

Deb Russ, GAL, MAC, LCSW

PO Box 8501

Nikiski, AK 99635

National Association of Counsel for Children

899 N. Logan St. Suite 208

Denver, CO. 802203

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to nominate Sarah Roberts for the Outstanding New Attorney. I have worked in the Child Welfare system as a guardian ad litem for the past 16 years and with foster families and parents for 8 years prior. I have worked with many new attorneys, but Sarah stands out. She is a mother who has recently become an attorney, having practiced for the past three years. She brings a great depth of empathy to the Child Welfare System and truly helps the clients she works with.

Sarah can think outside the box and work collaboratively with all parties in a case. She is an outstanding advocate and a strong voice for her clients. I have been told by many parents that they have felt heard by Sarah and listened to. She can have the tough conversations with parents that are needed.

The Kenai area has a high level of reunification, often made possible by Sarah's strong advocacy for her clients. Alaska also has a large, culturally diverse population. Sarah maintains a culturally competent work ethic. She will advocate for Talking Circles when it is appropriate for her clients' needs to be heard or to help reach a resolution.

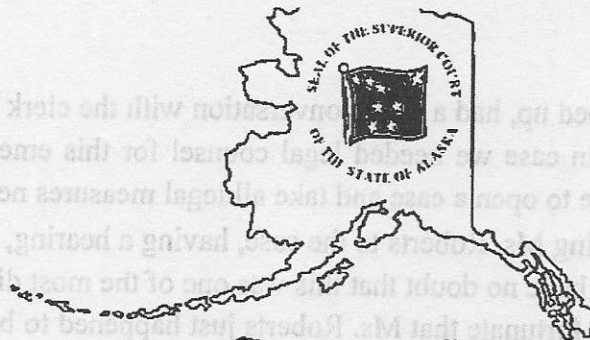
For being a new attorney, she really stands out as a wonderful, caring person who looks out for the clients she works with. I strongly advocate for Sarah Roberts to be considered as the Outstanding New Lawyer. She already is in my perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Deb Russ', with a stylized, cursive script.

Deb Russ, MAC, LCSW

Guardain ad Litem



Superior Court

State of Alaska

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

JASON M. GIST
Judge

125 TRADING BAY DRIVE, SUITE 100
KENAI, ALASKA 99611-7717

(907) 283-8506
FAX (907) 283-8548

May 29, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jason Gist, and I am a Superior Court Judge in Kenai, Alaska. It is my honor to recommend Sarah Roberts for the National Association of Counsel for Children's (NACC's) Outstanding New Lawyer Award. Alaska Superior Courts are courts of general jurisdiction, and my court docket consists of child in need of aid cases, civil litigation, criminal law, family law, and probate matters. Ms. Roberts regularly appears before me in child in need of aid cases, primarily as an attorney for parents, but also on occasion as an attorney appointed directly to represent children in these difficult matters. Although not directly tied to NACC's mission, Ms. Roberts also appears regularly before Kenai courts in guardianship probate matters.

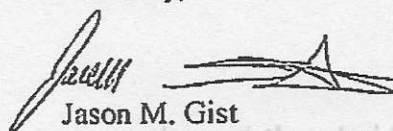
I have always been very impressed with Ms. Roberts' dedication to her clients. She is well-spoken in her arguments, is a strong advocate for her clients, and is always prepared for court hearings. More importantly, however, her clients are also always prepared for court hearings. These types of cases are stressful on families, and the idea of having to come to court to participate in hearings to discuss your children being removed from the home is often overwhelming. Ms. Roberts does an excellent job at communicating with her clients and putting them at ease as much as possible in such difficult situations. Ms. Roberts also does an excellent job at having difficult conversations with her clients, clearly explaining to them what the court's expectations are to have their children returned to their home. I am proud to say that Kenai regularly has one of the highest rates of child reunification in the State of Alaska, and Ms. Roberts is a significant contributor to that.

I have also been remarkably impressed by Ms. Roberts' sincere and caring dedication to clients in their times of need. We recently had a case in which there was a very tragic accident, and a lady came to the court seeking help to establish an emergency guardianship as the court was about to close. Ms. Roberts just happened to be in the court clerk's office at the time and overheard the

conversation. Ms. Roberts stepped up, had a brief conversation with the clerk and stated that she would remain at the court just in case we needed legal counsel for this emergency. With Ms. Roberts' assistance, we were able to open a case and take all legal measures necessary to get help for this lady – including appointing Ms. Roberts to the case, having a hearing, and completing all paperwork – in about an hour. I have no doubt that this was one of the most difficult moments of this person's life. We were very fortunate that Ms. Roberts just happened to be in the right place at the right time. While this was not a case that necessarily fulfills NACC's mission, it is just but one example of Ms. Roberts' dedication to assisting people in need with real legal solutions.

Ms. Roberts shows this type of caring dedication week in and week out to her child in need of aid cases, and all other matters that she is involved in. It is for these reasons that I am proud to recommend her for the Outstanding New Lawyer Award. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need more information regarding Ms. Roberts.

Sincerely,



Jason M. Gist
Superior Court Judge



THE STATE
of ALASKA

Department of Family and Community Services

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Kenai Field Office

145 Main Street Loop, Rm. 100

Kenai, Alaska 99611

Main: 907.283.3136

Fax: 907.283.9093

May 28, 2026

To whom it may concern,

I have worked for the Office of Children's Services in Kenai for the last two years, and have shared multiple child welfare cases with Sarah Roberts during that time. Ms. Roberts has represented both parents and youth in these cases. She strongly advocates for her clients both in court and behind the scenes.

Ms. Roberts routinely attends caseworker meetings with her clients, and in those meetings I have witnessed her communicating clearly with them about their rights as well as their responsibilities. She takes collaborative and creative approaches to finding resolutions, including initiating meetings with the department to discuss unique situations and come up with plans for how to address them. I can honestly say that a client who has Ms. Roberts for their attorney is being set up with the best opportunity for success.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jen Brighton".

Jen Brighton, MS
Protective Services Specialist IV
Family Services Supervisor
Kenai Field Office
145 Main Street Loop, #100
Kenai, Alaska 99611
Cell: 907-395-7492
Email:

**Department of
Family and Community Services**

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Homer Field Office

3670 Lake St. Suite 100

Homer, AK 99603

(907) 235-7114

Fax: (907) 235-2484

Centralized Intake: 1-800-478-4444

May 26, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support regarding Sarah Roberts' nomination for the Outstanding New Lawyer Award. In my capacity as the supervisor for the Homer Office of Children's Services, I have had many opportunities since October 2023 to observe Ms. Roberts' advocacy for her clients in court and in formal and informal meetings with OCS. In all cases, Ms. Roberts has been a strong and effective advocate for her clients while maintaining respectful communication with OCS, other legal parties, and with the court. Ms. Roberts has a solid understanding of OCS policy and procedures and CINA statutes, and she effectively uses that knowledge to further the goals of her clients.

The two attributes I appreciate most about Ms. Roberts are that she is willing to work with OCS in terms of willingness and ability to see a case situation from the department's perspective and to seek a mutually-agreeable resolution, and that while she zealously advocates for her clients, she has always treated OCS staff with respect and humanity, which many attorneys in the child welfare system seem unable to do. I have supervised the Homer OCS office for more than 20 years and Ms. Roberts is the first attorney who has agreed to travel with one of my staff to participate in a case planning meeting. Ms. Roberts and my staff traveled to Nanwalek, a remote village across the bay from Homer, and were unexpectedly weathered in overnight. They made the best of it, however, not only building relationships with community members but also with each other, and in fact, they both still laugh when telling stories about that trip!

I believe Ms. Roberts' unique style of working collaboratively with OCS while still zealously representing her clients has been instrumental in achieving permanency for children, whether that be through reunification or adoption. Ms. Roberts is an outstanding attorney and advocate, and I can think of no one more deserving to receive the 2026 Outstanding New Lawyer Award.

Thank you,



Margit Garry, BSW

Supervisor

Homer and Kodiak Field Offices

907-399-3388



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Family
and Community Services

DIVISION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
Kenai Probation

405 Marathon Road
Kenai, Alaska 99611
Main: 907 335 3100
Fax: 907 335 3134

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my honor to enthusiastically recommend Sarah Roberts for the outstanding new lawyer of the year award. During her time in practice, Sarah has already distinguished herself as an exceptional advocate dedicated to serving children, parents, and partnering agencies within the child welfare and juvenile justice system.

Sarah has consistently demonstrated excellence in legal representation through compassionate, client-centered advocacy and a deep understanding of the complex needs impacting families and youth. She approaches every case with professionalism, integrity, and unwavering commitment to ensuring that children and families are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect throughout the legal process.

In addition to strong courtroom advocacy Sarah has shown meaningful leadership in policy advocacy and collaborative work within community partners and agencies. Her ability to balance legal excellence with empathy and effective communication has earned the respect of colleagues, clients, and multidisciplinary professionals alike. Sarah is especially committed to advancing equality and justice, ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to fair representation and meaningful support.

I wholeheartedly support the nomination of Sarah Roberts for the outstanding new lawyer of the year award and am confident that she will continue to positively influence the field of child welfare and juvenile justice for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allison Gottesman", followed by a long horizontal line.

Allison Gottesman MSW

District Supervisor Kenai/Homer

Division Juvenile Justice

allison.gottesman@alaska.gov or 907.335.31321

Re: Stakeholder Letter in Support of Sarah Roberts

5/29/2026

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with enthusiastic conviction that I submit this stakeholder letter in support of Sarah Roberts's nomination for NACC's Outstanding New Attorney Award.

Notwithstanding her status as one of the more recent members of Alaska's Office of Public Advocacy, Ms. Roberts has already distinguished herself as a capable, knowledgeable, and effective practitioner on behalf of both children and parents. Ms. Roberts's advocacy is notable because she does not merely pursue her clients' goals, interests, and needs, but does so in a way that brings constructive problem solving and resolution-focused options to the table. When adversarial proceedings are unavoidable, Ms. Roberts zealously represents her clients, but always with professionalism, dignity, and respect.

Ms. Roberts's client-centered approach adequately balances the process of seeking the best possible outcome in accordance with her clients' wishes while simultaneously managing client expectations in light of each case's circumstances. When culture-specific challenges present themselves, Ms. Roberts deftly navigates these challenges on her clients' behalf, seeking to affirm, exemplify, and bring into better focus any unique customs, practices, and historically-informed familial traditions that may serve to transform challenges into opportunities.

Outside of formal proceedings, Ms. Roberts demonstrates both leadership and initiative in presenting creative solutions when problems arise, actively seeking party consensus when possible. She does so with empathy and compassion, while boasting an impressive command of the law.

It with these favorable observations that I commend Ms. Roberts to you as a worthy recipient of NACC's Outstanding New Attorney Award.

Sincerely,

_____/s/_____
Paul S. Morin
Assistant Attorney General
Child Protection Section, Alaska Department of Law
110 Trading Bay Rd., Ste 110
Kenai, AK 99611
Phone: (907) 283-8917
E-mail: paul.morin@alaska.gov

Heather Van Ostrand

PO Box 215 | Anchor Point, AK 99556

Phone: 907-299-8248 | Fax: 907-921-7776 | Email: vanostrandheather@gmail.com



To whom it may concern,

I would like to nominate Sarah F. Roberts for the Outstanding New Lawyer Award. I have worked with her on numerous CINA cases over the last year and a half, and she has consistently been a strong advocate for her clients, both parents and children alike. Sarah is highly responsive, direct, collaborative, and thoughtful in her approach to cases and shows a genuine commitment to achieving positive outcomes for her clients. I appreciate that Sarah is open to problem-solving and exploring alternate solutions to best meet the needs of the families we serve.

Sarah works diligently and consistently for her clients both inside and outside of the courtroom and is an excellent candidate for the Outstanding New Lawyer Award.

Best,

Heather Van Ostrand
Guardian ad Litem

Nicholas Torres
44790 Eddy Hill Dr
Soldotna, AK 99669

National Association of Counsel for Children
899 N. Logan St. Suite 208
Denver, CO 80203

To Whom It May Concern:

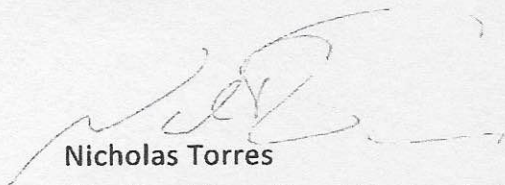
Sarah Roberts is an outstanding lawyer. I first had the pleasure of working with Sarah when she joined the Office of Public Advocacy about two years ago. I work with her daily as an assistant attorney general. Sarah is a very capable attorney who helps her clients navigate their Child In Need of Aid (CINA) cases with great aplomb.

Sarah is a very good listener. She puts her clients in the best position possible for their case by distilling her clients' often lofty wishes into reality. She presents creative solutions to problems in cases. Sarah cares about her clients and advocates well for them. At the same time, Sarah is open-minded and willing to look at issues from other viewpoints. This type of balance is crucial in the type of cases she handles.

The Kenai Peninsula enjoys a higher level of reunification and faster case resolution than many other regions in Alaska. Part of that success comes from the collaborative and cooperative attitude of the CINA attorneys, caseworkers, judges, and GALs. Sarah's friendly demeanor only increases the level of teamwork involved in our CINA cases. Alaska has a diverse population and Sarah's professional humility allows her to zealously advocate for her clients regardless of race or ethnicity.

I have seen Sarah use lived experience parties through community partnerships while upholding client confidentiality. Though new to the bar, Sarah already performs like a seasoned attorney who has been practicing for many years. For these reasons I know Sarah would be an excellent candidate for your consideration as an Outstanding New Lawyer.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Torres
Vice President, Kenai Peninsula Bar Association

Award Committee

National Association of Council for Children.

Letter of Recommendation for Sarah Roberts for the 2026 NACC Outstanding New Lawyer Award

05/26/2026

Dear Members of the Award Committee,

It is with honor that I recommend Sarah Roberts for the 2026 NACC Outstanding New Lawyer Award. I have had the privilege of working with Sarah in several capacities during the past three years, and I consider myself fortunate to have served clients alongside her. Throughout our professional interactions, I have witnessed a rare combination of integrity, knowledge, compassion, and dedication that sets Sarah apart within her profession.

Sarah demonstrates the ability to serve her clients in the manner most appropriate to the individual needs of the case, and this ability has contributed significantly to successful family reunifications. Sarah possesses a thorough understanding of the laws and statutes governing child welfare and family court proceedings while remaining aware of the unique and complex circumstances surrounding cases involving children.

Sarah's exceptional service is perhaps best demonstrated by her ability to effectively represent a wide range of clients, adapting her approach to meet the needs of each situation. Whether representing a parent seeking reunification or a child in need of representation, Sarah provides strong, honest, and thoughtful advocacy that remains firmly focused on the best interests of her client.

What I admire most about Sarah is her ability to engage all parties with kindness, professionalism, and respect, regardless of the often adversarial nature that accompanies legal proceedings. Her approach encourages collaboration and understanding, frequently helping parties find common ground and achieve positive outcomes for the children and families she serves.

I can think of no one more deserving of the 2026 NACC Outstanding New Lawyer Award. Sarah Roberts embodies the qualities of an outstanding attorney and an exceptional human being. I wholeheartedly and without reservation recommend her for this distinguished honor.

Thank you for your consideration.

With warmest regards,

Alissa Knott

Alissa Knott, LMSW
Mental Health Clinician
Soldotna, AK 99669
a.knott.ak@gmail.com



THE STATE
of ALASKA

Department of Administration

OFFICE OF PUBLIC ADVOCACY

220 Main Street Loop, Ste B

Kenai, Alaska 99611

Main: (907) 395-0481

Fax: (907) 395-0482

doa.opa.kenai.defense.service@alaska.gov

May 30, 2026

Re: Letter of Support – Sarah Roberts, Outstanding New Lawyer Award, 49th NACC Conference

To the NACC Awards Committee:

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support for the nomination of Sarah Roberts for the Outstanding New Lawyer Award. I serve as the Supervising Attorney for the Office of Public Advocacy in Kenai, and for the last decade I have handled, supervised, and mentored child welfare attorneys. I have supervised Sarah for only the last three months, since relocating to a new state. While my time working alongside her is short, my perspective on what distinguishes a capable child welfare attorney is not — and by that measure, Sarah stands out.

Sarah, for her part, has practiced law for only two years, dedicating that time to children in need of aid cases. Yet she came to the law later in life, and she brings to it two decades of experience as the devoted mother of five children. While her years at the bar are few, the life experience that informs her practice is not — and by that measure, she is exceptional. She understands firsthand the worries and pressures that parents carry into these proceedings, and her commitment shows in the simple but effective approaches she has developed to guide and support them.

What impresses me most about Sarah is her unwavering commitment to the fundamentals of effective representation. She maintains consistent contact with her clients rather than treating communication as an afterthought, and she is always willing to talk with them, listen to their concerns, and keep them informed about the proceedings that affect their lives and families.

Sarah is a genuine model of client-centered practice. She has a particular gift for explaining legal concepts, and the pros and cons of a given course of action, in plain and accessible terms. She makes certain her clients understand not only the legal standards that apply to them but also, in practical terms, what to expect at each stage. This skill reflects a deep respect for the people she represents.

Sarah combines sound legal judgment with a practical sensibility, focusing on outcomes that are realistic and meaningful. She shows an innate ability to balance principled advocacy and problem-solving, which makes her a real asset to our office and to her clients.

For these reasons, Sarah Roberts exemplifies the qualities the Outstanding New Lawyer Award is meant to recognize, particularly a demonstrated dedication to client-centered practice in the child welfare system. She is worthy of recommendation without reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Ira Dillman".

C. Ira Dillman

Supervising Attorney

Office of Public Advocacy – Kenai