

Supporting Alaskans accessing the public process to educate policymakers about the realities of their experiences, challenges, and successes, and to make recommendations for solutions



Retired Judge Mike Jeffery from Utqiagvik/Barrow testifies before the House Finance Committee in support of community services for people with prenatal alcohol exposure involved in the criminal justice system.

State Budget Successes: Supports for Individuals, Families, Service Providers in Reentry, Prenatal Alcohol Exposure

Advocates from around the state sent emails, called in for public testimony, and met in person with legislators to advocate for issues that impact Alaskans with behavioral health and other challenges, including prenatal alcohol exposure, addiction, and reentry after incarceration. The following FY24 budget items passed the Legislature and were signed into law by Governor Dunleavy in June 2023:

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Adds +\$120,000 Mental Health Trust funds will support increased behavioral health support and counseling in schools.

Crisis Now Grants. Adds +\$100,000 (above FY23) to the Department of Health (DOH), after the Governor’s vetoes. Crisis stabilization services help divert people experiencing crisis away from jail to more appropriate community settings that address mental health and addiction needs.

Aging & Disability Resources Centers (ADRCs). Maintains \$300,000 Mental Health Trust funds to continue providing community support and resources for older Alaskans, people with disabilities, families, caregivers, and other community members.

Continued on page 2

CONTENTS

State Budget Successes.....	Pages 1-2
SB 119: State ID After Incarceration.....	Page 3
SB 57: Adult Care Home License.....	Page 4
HB 66: Substances, Good Time.....	Page 4
Advocacy at the Capitol.....	Page 5
AK Advocates – About Us, Services.....	Page 6

Continued from page 1

Public Guardians. Adds \$226,800 to increase the capacity for the Public Guardian Program to provide representation for individuals who are unable to care for themselves or their affairs.

Peer Support Certification. Adds \$100,000 for continued implementation of Alaska's Peer Support Certification Program in DOH, preparing peer support specialists for the workforce, and assisting and mentoring others with similar lived experience. The Legislature added the extra \$100,000 and the Governor did not veto it.

Reentry Housing. Adds \$250,000 to the Department of Corrections (DOC) for housing for individuals leaving incarceration. The Legislature added \$1 million for reentry housing, but the Governor vetoed \$750,000 of it.

Trauma Informed Treatment for Incarcerated Women. Adds \$150,000 to DOC for a pilot project at Hiland Mountain (HMCC) and Yukon Kuskokwim (YKCC) Correctional Centers to provide in-person and telehealth-based services for women impacted by past trauma.

Holistic Defense. Adds \$40,400 to the Public Defender Agency and Alaska Legal Services Corporation to continue supporting defendants with disabilities and assist with both their legal and unmet community needs.

Transition Age Foster Youth. Adds \$250,000 to ensure basic safety-net funds are available for youth leaving foster care and establish independence and pursue vocational goals.

Discharge Incentive Grants. Maintains \$100,000 for housing and support services in DOC for individuals with disabilities leaving incarceration, increasing the likelihood of self-sufficiency and success after release.

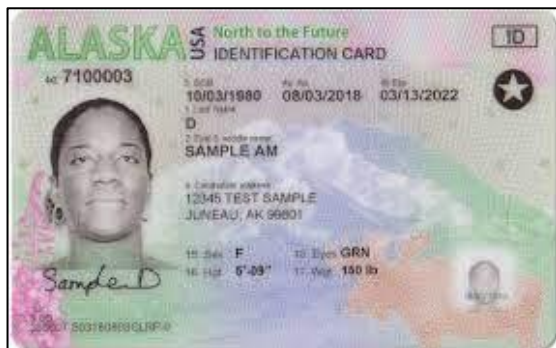
Public Defender Attorneys. Adds +\$1.9 million for caseload stabilization to allow the Public Defender Agency to keep pace with case appointments, which is experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties due to the high stress environment and the demands of the existing and ever-increasing workload.

Treatment and Supervision Costs for Therapeutic Courts. Adds +\$102,700 for increased treatment services in Kenai and Sitka, enhanced supervision through electronic monitoring, and treatment and family visitation support services for the Palmer Families with Infants and Toddlers Court. ‡



Top to Bottom: Prenatal alcohol prevention advocates Mike Jeffery and Gina Schumaker meet with Senator Scott Kawasaki; Teri Tibbett presents appreciation award from the Alaska Reentry Partnership to Anchorage Reentry Coalition coordinator Jonathan Pistotnik; Juneau Reentry Coalition coordinator Don Habeger and others meet with Senator Jesse Bjorkman; the Alaska Prenatal Alcohol Partnership sponsors an educational Lunch & Learn at the State Capitol.





SB 119: State Identification after incarceration passes, signed by the Governor

This bill, introduced by Senator Robert Myers and Representative Andrew Gray (companion bill HB 53), requires the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) to work with the Alaska Department of Administration Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to provide state ID cards for all eligible individuals leaving incarceration.

Proof of identity is critical for successful community reentry after incarceration. A returning citizen must show government-issued identification when accessing essential resources, such as employment, housing, addiction treatment, transportation, banking, and entry into public buildings for social security cards.

Without an ID, individuals can wait weeks or months while appropriate documentation, such as a birth certificate, arrives from another jurisdiction. These delays and subsequent inactivity are known to increase the likelihood of recidivism (return to criminal behavior).

SB 119 amends Alaska's state statutes to ensure that eligible individuals released from an Alaska prison, halfway house, or a juvenile justice facility have the appropriate documentation needed to obtain a valid state ID upon release.

By addressing the ID issue, individuals leaving incarceration are more likely to be successful in their communities with stable housing, employment, and treatment, and less likely to return to a criminal activities.

SB 119 was signed into law by Governor Dunleavy on August 7, 2023 in Fairbanks. ‡



Top to Bottom: State ID template for individuals leaving Alaska Department of Corrections custody; Governor Dunleavy shakes hands with advocate Marsha Oss, reentry advocate and coalition coordinator for the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition; Governor Dunleavy signs SB 119 surrounded by Department of Corrections Commissioner Jen Winkelman, Representative Andrew Gray, Senator Robert Myers, Representative Frank Tomaszewski, Senator Scott Kawasaki, Marsha Oss, and Representative Mike Prax.

SB 57: Establishing Adult Care Home License passes, signed by Governor

This bill, introduced by Governor Dunleavy, establishes a new residential care license type that allows individuals to operate an “adult host home care” residence. Licensees can receive payment under Medicaid for providing assisted living services to elderly adults, individuals aging out of foster care or behavioral health treatment, and the disability care system.

The bill authorizes the Department of Health (DOH) to pay for assisted living services under the state’s Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waiver program, adding to the array of supports available for seniors and adults with disabilities, including people with prenatal alcohol exposure/fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (PAE/FASD).

This license type will “be limited to a non-business site where the head of household lives and provides 24-hour care for no more than two individuals.” DOH can adopt regulations that allow for care of up to three individuals based on certain circumstances, according to the Sponsor Statement.

Access to home and community-based services allows people with disabilities to live normal lives in their communities utilizing supports, such as adult day services, day habilitation, respite, supported employment, transportation, environmental modifications, meals, specialized medical equipment, nursing oversight, intensive active treatment, private duty nursing, and more—all of which are less expensive than institutional care. The final menu of services available to people in adult care homes will be determined through regulation. ‡

HB 66: Related to Controlled Substances, Sentencing, Good Time, still on the table

This bill, introduced by Governor Dunleavy, would change sentencing laws for distributing

or manufacturing a controlled substance and a person dies as a direct result of ingesting that substance. The original version removed the option for “good time,” a provision in state law that allows incarcerated individuals who participate in rehabilitative programming and/or display ongoing productive and good behavior, to have reduced time.

While the intention of the bill is to increase consequences for controlled substances crimes resulting in death, the “good time” provision reached much farther and removed that option for other drug offenses, including some involving possession only.

Advocates were successful in educating legislators about the value of “good time” for reducing recidivism and saw the House of Representatives remove that provision from the bill before sending it to the Senate. The bill will likely be taken up again in the 2024 legislative session.

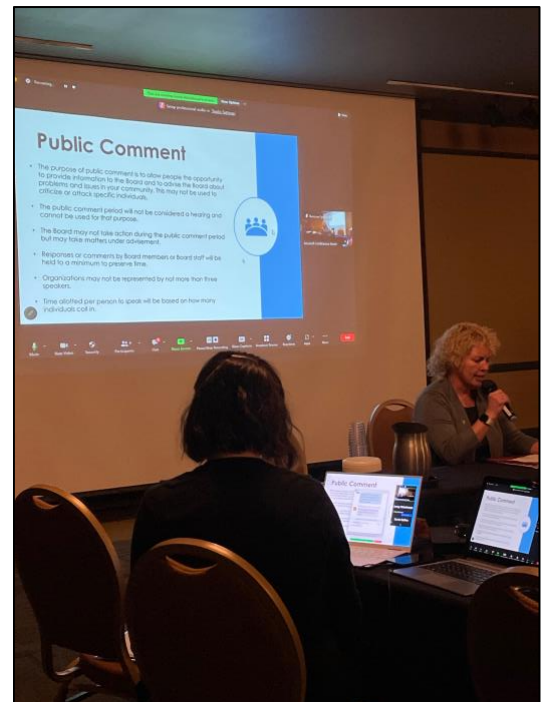
Reentry advocates with lived experience of incarceration sent emails, testified at public testimony, and met directly with legislators to speak about how “good time” helps change behavior and reduce the likelihood of future crimes. They pointed out that using positive reinforcement to incentivize acceptable conduct is a well-established physiological method for changing behavior. Many effective treatments and services are founded on this principle.

Another benefit of the “good time” option is that individuals released under this provision receive parole supervision. Community parole supervision adds an extra layer for supporting individuals in maintaining a successful transition and crime-free lifestyle.

Research shows that the incentive to engage in rehabilitative activities (such as substance abuse treatment, education and training, etc.) is a more effective strategy for reducing criminal behavior than longer sentences. Removing “good time” is the opposite of this strategy. ‡

Advocacy at the Capitol:

Peer advocates attended advocacy training, met with legislators, and spoke at public testimony in Juneau



Clockwise from top right: Bobby Dorton, reentry peer advocate (person with lived experience of incarceration) shakes hands with Representative Mike Cronk; advocates meet with Senator Jesse Kiehl in his office at the Capitol; Gina Schumaker, self-advocate for prenatal alcohol awareness, speaks at public comment before the Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse; reentry advocates pose in the chambers of House of Representatives; peer advocates meet with Representative Cathy Tilton, Speaker of the House.



ABOUT US

AK Advocates provides consultation, training, and guidance to individuals and organizations interested in accessing the public process to educate policymakers about their experiences, challenges, successes, and to make recommendations for solutions.

Teri Tibbett has over 28 years experience in public advocacy. For ten years she served as a legislative aide with the Alaska State Legislature and 14 years coordinating the advocacy effort for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and partner advisory boards. She has also coordinated legislative advocacy for the Alaska Prenatal Alcohol Partnership, Alaska Reentry Partnership, Alaska Youth Policy Summit, Alaska Peer Support Consortium, Alaska Mental Health Board, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and many Alaska non-profit behavioral health and disability organizations.

AK Advocates can help with:

- Identifying legislative priorities and 'asks'
- Developing an advocacy action plan
- Tips for successful meetings with policymakers
- Tips for testifying at public meetings
- Tips for writing letters and emails
- Telling personal stories for the most impact
- How to follow the public process and get involved
- Joining with others to increase influence
- Bills and budget tracking and reporting
- Capitol visit planning, appointments, guidance

SERVICES

Advocacy Planning and Priority Identification.

Organizations are guided through a process of establishing advocacy objectives and identifying resources that can support the advocacy effort; identifying allies and opponents that can help or hurt the effort; actionable tasks to make the effort happen; and task assignments with deadlines (who is going to do what and when).

Advocacy Training. This training offers hands-on instruction and practice for effective meetings with policymakers; tips for testifying at public meetings; what is public advocacy, including the difference between advocacy and lobbying; tips for writing letters and emails; what power citizens have within the public process; the importance of the personal story and tips for telling it for the most impact; how to follow the legislative process from home; identifying action items and moving forward to implement them.

Legislative Tracking and Reporting. This service provides tracking and reporting on relevant bills and budget items as they pass through the legislative process. It can include written or Zoom reporting to executive and/or advocacy committees, providing written reports, and independent consultation.

Capitol Visit Planning, Appointments, and

Guidance. This service offers assistance in planning for an in-person Capitol visit in Juneau, including advance consultation on relevant legislation and budget items before the legislature; identifying specific legislators and/or staff for client in-person meetings; making appointments and assistance organizing the schedule of appointments (who goes where and schedule changes); tracking what happens in meetings for follow-up and future reference; and assistance developing materials to give to legislators. Does not include advocacy training, direct advocacy, or independent meetings with legislators or staff on behalf of the client.

Comprehensive Planning, Tracking, Reporting, Training, and Direct Advocacy.

This service can include all or any of the following: advocacy planning; priority identification; advocacy training; legislative tracking and reporting; Capitol visit planning, appointments, and guidance; contractor meetings with policymakers and/or staff on behalf of or with the client. Meetings that include the client can be contractor-led or client-led, with the contractor available for background and questions. Or contractor can meet independently with policymakers and/or staff to represent client interests, proposals, bills, budget requests, etc. This service includes reporting on what happens in meetings for follow-up and analysis.