

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Lesil McGuire District 17

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House Enhances Security of Children in Care **HB 180 Requires Criminal Checks of Licensees, Staff, Volunteers**

(JUNEAU) – Any Alaskan with a criminal record of rape, sexual assault or homicide or of any crime against children, would be barred from operating a residential child care facility, or of working with children at such facilities under legislation the House passed today.

Rep. Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage) introduced House Bill 180 as an effort to improve protections for Alaska children entrusted to the care of a foster home, residential childcare facility, residential psychiatric center, child placement agency, maternity home, boarding school or similar facility, she said.

“It is essential that we take whatever steps are necessary to make sure we are entrusting our children only to those committed to the safety and well-being of children, and whose history reflects this commitment,” she said. “House Bill 180 helps ensure that Alaska’s children are safer.”

The bill reconciles Alaska law with a 1997 federal child safety and adoption law, an act that received bipartisan support and was conceived from reports that children were being left in, or returned to, unsafe situations, McGuire said.

“My goal with this legislation is to shield children from those who have past records of serious criminal misconduct,” McGuire said. “It not only protects children, but also helps deprive those with a history of serious criminal misconduct of the opportunity to repeat harmful behavior in the future.”

HB 180 also creates a task force of four legislative and five public members to evaluate the safety of children in other facilities that do not currently require state licensing or background checks. The task force will examine such topics as methods used by private and public organizations to protect children from predatory individuals, and the benefits of expanding the required background checks to other child service agencies. The task force would report back to the Legislature by January 2003.

[HB 180](#) moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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