



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

## Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD  
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM  
AND DRUG ABUSE

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March 29, 2016

Representative Paul Seaton, Chairman  
House Health and Social Services Committee  
State Capitol Room 102  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HCR 21 – Adverse Childhood Experiences

Dear Representative Seaton,

The Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse support House Concurrent Resolution 21 in response to the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Alaska. The Boards have been instrumental in educating Alaskans about ACEs through use of specific data regarding the childhood experiences of Alaskans of all ages and the impact adverse events have throughout a lifetime, and we appreciate the work of Representative Tarr and your community to expand the knowledge base on ACEs in Alaska.

More than two-thirds of Alaskan adults experienced ACEs prior to their eighteenth birthday. The neural networks being “wired” in the developing brains of children and youth are especially susceptible to traumatic events. Research is showing that ACEs can affect the normal development of children and that these are the mechanisms behind the poor outcomes associated with childhood trauma. From poor school and work performance to substance abuse and mental illness to poor physical health outcomes, the link to ACEs has been shown in Alaskan and other states’ populations as well. Hundreds of millions of Alaska’s dollars in state and private funds are spent each year as a result of traumatic events experienced during childhood. Even modest reductions in childhood trauma would have immediate and long-term benefits to our state financially and socially.

All over Alaska, communities are addressing ACEs in big and small ways. HCR 21 recognizes and supports the need continued research and evidence-based efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of ACEs. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Kate Burkhart".

J. Kate Burkhart  
Executive Director

cc: Representative Geran Tarr