



Alaska State Legislature
Representative Geran Tarr
716 W. 4th Ave., Suite 380
Anchorage, AK 99501

June 29, 2015

Senator Lisa Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Dan Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Murkowski and Sullivan,

Last week Senators Gillibrand (D-NY), Heller (R-NV), and Feinstein (D-CA) introduced bipartisan legislation to help protect children from sexual abuse by funding school programs that provide age-appropriate personal body safety information to primary and secondary school students on how to recognize and safely report sexual abuse. The "Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Act" will provide funding to states to help implement "Erin's Law", that requires child sexual abuse prevention curriculum be taught in schools. This announcement comes after Alaska passed Erin's Law on June 11th and is awaiting a signature by Governor Walker. With Alaska a total of twenty-six states have passed a version of "Erin's Law," legislation that requires public schools to provide child sexual abuse prevention education to students and professional development for school personnel.

Gillibrand, Heller and Feinstein's Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Act provides federal funding for schools to develop and implement or expand these programs for students, parents and guardians. Alaska leads the nation in rates of child sexual abuse and in 2014 there were more than two-thousand allegations of child sexual abuse. That's more than all of the students at Anchorage's largest high schools. We know that one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted by age eighteen, but only one in ten will tell. This silent epidemic is hurting our state.

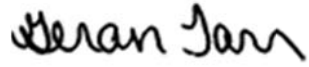
While we lead the nation in rates of child sexual abuse, child sexual abuse is not a uniquely Alaskan problem. In 2013, there were a total of 60,956 instances of child sexual abuse reported to Child Protective Services agencies in the U.S. However, again, this estimate only represents cases of child sexual abuse reported to and confirmed by child protection authorities. Many such cases are never reported to welfare or legal systems.

A frequent challenge when trying to pass Erin's Law in the states is the need for funding to implement the curriculum and provide training for teachers and staff. The bill filed last week, the Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Act, will provide schools with the resources needed to develop or expand these programs and provide parents, guardians and school personnel with the tools to help prevent and respond to child sexual abuse

Erin's Law will protect children in Alaska by empowering them with critical personal body safety information. And, research has consistently shown that educational programs designed to prevent child sexual abuse are effective at teaching children skills to identify dangerous situations and prevent abuse.

Erin's Law founder and my friend Erin Merryn is an enthusiastic supporter of this bill. I stand with her in supporting this important bipartisan legislation. I ask for you to sign on as cosponsors to the Child Sexual Abuse Awareness and Prevention Act as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geran Tarr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Representative Geran Tarr