

Sponsor Statement for HB 386

Adoption, CINA Cases & Foster Parents

“An Act relating to foster care and adoption of children in need of aid; and relating to child-in-need-of-aid proceedings.”

Under [House Bill 386](#), foster parents will receive preference in the adoption of children who have been in the continuous custody of the foster parent for a period of nine months.

Under the federal [Indian and Child Welfare Act](#) (ICWA), there is a preference for the adoption of an Indian or Alaskan Native child in state custody by extended family, a member of the child’s tribe, or another Indian or Alaskan Native home. Further federal and state requirements call for priority adoption by a relative of a child in state custody. There is no current statute governing the preferential adoption of children by foster parents. This bill will not supercede current federal or state laws, however, it will provide the [Department of Family Youth Services](#) and the [Court System](#) with another opportunity to place a child in a permanent home in a timely manner.

As of January 2001, there were approximately 2,000 children in foster care in Alaska. Of these 2,000 children, there are children who have been in the custody of state-sponsored foster parents for more than a decade.

Federal and state law agree that, children who have been in and out of home care for 15 of the previous 22 months have been in state custody for too long. While great effort has been made to target children who have been in state care for too long, more effort is needed to expedite the adoption proceedings for foster parents. HB 386 will assist in reducing the backlog of children in long-term custody and accelerate the process of placing children in permanent, stable homes.

Most children taken into custody who are not placed in permanent homes within a reasonable time frame have difficulty succeeding as adults. A wealth of statistics, professional assessments, and common experience all confirm that a place to call home is a basic human need and without it, a child will suffer. Every child needs a permanent home. HB 386 assists in placing children in good homes with loving parents in a timely manner.
