

Sponsor Statement for SCS for CS for HB 172 (JUD) am Therapeutic Drug and Alcohol Courts

An Act relating to therapeutic courts for offenders; to the authorized number of superior court judges; AND AMENDING Rule 35, Alaska Rules of Criminal Procedure.

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SCS for CS for House Bill 172(JUD)am will establish two therapeutic court pilot projects- Anchorage and Bethel. These courts are designed to serve as working models for the development of other similar courts throughout the state.

As stated in the legislative purpose section of SCS for CSHB 172(JUD)am, therapeutic courts are designed to:

- assist offenders toward lasting sobriety;
- protect society from alcohol and drug related crime;
- provide prompt payment of restitution to victims;
- encourage effective interaction and use of resources among criminal justice and community agencies; and,
- reduce long-term costs relating to arrest, trial and incarceration.

The pilot projects will be implemented through joint efforts of the Court System, Department of Law, the Public Defender Agency, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health and Social Services and other agencies in accordance with a mutually agreed upon plan. The courts are to use existing public agencies, medical and treatment services, housing and other public, private and non-profit community services as well. The Bethel pilot project is designed to coordinate services with municipal and local entities, taking into consideration local resources and cultural traditions, to facilitate rehabilitation.

The Court System has requested two additional superior court judge positions to preside over the therapeutic courts. These positions will be assigned to Anchorage and Bethel.