



REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUÑOZ

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 161

HB 161 will enable the Alaska Mental Health Trust to move forward with construction and ownership of a new office facility on land the Trust owns in downtown Juneau.

The core mission of the Mental Health Trust is to develop and manage Trust assets for the benefit of mental health beneficiaries in the areas of health, safety, quality of life and economic security. Trust beneficiaries live in communities across Alaska. They are friends, neighbors, and family members facing mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia.

The Trust has identified land in Juneau as a top priority for development. HB 161 enables the Trust to develop, through the issuance of certificates of participation, much needed office and retail space. Four State agencies are currently housed in aging facilities, all in need of major renovation. The proposed building, using modern construction standards, and new energy saving technologies, will reduce both operating and maintenance costs. From a centralized location the offices will function with improved efficiencies and better public access.

Most importantly, over time, a new facility will save the State of Alaska money, and will provide a steady revenue stream to Trust beneficiaries. Development of Trust assets will provide a return on investment for beneficiaries, in turn enriching the lives of those served.

House Resolution 6 passed unanimously on February 25, 2009 by the Alaska House of Representatives. It encourages the Trust to pursue this type of project on behalf of its beneficiaries. It states in part:

"BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives encourages the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to develop its land and resources to the fullest extent possible, consistent with its legal and moral responsibility to advance mental health services and employment opportunities that protect and enhance the lives of those who benefit from the mental health trust."

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