



National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami

Alaska

February 27, 2019

Alaska State Legislature

Re: Letter of support for SB 10 and HB 22, extending the “sunset” date for the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council.

To Whom It May Concern:

NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness), is the largest grass-roots organization in the country providing education and advocacy for families affected by mental illness. NAMI Alaska is the Alaska state chapter of NAMI. There are nearly 1,000 local NAMI affiliates, nationwide, of which four are in Alaska: NAMI Anchorage, NAMI Fairbanks, NAMI Juneau, and NAMI North Slope. These are volunteer-centered organizations providing classes and support for families impacted by mental illness.

NAMI Alaska supports SB 10 and HB 22, which would extend the “sunset” date of the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to 2027.

Alaska, tragically, leads the nation in rates of suicide. We must do what we can to reduce the horrific toll suicide takes on Alaskan families. Suicide is preventable. “Treat the mental illness; prevent the suicide.” Like most illnesses, the earlier mental illness is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcome.

Information, and access to resources prevent suicide. The Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is an inexpensive and effective way to reduce Alaska’s rate of suicide. Extending the sunset date – keeping the Council from having to close its doors – is essentially free. Please support these bills. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sheila Harris
Executive Director
NAMI Alaska



March 22, 2019

Sent Via Electronic Mail

The Hon. Geran Tarr
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Rm. 128
Juneau, AK 99801
Representative.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov

Re: Support the continuation of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council;
Addition of Tribal Health Representative

Dear Representative Tarr:

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) writes to express our strong support for House Bill 22, An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date. We also support the Alaska Native Health Board's (ANHB) efforts to amend HB 22, and its companion bill SB 10, by adding a tribal health representative, which would be nominated by ANHB and its Tribal Behavioral Health Directors Committee.

AFN is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Our membership includes all 12 regional for-profit corporations, all 12 regional non-profit organizations, 171 for-profit village corporations, 191 federally recognized tribes, as well as a number of tribal consortia that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. AFN serves as the principle forum and voice of the Alaska Native community in dealing with critical issues of public policy and government, including state legislation.

Suicide prevention, education, and awareness have been priorities of AFN for many years. Our former board member William Martin serves as a Vice Chair for the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council (SSPC). We fully support the continuation of the SSPC, and the work of ANHB.

Alaska Natives and American Indians are the only ethnic population specifically listed as at-risk for suicide by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Since suicide disproportionately affects Alaska Natives and American Indians, AFN fully supports SSPC's continuation, and we see the value of expanding the council to include a subject matter expert in prevention who has program experience in the tribal health system. The individual's knowledge and experience would add tremendous value to the work of the SSPC. Suicide is preventable, and an

additional tribal representative on the SSPC would be a critical resource in providing a unique perspective to promote resiliency and raise awareness.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions about the content of this letter at (907) 263-1310 or nborrowmeo@nativefederation.org. Thank you for all you do on behalf of Alaska.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Borrowmeo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "B".

Nicole Borrowmeo
Executive Vice President and General Counsel



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.

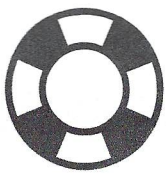
The suicide rate in Alaska continues to be extremely high. In 2017, Alaska's suicide rate was the second highest in the country. The problem of suicide continues to escalate in our state; our suicide rate increased by 13% in the period from 2012 to 2017. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Alaskans 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



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Alaska Chapter
2440 E Tudor Rd. #191
Anchorage, AK 99507

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Matson Navigation

Kim Isada
Community Volunteer

20 March 2019

The Honorable Representative Tarr
State Capitol Building
120 4th St. , Room 126
Juneau, AK, 99801

RE: **SB 10** (Kawasaki)/**HB 22** (Tarr)

Dear Representative Tarr:

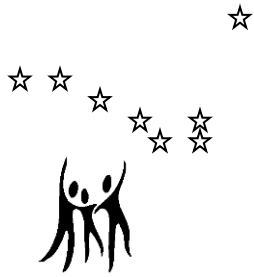
The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is pleased to write you in support of SB 10/HB 22, to extend the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council until 2027. Established in 2001, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council has served as an advisory council to the Legislature and Governor regarding suicide awareness and prevention. In 2018, the council released an updated 2018-2022 state plan, *Recasting the Net: Promoting wellness to prevent suicide in Alaska*.

The council serves the public interest by actively broadening the public's awareness of suicide prevention and coordinating the efforts of other suicide prevention entities including state agencies, regional groups, coalitions, and local communities. Overall suicide ranks as the fifth leading cause of death in Alaska, it is the first leading cause of death among residents ages 15-24 and the second leading cause of death among those 25-34. We must continue to let the council advise us on this public health problem and coordinate efforts across the state to save lives.

Please support SB 10/HB 22

Dennis Lasley
Board Chair
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Anchorage, AK 99515
Ph: 907.250.1890
Email: Alaska@afsp.org

AFSP Mission:
*To save lives and bring hope
to those affected by suicide.*



ALPHA

☆
ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed to Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

March 25, 2019

The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz, Co-Chair
The Honorable Tiffany Zulkosky, Co-Chair
House Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Spohnholz and Zulkosky and Committee Members:

The Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) is a non-profit membership organization with over 150 health members dedicated to improving the health and well-being for all Alaskans. ALPHA is also the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association.

ALPHA strongly supports HB 22, to extend Alaska's Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to June 30, 2027. As outlined in Alaska Statute 44.29.350, the functions of the Council are necessary to improve health and wellness throughout the state by reducing suicide and its effects on individuals, families and communities.

The Statewide Suicide Council has done a remarkable job of raising awareness; coordinating and improving statewide prevention programs and resources; collaborating with national, state and local stakeholders and resources; and developing, updating, and implementing statewide prevention plans.

Reducing suicide rates in Alaska has been one of the goals of the [State's Healthy Alaskans 2020](#) and is also a priority of ALPHA. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, suicide rates in Alaska remain high and still much higher than the national average.

It is crucial that the Statewide Suicide Council continue its work and remain the primary entity in Alaska for Alaska's collective approach to preventing suicide.

Sincerely,

Patty Owen
Policy Committee Co-Chair

Jayne Andreen
Policy Committee Co-chair

cc: Representative Tarr
Statewide Suicide Prevention Council



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education

Anchorage
3601 C Street, Suite 740
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5923
Main: 907.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

March 25, 2019

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol, Room 128
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Representative Tarr:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the "Council") fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

We partner with other boards and commissions all the time, and have been very supportive of the great work that Suicide Prevention Council has done to bring awareness, support and hope to Alaskans on this very difficult issue. Therefore, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education wishes to offer support for HB 22, to extend the "Statewide Suicide Prevention Council" to June 30, 2027. As you are aware, Alaska has a very high suicide rate and it affects all segments of our population, including those who experience intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. The Council stands ready to assist in the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to increase outreach and awareness to our beneficiaries. The Council itself lost one of its valued employees to suicide four years ago and our entire staff and members mourn her loss deeply.

Thank you for taking the lead to extend the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council for ten more years.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MAGGIE WINSTON".

Maggie Winston, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Reinhart".

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION – ALASKA CHAPTER

March 7, 2019

Representative Tarr
State Capitol Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: **SB 10** (Kawasaki)/**HB 22** (Tarr)

Dear Representative Tarr:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – Alaska Chapter is pleased to write you in support of SB 10/HB 22, to extend the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council until 2027. Established in 2001, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council has served as an advisory council to the Legislature and Governor regarding suicide awareness and prevention. In 2018, the council released an updated 2018-2022 state plan, *Recasting the Net: Promoting wellness to prevent suicide in Alaska*.

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This Chapter of the American Foundation supports SB 10/HB 22

Sincerely,

James Biela
POB 3543
Bethel, AK 99559
Lead Ambassador/Suicide Survivor Outreach Coordinator/
National Public Policy board member