


Senator Dunleavy,

My name is Melanie Nelson and I am the Administrator of the Coastal Trail and Williwaw programs at North Star Behavioral Health. I am writing this letter in support of SB103. Families should not have to struggle between receiving mental health treatment for their child or their child's education. Educational services in the program right now do not serve the child or family in a way that allows for the child to stay current with school and move forward in their education while receiving treatment for mental health issues. Too often students leave the program further behind in their educational endeavors than before they entered. This is a concern as education and school can often be the one positive thing in a child's life and is definitely an area that can help them become productive members of the community.

SB103 would allow school districts to contract with facilities to provide education for youth residing in their programs. Mental health and education would be intermingled and clear transitions and educational plans developed that would go back to resident school districts. This bill would allow for clear measurable key educational indicators to be identified and outcomes tracked for stakeholders, allow for a comprehensive continuum of care that encompasses treatment and educational planning, and increase the educational opportunities of child.

I ask for your support for SB103 as it will greatly increase the educational opportunities for children receiving mental health treatment in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie Nelson".

Melanie Nelson