



March 20, 2021

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Senate
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Governor's FY22 Budget: Operating (SB49), Mental Health (SB51)

Dear Co-Chairs and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

NAMI Fairbanks would like to voice our opposition to the Governor's FY22 state operating budget actions to utilize Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's Trust Reserve Funds in lieu of state general fund dollars, as well as the reduction in funding for Public Assistance Field Services, the Civil Legal Services Fund, Sobering Centers, Therapeutic Courts, and the proposed \$6 million funding source change for API from state general funds to the Mental Health Trust Reserve funds.

We support the Trust and partner advisory boards in directing state resources and implementing measures that expand Alaska's revenue base, preserve its savings accounts, and protect dedicated funds for the purposes they were statutorily/constitutionally intended. Increased revenue means continued resources for critical programs and services that support Alaska's most vulnerable citizens.

Adequate services are essential to persons living with mental illness in achieving stability. Alaskans experiencing mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcoholism, traumatic brain injury, or Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder are all Trust beneficiaries. In many cases, these beneficiaries are some of the most vulnerable populations in the state.

NAMI Alaska supports a comprehensive array of treatment, services and supports that address prevention, early intervention, recovery, and support should be available to children, adolescents and adults living with mental illnesses and their families. NAMI Alaska applauds the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (Trust) and its support of behavioral health programs through the [Alaska Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan](#) now in place.

By statute, the Trust must make recommendations for state general fund spending which are developed in coordination with the Trust's contribution to funding state programs. This year, the Trust developed a list of general fund recommendations for many programs/projects/grants to support Trust beneficiaries. The Governor's proposed FY22 budget replaces the board of trustee-approved general fund recommendations with \$4.29 million in Trust Budget Reserves. We understand these direct

appropriations were not discussed with the Trust and were not approved by the board of trustees. An overdraft on the Trust's Reserves could have negative impacts on current and future spending and support for Trust beneficiaries.

Cuts to the mental health budget on the State of Alaska level, especially in regard to mental wellness and mental health programs, do not save money in the long run. In the long run, investing in behavioral health services will bring a large return-on-investment to the state.

NAMI Alaska is opposed to any reductions in these budgets, including diversion of Trust funds without the Trust's approval.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,

Jeanette Grasto

Jeanette Grasto
President