

From: [Kristen Pratt](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FW: Public Comment on Proposed DHSS Budget cuts
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Subject: Public Comment on Proposed DHSS Budget cuts

Dear DHSS Committee Senators and Representatives,

I appreciate the opportunity to communicate my thoughts regarding the proposed budget cuts to the DHSS 2017 budget. I urge you to instead support the Governors proposed DHSS Budget.

I would like to specifically speak to the proposed cuts to the Section of Public Health Nursing (PHN). As a past public health nurse who served the YK Delta Region, I find the proposed cuts to this section, and the reduction of 30/200 positions appalling. Rep. Wilson states, 'I've done the research and there won't be any impact,' which is completely untrue. What is true is that the states ability to respond during an emergency or outbreak of disease will be significantly impacted and prevention oriented public health efforts dangerously limited.

Public Health Nurses are your only field staff located outside of Anchorage within the Division of Public Health. They have a unique skill set that allows them to provide health education, community mobilization, individual clinical nursing services and population health assessments. They are your 'safety net' for Alaskans who fall through the cracks of our health care system. Without them, individuals with communicable diseases (STD's, TB etc.) would be sicker longer and infect more community members.

If you think the nurses who work in the Section of Epidemiology will simply take on more case work, remember this will cost the state much, much more in travel/lodging and per diem to investigate and treat clients outside of Anchorage. Additionally, Anchorage based staff don't have the community relationships a local public health nurse would have and this will impact the success of the investigations.

Rep Wilson did not do her homework and the rest of the sub committee does not seem to understand the difference between health care and public health. By cutting Public Health Nursing you have no dedicated workforce looking upstream at what is causing poor community health outcomes in the first place. Additionally, these types of suggested budget reductions will result in closure of several public health centers.

We all need to tighten our belts during this fiscal crisis, but the cut and run approach to the deficit is short sighted and puts the public at risk. Cutting 15% of your statewide public health nurse safety net is unwise in the age of Ebola, Zika and Measles.

After all, we had a measles case in Fairbanks last year. Parents in Fairbanks are also well known for knowingly exposing their young children to another child with active chicken pox instead of getting the vaccine. Fairbanks also voted to remove fluoride from the community water system thus potentially moving more vulnerable children into dental pain, suffering and lost school days. Believe me, there is so much public health work to be done and the public health nurses are your boots on the ground, building organizational relationships, moving communities towards better individual health choices, linking people to a medical home and contributing to evidence based public policies.

I urge you to consider the quality of life we want to have here in Alaska both now and for future generations. Please support the Governor's Budget for DHSS. Thank you.

J.A.Meyer

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