

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

HCR 2

“Respond to adverse childhood experiences”

Sponsor Statement

In 1998, more than 17,000 middle-class Americans were administered a 10-question study to evaluate childhood traumatic experiences concerning abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. The results of this study were used to formulate an adverse childhood experiences or “ACEs” score ranging from 0-10. The term “ACEs” thereafter became synonymous with traumatic experiences that occur during childhood and have a lasting, negative effect on a child’s developing brain and body.

There have been two key findings as a result of ACEs studies conducted in Alaska: childhood trauma is far more common than previously realized; and the impact of this trauma affects individuals over a lifetime, and societies over multiple generations. Sixty-seven percent of Alaskan children have an ACEs score, and Alaska has some of the highest ACEs rates among the five other states surveyed (Washington, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and New Mexico).

In Alaska, we are seeing that ACEs is synonymous with asthma, depression, teen pregnancy, suicide, drug abuse, employment difficulties, and intimate partner violence. Health measures are linked to ACEs, and these community challenges are also fiscal challenges for our state. According to Dr. Hirschfield of the University of Alaska and Alaska’s Southcentral Foundation, reducing Alaska’s ACEs score by fifty percent could save the state \$90 million annually. That means \$90 million more dollars that could be spent on preventative measures that add to our children’s wellbeing.

Alaska’s state slogan “North to the Future” was adopted to signify that our state is the land of promise and that Alaskans are always advancing for the benefit of the people and land that sustains us.

HCR 2 urges the Governor to establish policies and programs that address the public and behavioral health epidemics associated with ACEs so that we can uphold the promise to our children that they may grow up in safe households with the best opportunities before them in order to become upstanding Alaskan citizens.