

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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March 31, 2009

The Honorable Representative Mike Hawker, Co-chair
The Honorable Representative Bill Stoltze, Co-chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Co-chairs:

Saturday, March 28, 2009, in a House Finance Committee meeting regarding economic stimulus funding, the Department of Health and Social Services staff was asked whether or not the Governor supported the funding for the Health Information Technology component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The response was affirmative.

Rather than leave the committee with the wrong impression of the Governor's position regarding the acceptance of these funds, I wish to clarify the administration's position. The Governor supports in concept the creation of a Health Information Exchange system and the use of electronic health records by healthcare providers. However, at the present time, there is little information available regarding the ramifications of accepting ARRA funding for that purpose. Once the federal government has made additional guidance available regarding what it means to accept these funds, the Governor will be better positioned to determine if acceptance of these funds is in the best interests of the State of Alaska. Until such information has been received, the Governor continues to express reservations regarding the use of ARRA funds for this purpose.

Sincerely,



William H. Hogan
Commissioner

cc: Anna Kim, Special Assistant, Governor's Office
William Streur, Deputy Commissioner, Health Care Services, DHSS
Karen Rehfeld, Director, OMB