



Representative Tom Brice

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sponsor Statement for Sponsor Substitute House Bill 72

The State of Alaska, following the national trend, eliminated institutionalized care for citizens with developmental disabilities (DD) in favor of community based care. When the state changed its approach for care it failed to appropriate adequate funds to provide community based services for the disabled community. To catalogue the needs for care that these folks have, the Department of Health and Social Services created a wait list. Needless to say, there are a number of concerns that families have about their inability to receive services. The duration on the state's (DD) waitlist can be up to seven years, but is dependent on the level of crisis the individual is facing, among other things.

Currently, there is between 840 and 1100 disabled Alaskans on the state's (DD) waitlist. In a survey titled "State Ranking for Services Needed by People on the Waiting List per 100,000 State Population -1997," Alaska was ranked as the 5th worse in the nation with 209.3 people needing services per 100,000. SSHB 72 establishes mechanisms to eliminate that problem.

SSHB 72 does three primary things. 1) It implements a concrete time line to eliminate Alaska's DD waitlist; 2) It removes funding barriers so the Department of Health, and Social Services Developmental Disabilities Division can administer the community based care program at an appropriate financial level and 3) It revises sections of our current statutes to reflect correct terminology used for persons with disabilities.