



For Immediate Release:

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## **Constitutional Climate Lawsuit Brought by Young Alaskans Heard in Anchorage**

*State tells Judge "Alaska is not causing climate change"*

Anchorage, Alaska -- Today, Superior Court Judge Gregory Miller for the Third Judicial District in Anchorage heard oral arguments on the State's motion to dismiss in *Sinnok v. State of Alaska*, the climate lawsuit brought by 16 Alaskan youth. The youth plaintiffs allege that the State is violating their constitutional rights by contributing to climate change and putting fossil fuel production above the safety of their lives. They are calling on the court to remedy the violations of their constitutional rights by ordering the defendants to prepare a plan to reduce Alaska's emissions in line with a science-based prescription to stabilize the climate system.

Assistant Attorney General Sean Beausang argued, on behalf of the state of Alaska and Governor Walker, that the youths' climate lawsuit should not be permitted to go to trial. Beausang went so far as to say:

"Alaska is not destroying the environment. Alaska is not causing climate change."

**Andrew Welle**, co-counsel for plaintiffs and staff attorney at Our Children's Trust said:

"Alaska is a major contributor to climate change. According to the State's records, Alaska's emissions are comparable to states with populations 3.5 - 7 times larger than Alaska's. And these figures don't account for the substantial volume of fossil fuels extracted in Alaska and exported out of state. Alaska's constitution protects these young

plaintiffs from their own government contributions to the profound dangers they face. Because of the urgency of these dangers, there's no time for the judicial branch to defer to the other branches of government. It's clear that those branches won't change their unconstitutional Climate and Energy Policy without court intervention."

**Esau Sinnok**, 20 year-old plaintiff from Shishmaref, Alaska said:

"With the state contributing to climate change it has the duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and respect our human rights to live in a healthy, safe and sustainable environment. Alaska is on the frontlines of climate change. About every community in Alaska is affected by climate change and we need our state government to reverse course."

**Tasha Elizarde**, 19-year-old plaintiff from Juneau, Alaska said:

"When I was young, I remember being able to hike up to scenic point that views the Mendenhall glacier. When I was five I could see the glacier from that point. Now I'm 19 and the glacier is not visible from that point. It's a stark reminder that climate change is impacted my home and my state. This case needs to go to trial because we need to recognize that climate change is real and actively seek out a solution."

**Brian Conwell**, 17-year-old plaintiff from Unalaska, Alaska said:

"For my entire life I've lived in Unalaska, a fishing town that's both tough and hard-working, and close-knit and generous. I'm extremely grateful for the amazing, unique opportunities that have been given to me there but those opportunities are being threatened by economic uncertainty exacerbated by climate change. Ocean acidification is decreasing the biodiversity and resilience of our marine ecosystem and that's why I have a responsibility to be here to put a voice to these environmental and economic issues in Unalaska."

At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Miller said he would take the issues under advisement and issue a written decision on whether the case will proceed to trial.

*Sinnok v. Alaska* is one of many related legal actions supported by Our Children's Trust, and brought by youth in several states and countries, including [\*Juliana v. United States\*](#), seeking science-based action by governments to secure a safe climate and healthy atmosphere for present and future generations.

*Counsel for Plaintiffs include Andrew Welle, Esq. of Eugene, OR and Brad De Noble, Esq. of Eagle River, AK.*

***Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit organization, elevating the voice of youth, those with most to lose, to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate on behalf of present and future generations. We lead a coordinated global human rights and environmental justice campaign to implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans that will return atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration to below 350 ppm by the year 2100.*

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