abuse.

When crisis strikes at home, many of us turn to our family or church for support. But for too many parents, that safety net isn't there—and life can spiral out of control. Addiction, domestic abuse, incarceration, illness, unemployment, homelessness; it's during these crises that kids are at risk as their parents struggle.

Government bureaucracies aren't helping. They cannot accomplish what's right for kids and families. But there is a proven solution.

THE PROVEN SOLUTION

Since 2002, SAFE FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN and its thousands of volunteer families has offered support and hope for families in crisis. SAFE FAMILIES doesn't take kids from their parents. SAFE FAMILIES gives parents peace of mind that their children are protected and nurtured while they get clean, sober, working and back on their feet. The goal is to strengthen and preserve biological families without all the bureaucratic bullying, taxpayer spending or government dependence.

Through private charity, not government coercion, **SAFE FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN** meets three critical objectives:

- Protect:** A safe alternative to foster care custody that greatly reduces the number of kids entering the child welfare system.
- Prevent:** A safe, temporary home for a child while a parent in crisis gets help and support, preventing abuse and neglect without the threat of losing custody.
- Nurture:** An extended volunteer family to offer help, advice and support to parents who never had a social safety net to rely on.

THE SAFE FAMILIES WAY:

- Volunteer families are extensively screened and trained
- Volunteer families are never paid or asked for money
- Biological parents maintain full custody of their kids
- Parents and kids are safely reunited as quickly as possible

THE ROADBLOCK— GOVERNMENT

To change lives, Safe Families needs government out of the way so private volunteer families can help children and families in need without state intervention. In a recent poll, 71% of registered voters responded that they would be more likely to support legislators who work to bring Safe Families to their community.



-Denise Gonzales
Division of Child Protection, Illinois
Department of Children and Family Services

"Safe Families sounds too good to be true, but it really works."



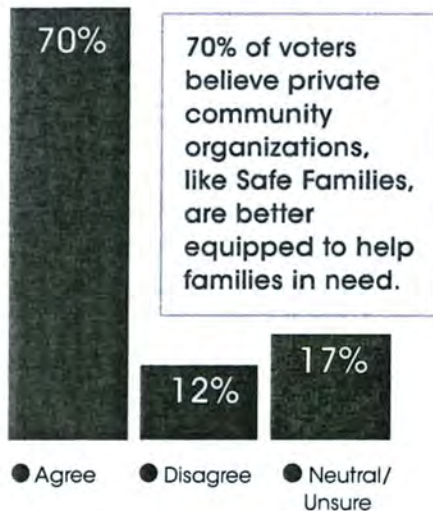
■ SAFE FAMILIES laws

👨👩👧 SAFE FAMILIES locations (most without legislative protection)

WHY SAFE FAMILIES STEPS IN

Homelessness	24%
Parental crisis, family conflict	16%
Medical crisis/hospitalization	15%
Lack of family support	11%
Respite	9%
Referral by child welfare agency	6%
Mental health issues	6%
Substance abuse	4%
Domestic Violence	3%
Job loss	3%
Prison	3%

VOTERS PREFER PRIVATE CHARITY OVER GOVERNMENT



SAFE FAMILIES:

More Kids Helped, More Families Succeed

	Private Charity—Safe Families	Old-Style Government Foster Care
Cost per child served	\$1,500 - mostly or entirely private funding	\$25,000+ taxpayer-funded
Average compensation	\$0 to volunteer family	\$6,000 to foster parents
Average time child spends in care away from parent(s)	29 days	702 days (23.4 months)
Portion of kids that return home	90%	51%

To bring SAFE FAMILIES to your state:

FGA Senior Fellow
Andrew Brown
andrew@thefga.org



ALASKA YOUTH & FAMILY NETWORK

The Alaska Chapter of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

We Are Your Shelter From The Storm

PO BOX: 233142, Anchorage, Alaska 99523-3142 Main Office: 740 Communications Ave, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Phone: 907-770-4979

Fax: 907-770-4997

Website: www.ayfn.org

Email: admin@ayfn.org

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 180 and House Bill 201 – Parent – Guardian/Child Temporary Power of Attorney.

I am the Executive Director of Alaska Youth and Family Network (AYFN). AYFN is a family run, peer-delivered, community-based behavioral health and social services provider whose mission is "To strengthen, preserve, and unify families through advocacy, peer-to-peer support, education, and connections to community-based services that promote social, emotional, behavioral/mental health, and substance abuse recovery."

AYFN is based in Anchorage and the Matsu Valley and we have been serving families from across Alaska since 2003. AYFN assists children, youth, and families who are at-risk and struggling with the challenges of mental illness, substance use, intellectual and developmental disabilities, homelessness, and the lack of material resources. The families we serve are involved with, and struggling in, Alaska's complex and challenging to navigate family serving systems. AYFN's parents and their children are usually involved with more than one service provider and more than one family serving system. And they are struggling to meet the challenges and requirements of those systems. We serve families involved in mental health and substance use services, juvenile justice, corrections, special education, and child welfare, etc.

We support Alaska's families by connecting them to the community and natural resources and teaching them the skills to help them recover from whatever challenges they may be facing. We provide education, support, and advocacy for families working toward becoming healthy and self-sufficient. Alaska Youth and Family Network receives funding and support from the Division of Behavioral Health, The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Matsu Health Foundation, The Alaska Children's Trust, and the National Institute of Mental Health. We use this funding to hire well-educated and skilled workers with professional backgrounds and lived experience in behavioral health, substance use, social work, special education, etc.

During FY15, our staff of 14 provided service and support to 742 Alaskan families, 400 of these families were involved with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). Referrals to our services came from approximately 80 sources from throughout Alaska. Many of the families that come to us with OCS involvement have that involvement for good reason. Many others have ended up there because no alternative for safe placement of their children while they work through the challenges facing them existed. Safe Families for Children Alaska changes that.

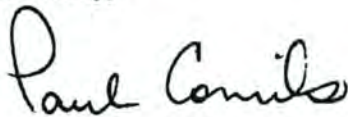
A peer-run, peer delivered service, to create a more effective and inclusive behavioral health treatment system for Alaska's children, youth & families.

Safe Families for Children Alaska (SFFCA) is an alternative to the child welfare system that will strengthen Alaska's fragile safety net for vulnerable and at-risk families. SFFCA will provide meaningful, concrete support, to Alaskan families who without such support would have to continue to live in situations that are unhealthy for their children and place their families at risk for legal intervention by OCS. Early intervention and support, meaningful connection to members of our faith-based community, and the opportunity to seek help without fear of losing custody, while providing children with a safe place to live in their home communities is good for families and good for Alaska. It is an opportunity to reduce potential trauma to Alaska's children and families by possibly preventing permanent separation (Only 45 of every 100 children currently in state custody will return home). It will reduce Alaska's fiscal burden and it will reduce the vast and the unmanageable workload of OCS.

By supporting SB180 and HB201, you will significantly improve the chances that such a valuable, mostly volunteer effort, that has had such an immense role in improving the lives of over 22,000 children across our country will take root in Alaska without the burden of unnecessary and costly government support and intervention.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate all that you do for Alaska, it's children, and it's families. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Paul Cornils, Executive Director

Alaska Youth and Family Network

Office: 907-770-4979

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A peer-run, peer delivered service, to create a more effective and inclusive behavioral health treatment system for Alaska's children, youth & families.



To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 180 and House Bill 201 - Parent-Guardian/Child Temporary Power of Attorney.

I am the President of Beacon Hill which is a foster care and adoption community resource center that operates in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley. We are the organization that implements the Safe Families for Children Alaska program. Safe Families for Children Alaska (SFFCA) hosts vulnerable children and creates extended family-like supports for desperate families through a community of devoted volunteers motivated by compassion to keep children safe and ultimately together with their families.

SFFCA is a movement of the faith based community that returns the community to the forefront of caring for the most vulnerable people group in society, at-risk children and their struggling parents. It expands the community safety net by providing parents in need – on their own, or at the recommendation of a case worker – a loving sanctuary where they can safely place their children in times of crisis. Host Families are background checked by the state background check unit, screened, trained and serve without compensation. Designed to positively impact and support at-risk families, SFFCA is a non-coercive alternative to the state child welfare system, allowing parents to work out their problems without having to worry about losing custody of their child. Beacon Hill, through SFFCA, facilitates the arrangement between the family in crisis and the hosting safe family. Parents place their children voluntarily and retain full legal custody of their children.

The families served through SFFCA have no current involvement with the Office of Children's Services (OCS). SFFCA is designed to prevent children from being abused and families from needing intervention from OCS.

Because of our role as the "arranger" of the placement, we have had to become a Child Placement Agency for the State of Alaska due to AS 47.32.900 even though our host families are not foster homes and the children placed are not in the custody of the state. According to this statute, "child placement agency" means an agency that arranges for placement of a child in a foster home, residential child care facility, or adoptive home; or for guardianship purposes. Unfortunately, the definition of "foster home" in the same statute means a place where the adult head of household provides 24-hour care on a continuing basis to one or more children who are apart from their parents.

Beacon Hill has been granted a temporary variance to operate SFFCA by OCS that we must renew each year. Our hope is that this bill will eliminate the need for our child placement agency license and accompanying variance. SFFCA's goal is to facilitate a safe and effective way for neighbors to help their neighbors in time of need without any threat of termination of rights or state regulation.

Phone 907-222-0925
Fax 855-277-2004
www.beaconhillak.com

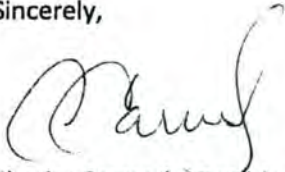
Physical 440 W 3rd Ave Anchorage, AK 99501
Mailing PO Box 241764 Anchorage, AK 99524

Safe Families for Children Alaska began hosting children on January 1, 2016 in Anchorage and the Valley. We have successfully hosted four children from three different families resulting in these children not having to go into foster care. Alaska is the 37th state to operate Safe Families for Children (SFFC). Since 2003, SFFC has hosted more than 22,000 children without one report of harm. It has reduced foster care placements by more than 50 percent in some areas of the country. SFFC successfully operates in 5 countries.

Local churches and Beacon Hill operate SFFCA with NO FUNDING from the federal or state government. The passing of these bills and un-interrupted operation of SFFCA will save the state money and provide much needed relief to our over-burdened foster care system.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate all you do for Alaska. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charity Carmody', written in a cursive style.

Charity Carmody, President

Beacon Hill

907-632-4862 cell

charity@beaconhillak.com

February 21, 2016

To whom it may concern:

My name is Brian Schaffer and I serve as the Outreach Pastor at ChangePoint church. I am active on numerous councils, coalitions, and committees as a way to foster the relational and functional unity in our city and state as we address some of most important issues facing the welfare of Alaska. One of the groups that I enjoy working with the most is the Fostering Hope Coalition that is comprised of executive level leaders from a variety of agencies, state offices, businesses, churches, and concerned parents. Beacon Hill and Safe Families for Children Alaska are strategic partners within this group and I am encouraged by their vision that is leveraging people resources to meet the needs of the children and families that find themselves in desperate situations.

I am compelled to write this letter because of my strong belief that children are a gift from God given to parents as a way to make this world a better place. My wife and I were blessed with the privilege and responsibility of raising three boys. I am grateful that we had a strong community of people around us to provide guidance, counsel, and support on the days we didn't know what to do. It took courage to admit our shortcomings and reach out for help. We are better parents and our adult children are well prepared to start their own families today because of the people who stepped up to help us in our time of need. We were fortunate to have a structure in place where we could seek out assistance without fear of our rights being terminated as parents. The preventative resources that were available to us as parents were a lifeline to us, so this is one of many reasons why I am writing in support of Senate Bill 180 and House Bill 201—Parent-Guardian/Child Temporary Power of Attorney.

I am a firm supporter of Beacon Hill as they operate Safe Families for Children Alaska without funding from either the state or federal government. This is wise stewardship and worth being recognized as a way for each person to have the opportunity to love their neighbors through acts of compassion and words of life. The passing of these bills and un-interrupted operation of Safe Families for Children Alaska will save the state money and provide much needed relief to our foster care system.

Thank you for your service to our great state! Feel free to contact me with any questions or comments you may have for me. I look forward to the opportunity.

Sincerely,



Brian Schaffer

brians@changepointalaska.com



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2/19/2016

Dear Alaska Legislator,

I am writing you to urge your support for Senate Bill 180 and House Bill 201 – Parent Guardian/Child temporary Power of Attorney. Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) is the lead statewide organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The child welfare system cannot prevent child abuse and neglect. The community has a collective responsibility to ensure that the safety and needs of children and families are met by an array of supports to safely reduce reliance on the child welfare system with an emphasis on prevention, culturally relevant services and customs and evidence-based safety practices. Safe Families for Children Alaska program is an excellent example of how communities are stepping forward to ensure children live in safe, stable and nurturing environments. SFFCA is an innovative program that is effective. We need our policies to reflect and support the efforts like SFFCA.

ACT strongly urges you to support SB180 & HB201. These changes would strengthen Alaska's engagement with communities and our shift to greater emphasis on early intervention. These bills are a positive step towards keeping our children safe and our families together..

Sincerely,

Trevor Storrs
Executive Director

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February 11, 2016

Senator Cathy Giessel
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Senator Giessel,

Thank you for the leadership and the great effort on behalf of all Alaskan families.

I serve as the Chairman for the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). This letter to you is a personal letter and is not written representing CDVSA. However, in my role as a council member and serving Alaska's people for over four decades as a pastor, I have been very involved with the issues facing our state regarding healthy families and the safety of children.

Statistics clearly indicate that Alaska has a crisis regarding the number of children being referred to the Office of Children's Services. I commend OCS for the very difficult responsibility of providing oversight of children being neglected and / or in harms way. It is also clear to me, in light of this reality, Alaska must have evidence-based programs to work alongside of OCS. Alaska is very fortunate to have the "Safe Families For Children" program, sponsored by Beacon Hill.

I appreciate your sponsorship of SB 180. I stand in full support of providing families in need with temporary assistance and caring intervention. Families should be able to pursue support without the fear of the termination of parental rights because they are addressing needful matters. If I can be of assistance to you in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be in Juneau the 23rd through the 29th. My cell number is 907-227-2737.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Irwin Sr.", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Richard Irwin Sr.