

Sponsor Statement for HB 255

Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

*An Act establishing the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council;
and providing for an effective date.*

Last Updated: April 24, 2001

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It is devastating to lose someone to suicide at any age, but it is especially tragic to lose a young person who has so much to live for. Suicide is preventable.

In 1999, the United States Surgeon General issued “A Call to Action” to prevent suicide. The report made 15 recommendations categorized in the areas of awareness, intervention and methodology. House Bill 255 is another step in answering both the state’s and the national call to action.

House Bill 255 will establish a statewide suicide prevention council made up of fourteen private and public members representing rural and urban Alaska. Two members from both the House and Senate would sit on the council. The governor would appoint ten members, including experts in substance abuse and mental health, as well as people who have been directly impacted by suicide and who work with youth across the state.

Suicide is an on-going epidemic in many parts of the state. In rural Alaska and in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, the numbers are at an all-time high. We all must work together to reduce the toll suicide is having on the people of our state.

The council will focus on finding ways to reduce suicide rates, broaden public awareness of the suicide warning signs, and enhance suicide prevention services and programs throughout the state. Each March the council will submit a report to the Legislature and the governor with its findings and recommendations.