

March 28, 2018

Senator Giessel
State Capitol Room Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801
Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov

RE: SB 169 – Medicaid - Behavioral Health Coverage

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority fully supports SB 169.

Improving access to mental health services is a top priority for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. Currently, statewide gaps in the continuum of care combined with gaps in health care coverage perpetuate a cycle of crisis response and create costly inefficiencies. We are hopeful that this bill will help move the state forward in reducing those gaps and inefficiencies.

The Alaska Behavioral Health Systems Assessment (produced by the Trust in 2016), estimated the prevalence rate of adults needing treatment for drug or alcohol treatment or a mental illness was approximately one in four. However, the behavioral health needs of many Alaskans are going unmet because of gaps in care, resulting in higher costs and poorer health outcomes.

This legislation will reduce the existing barriers for mental health physician clinics to offer mental health services, and, ultimately, allow for more Alaskans to access and receive necessary treatment to improve their quality of life. This legislation will also ultimately enhance the continuum of care for Trust beneficiaries.

Respectfully,



Michael K. Abbott
Chief Executive Officer