



February 25, 2019

Dear Legislators,

The Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition is writing in strong support of House Bill 22 to extend the State Suicide Prevention Council (SSPC) until June 30, 2027. It is critical that the important work of the SSPC be reauthorized and funded throughout this time period.

The suicide rate in Alaska continues to be extremely high. In 2017, Alaska's suicide rate was the second highest in the country. The problem of suicide continues to escalate in our state; our suicide rate increased by 13% in the period from 2012 to 2017. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Alaskans ages 10 to 64, and the sixth leading cause of death overall in our state. Given the severity and magnitude of suicide in Alaska, it is essential that our state continue to dedicate resources to support suicide prevention strategies.

The SSPC has been an excellent resource to help guide statewide suicide prevention efforts, including those efforts by our Coalition in Juneau over the past ten years. The recently revised "State of Alaska Suicide Prevention Plan" 2018-2022, "Recasting the Net – Promoting Wellness to Prevent Suicide in Alaska" provides a framework for suicide prevention from the individual to community to statewide levels. Council members come from a cross-section of our population to ensure representation of different perspectives. The statewide prevention summits the State Council has co-sponsored were especially valuable for building relationships between our widespread communities and fostering collaboration and resource sharing.

Suicide is a complex public health problem. The SSPC has been instrumental in fostering communication to break the silence and stigma surrounding the difficult social problems contributing to suicide and preventing people in distress from receiving the help they need. There are many challenges and much work ahead. The SSPC has built a solid foundation for continuing and expanding the good work of Alaskan communities to find the best ways to nurture healthy citizens who value life and can be part of a healthy Alaska. Please continue to authorize and fund the State Suicide Prevention Council.

Respectfully,

Jorden Nigro  
Chair, Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition