

February 23, 2016

Senator Dunleavy
Alaska Capitol Room 11
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 103 – Education in Residential Psychiatric Treatment Centers

Dear Senator Dunleavy,

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, by statute, works to improve the lives of Trust beneficiaries – which include young Alaskans with severe emotional disturbances. For some time now, the Trust has been extremely concerned that students with severe disabilities have apparently not been receiving the education to which they are entitled under the Alaska Constitution and federal law. The Trust unequivocally supports finding a solution to address this situation as quickly as possible. SB 103 is a step in the right direction by funding educational services for students in residential psychiatric treatment facilities.

It is imperative that students, parents, and school districts be able to rely on consistent expectations and obligations statewide – especially for youth who will eventually transition back to their home school district after treatment.

We appreciate the Senate Education Committee sponsoring a bill to help resolve this disparity, and look forward to an ongoing conversation about how best to provide for the educational needs of disabled students statewide. Providing a mechanism by which access to equal educational opportunities, regardless of disability, is guaranteed for all Alaska children is imperative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Jessee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeff" and last name "Jessee" clearly distinguishable.

Jeff Jessee
Chief Executive Officer