

## **Disability Law Center Candidate Questionnaire**

1. Well, this year we passed -- and the governor allowed it to become law -- Broad Based Category Eligibility which expanded eligibility requirements and removed the means test for SNAP benefits. This will be a big help as far as SNAP is concerned. I also filed a bill that unfortunately did not pass that would have required the State of Alaska to adhere to the federal maximum period of time for renewal of SNAP eligibility. Prior to the backlog Alaska had the shortest period in the country, requiring recipients to renew their applications every 6 months. My bill would make it 12 months for non-disabled, non-elderly; 24 months for folks with disabilities or elderly. As far as Medicaid and housing assistance. I cannot speak as an expert on this issue but welcome any suggestions from the Disability Law Center and will support any bills or budget items that ensure more folks who need them get these services.

2. I have met with Hope Community Resources many times. I have advocated for more pay for PCAs. I will always work toward providing services that empower Alaskans with disabilities to live as independently as possible.

3. For my podcast "The East Anchorage Book Club," I interviewed Lisa Wawrzonek, the Statewide Guardianship Compliance Officer who discussed how to become a guardian, why folks are reluctant to become guardians, and why our guardianship crisis came about and potential solutions. Ultimately, I believe that many relatives and close friends who would potentially make great guardians are afraid – we need to better educate these folks about the support and services available to them so that they will take on this role. That said, it is a difficult role that goes unpaid. Exploring ways of potential compensation is something I'd be willing to discuss.

4. This issue is near and dear to my heart and I had a bill that would have required a timely hearing for foster children placed in acute psychiatric facilities – we have a history of using those acute psychiatric facilities as placements when we are short foster families. Not always, but often the kids who end up in this situation have behavioral health problems likely stemming from their childhood trauma and separation from their families – the correct treatment is not institutionalization whether it be in Alaska or out-of-state. However, I am reluctant to advocate for bringing kids back to Alaska until Alaska has a better way of dealing with this issue. I have met with many to discuss other states' models of conflict de-escalation and potential temporary homes for these kids to allow cool-down periods where they have resources and counseling services – not intramuscular injections of antipsychotic medications against the child's will that may not be medically indicated.

5. My son has learning disabilities and has an IEP – I understand the need for proper accommodations and modifications in the classroom. From my perspective the school districts know what they need to do, but are often reluctant to do it because of the cost and lack of resources. First and foremost, we need to fully fund our public education system. Second, we need to better educate our parents about what services are available. We need to empower parents to advocate for their children with disabilities because the schools themselves are not going to take on the added expenses unless someone asks them to. I believe that if I didn't show up at my son's IEP meetings and push back on moves to reduce his services that he would not get all the help that he needs.