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**Sponsor Statement
House Bill 335**

In 2016, the Alaska State Legislature passed into law Senate Bill 91, and within that law, a structure for a new tool for the evaluation of an offender arrested pre-trial was created. This “risk assessment tool” was intended to insert objective information into a judicial officer’s decision as to whether to release a defendant before their trial date.

The Pretrial Services Division of the Department of Corrections has developed an algorithm that takes various factors into account related to a defendant to create a score that determines their risk of failing to appear for their court date or committing a new crime. In certain circumstances, this risk score is the only determining factor as to whether a defendant is released on their own recognizance.

Mathematical data can play an important role in ensuring that judicial officers understand current research and trends in criminal justice policy and practice. However, judges are those ultimately entrusted with providing the balance between protecting a defendant’s freedom and maintaining the public’s safety, and they should be given some discretion in making these release decisions.

House Bill 335 allows for a judge to use the risk assessment score developed by the Pretrial Services Division as information in their decision-making process but does not allow an algorithm alone to provide for a defendant’s release. This creates a balance between unbiased data and judicial expertise that will ultimately better provide for the public’s safety.