

House Finance Committee

Public Testimony
HB 281 Op Budget

Emails received to
House.Finance@akleg.gov

By 5:00pm on March 3, 2022

From: Cathy Weiford <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 2:43 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Independent Living Center Support

Hello,

I am writing to voice my support for more funding for Independent Living Centers across our state.

I can not say enough praise for how the ILC has helped my family. A year ago, my husband suffered a stroke following a brain biopsy, which left him with paralysis on his right side of his body. As he is no longer able to walk, we had to put in a wheelchair ramp to get him from the car to our home. Living in a snowy area, this was no easy feat and very costly. We were able to receive a generous grant from ILC to cover some of the costs. As my husband is no longer able to work and I am his caregiver, we have suffered much financially.

We also have been fortunate enough to have access to the ILC's loaner program here in Seward, with use of hospital bed, walker, wheelchair, etc. I honestly don't know how we would have gotten by without.

And finally, each and every of the ILC staff we have worked with are amazing and caring people who strive to make life better for those who need it.

Again, please increase financial funding for Independent Living Centers statewide so they can continue to do the great job they have been doing.

Thank you,
Cathy Weiford

(907) [REDACTED]

From: Sandi Trumbower <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 1:33 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Public School funding

I am writing in support of the additional \$50 million in funding proposed for K-12 public education. Education of our youth is our best investment in our future! I live in Anderson, AK and Denali Borough is seriously planning to shut down two of three schools in our district due to lack of adequate funding. This is unacceptable as it will result in about 3 hours of time on the school bus for our students. Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

From: Tracey Schaeffer <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 1:32 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB281

For the record my name is Tracey Schaeffer from Kotzebue, Alaska. I am testifying in support of the additional \$50 million in funding proposed for K-12 Education. I encourage you to approve this and still want to point out that long term funding increases are needed to keep up with inflation. Funding for school nurses and school counselors is crucial to address physical and mental health needs which have all increased due to the pandemic. In Kotzebue, we have seen many people move to Anchorage during the pandemic and as a result we have already lost funding. Those families are very likely to return and we will be even more short staffed. Many educators chose to leave here as the salaries have not increased with the cost of housing. There is no preschool in most communities which is a huge loss and a research based way to help kids succeed in school and life.

Tracey Schaeffer, Occupational Therapist
Arctic OT Services, 907-355-6025
Fax: 1-888-822-0741

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From: Claudia Tessier <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 1:12 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Increase the BSA for FNSBSD !

Members of the Finance Committee:

Please consider increasing the BSA for the FNSB Schools! Our School Board has yet to approve the 2022-2023 budget for FNSB. An email was sent to music teachers stating that there will be no Band or Orchestra at Elementary Schools for the 2022-2023 school year due to budget cuts. Before any further cuts are considered, remember 4th Grade Band and Orchestra were cut from the 2021-2022 Budget. This was supposed to be temporary. Now they want to cut 5th Grade? Additionally, in order to cover prep periods for three schools, for the 2021-2022 school year three instrumental teachers were taken out of their positions which impacted 18 schools! Last year those cuts were justified by telling us it was to make things work with a staff reduction.

I cannot imagine any student taking up an instrument beginning in the 6th Grade! I can however imagine students whose parents could afford instruments and private lessons being so far advanced it would intimidate the most confident student to join the school Band or Orchestra in Middle School.

Becoming part of a group team provides an avenue of learning which will benefit students no matter what their futures hold. Not all students excel at sports, writing or speaking - Band and Orchestra can provide another option. Research from Maryville University confirmed music provides a definite psychological link between mental health and learning development. It stated

this was one reason why music engagement is encouraged among young children whose brain can easily be molded to become more efficient in processing thoughts. It also explained that playing music allows students to express themselves in ways that listening does not allow. I encourage you, our State Legislators, to increase the BSA to make up for the steady cost increases to provide education for our students. With an increase there could be funding for Band and Orchestra in our Elementary Schools for the 2022-2023 school year! Do what's best for the students! Please don't allow budget cuts to take the instruments away from them!!

Claudia Tessier



Fairbanks, AK 99709

From: Barbara Rath <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 1:06 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for FY23 Budget

Importance: High

Attention House Finance Committee,

I am writing to express support for the IDD community by urging the committee to support the FY23 Budget for the following topics:

1. Many people have been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in the past two years. People are reporting and needing treatment for behavioral health issues at a much high rate than we have seen in the past. This is a chronically underserved population with a desperate need for services. Increasing funding for the Behavioral Grants will support on-going operation for our community to provide the immediate supports to some of our most vulnerable Alaskans.
2. As an administrator who manages provision of services to people who receive HCBwaiver, I see firsthand the struggles individuals and families go through waiting for services. I urge the committee to increase the limit for the IDD waitlist to receive an IDD waiver from 50 to 70 for draw each year. I also am very excited to hear that the state is looking to create a 5-year plan to eliminate the waitlist all together. This would be huge, to think that all of our Alaskans who experience disabilities could have supports. No one is waiting, no one is suffering, families have supports and individuals are engaged in a flexible system designed to let them lead their best lives. This along with rate adjustments over this 5 year plan would help not just the individuals, but it would breathe life back into providers who carry out the needed services and supports. It would be ideal to be able to recruit staff back into our field by offering a livable wage.

Please vote to support the FY23 Budget and continue to invest in our social services communities. Thank you for your time in reading my testimony and all you do for Alaska!

Respectfully,

Barbara Rath, MSW

ED/Chief Executive Officer

[The Arc of Anchorage](#) | 2211 Arca Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508

T 907.777.0127 F 907.272.2161 | brath@thearcofanchorage.org



65
The Arc
of Anchorage

Celebrating the potential of people
who experience disabilities for 65 years

All donations make a difference

Donate gently used clothing and household
items in our local bins or using our free
pick-up service and help us Achieve!

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From: Anna Roys <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 12:56 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB281

Thank you for your service. The funds outside the BSA are appreciated! Please understand that the students of Alaska need stable long-term funding and increases to keep up with inflation and the needs of students who are the future of Alaska. Please act to take care of these precious young ones.

From: Steve Harrison <[REDACTED]@akleg.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 12:47 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Education funding

Greetings!

My name is Steve Harrison, an educator in a Russian village outside of Homer. This is my 26th year teaching but first in Alaska.

I saw firsthand what budget cuts did to education in Florida. There was a group called '50thnomore.com' that tried to turn the tide, but another round of cuts put us so far behind that it would be nearly impossible to catch up. From those cuts, assistant coaches were cut. National Board Certified teachers were no longer compensated. After school programs cut, services for SPED were cut, and the class size amendment was summarily ignored. Waves of teachers resigned and a wealth of knowledge was lost. Expectations were lowered and now no one wants to get into education, and Florida students are the most ill-prepared for adulthood in the nation.

We already face a 'brain drain' from our best and brightest students leaving the state due to lack of opportunity. Let's not 'Florida' Alaska. We deserve better. They've given up. We cannot. Too much is riding on this.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

Steve Harrison

From: Don Pendergrast <[REDACTED]@akleg.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 11:48 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget Testimony

Deal legislators,

Alaska has a fortunate windfall with the increased high prices for oil. We should take advantage of being flush and fund our savings account, the budget reserve, which has been depleted in recent years. I do not support using these funds for increasing our dividends. We can do more good for all and our state by increasing funding for the following:

1. University of Alaska. A great state must have a great university system. Past cuts diminish our university and our state. We must prepare for the future by having a well educated and trained population. The surest way to insure a prosperous future is to fund education.

2. K-12 Schools. Ditto, see above. To prepare for the future we need to support education. Future economic growth depends upon education our greatest resource, our children.

3. Alaska Marine Highway System. Although I live in the great Interior, our citizens in Southeast depend on the Marine Highway System. Recent cuts have decimated this critical service. We do not need to treat them like second class citizens. Make the Marine Highway system seaworthy again; restore those services.

4. Public Safety. We need more Troopers and support for them. We should have specialized Troopers to deal with social issues rather than criminal issues. I'd like to see more rigorous traffic enforcement, although I realize that is neither criminal or social, but is a public safety issue.

5. Pioneer Homes. How can we respect our elders by cutting funds for the Pioneer Homes? They deserve our support and respect.

6. DOT road maintenance. As our climate warms our roads deteriorate. Rather than building new roads, please take care of our existing roads and highway infrastructure.

7. Fisheries. Alaska still has world class commercial and sport fisheries, although they are suffering from the one-two punch of climate change and poor management (over fishing). Our renewable resources should be our highest priority and managed for sustainability. Keep Bristol Bay free from mining; take care of our renewable resources.

8. Air Quality. This is huge in Fairbanks. As I wright we are under a Stage 1 Alert. We need strict air quality regulation and enforcement. Our poor air quality is our "glass ceiling" for growth in the Fairbanks Area. Please fund the stove exchange program, monitoring and enforcement efforts, and a switch to alternatives and cleaner burning fuels.

Thank you,

Don Pendergrast



From: Key Coalition of Alaska <keycoalitionofalaska@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 10:57 AM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Testimony on Operating Budget

To: Members of the House Finance Committee

From: The Key Coalition of Alaska

Re: Testimony on Operating Budget

The Key Coalition of Alaska is in full support of the proposed amendments to the budget that the HSS department develop a five-year plan, in collaboration with stakeholders, to eradicate the waitlist for the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities waiver and to prevent waitlists for other Home and Community Based Waivers, and submit the plan to the Co-Chairs of the Finance Committees and the Legislative Finance Division by December 20, 2022, and that the department draw a minimum of 70 new individuals from the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities waiver waitlist in FY23 to receive services.

Eradicating the waitlist for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been a Key Campaign platform focus for decades, and we are very grateful to Representative Josephson and Representative Snyder for introducing these amendments and to the members of the House Finance Sub-Committee for their full support.

Supporting these amendments helps to assure all Alaskans with disabilities have access to needed supports to live full and meaningful lives in communities of choice across the state, and tangibly supports the DD Shared Vision.

Thank you for your consideration!

**Michele Girault
Board President
Key Coalition of Alaska**

From: Casie Warner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 10:25 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Public Testimony FY23 Operating Budget

Please forward to House Finance Committee

My name is Casie Warner and I live in Seward Alaska, which has been my home since childhood. First I would like to thank the House Finance Committee for their support of the proposed FY23 operating budget which includes critical resources for early childhood such as childcare benefits, Pre K and other family supports. I have been following the work being done in Juneau and appreciate the designation of federal funds from last year that supported the child care sector but there is still more to be done. Seward currently experiences a 78% deficit in licensed childcare opportunities and our community has been working hard to address the deficit. Now is not the time to cut supports and hinder the work being done to support the economic growth of Seward. The Seward economy is suffering a loss of viable workforce and the opportunity for economic growth past the tourism industry due to this deficit. Seward is in a unique position to diversify our local economy through ocean research, increased coast guard representation, boat maintenance, increased AVTEC enrollment, and the fishing industry; just to name a few. Seward will be losing our one and only pre-k program in school year 22/23 leaving the community with no pre-k options. Please increase investment in pre-k and other early childhood

programs. Securing funding for early childhood programs is now, to ensure communities like Seward can pursue economic growth by making the community viable and attractive to raise ones family.

Casie Warner

[REDACTED]

Seward AK

99664

Cell [REDACTED]

From: Anne Biberman <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 10:20 AM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Increase the BSA

I write in support of the recommended increase of \$50 million to the Base Student Allocation. Flat funding for our schools has resulted in school closures, loss of programs, and valuable, passionate, professional teachers.

This pencils out to about an extra \$195 per year per student in Alaska, a small investment that will have a significant rate of return.

The BSA has not seen an increase in seven years. During that time, we've seen our schools increase class sizes and force cuts of important programs to stretch district dollars. This \$50 million increase represents one piece of a multi-pronged effort to ensure that our children have every opportunity to excel in Alaska's classrooms. Schools both need and deserve adequate funding, especially as everyday costs are skyrocketing. From rural sports and elementary music programs being cut, vocational education going away to class size increases, the impacts on our students of flat funding for seven years is real and harmful. We can, and must, do better.

As I advocate to our local school board to keep valuable programs from the chopping block, I can't help but be aware that they can't do that without adequate funding from the state. We have to provide them the means to do that.

Please fund education in our state. It is the very definition of investing in our future.

Respectfully submitted

Anne Biberman

Fairbanks

From: Mary Calmes <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 5:23 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget Testimony

To whom it may concern:

Last night I listened to the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board meeting being broadcast over KUAC FM. Thank you public radio!

I am chagrined at the state of our priorities in this state.

Education is paramount. It is fundamental. It is indispensable. And yet over the years it has taken a back seat for funding.

And what do I hear our governor talking about when it comes to state monies and its allocation: a bigger PFD.

The PFD was never meant to override paying for the basic responsibilities of government:

education (both K-12 and the STATE University system),

transportation needs (roads, bridges, ferries and marine highway systems,

public safety,

environmental protections to maintain clean water, air and wildlife resources,

Pioneer Homes,

and State Parks.

This is what government is in place to pay for, maintain and provide for future generations.

The State of Alaska is not here to put money into the pockets of its residents. That was never the deal.

The PFD was a way of acknowledging that the resources of this state belonged to all of us and if there was surplus

money, then to share that with Alaskans. But FIRST the fiscal responsibilities of what WE have determined to be the

basic foundations of a civilized society must be met.

Please forward fund education on all levels.

Communities and individuals have worked long and hard to build up our K-12 education and the University only to have the rug

pulled out from under them year after year. This is no way to run anything. Yes it is important to take inventory and work to

make systems more efficient, to reassess needs, and to acknowledge changes that require shifts in delivery of services.

But underfunding is not the means to that end. It only slows the process.

The Marine Highway system in Alaska makes sense. The Ambler Road Project does not make sense. Two hundred and eleven miles

of road built by the state to facilitate a mining enterprise is NOT a public priority especially since that road is not for public use. Why does

the State feel that they need to pay for a road that benefits only a commercial mining operation when they can't come up with the \$\$ to

keep the Marine Highway system functional? Not to mention the havoc such a road would wreak on permafrost lands and contribute to

the degradation of permafrost and only serve to speed up the effects already evidenced in global warming.

Go back to the basics and fund what we as Alaskans have determined to be the priorities of government spending.

Respectfully,

Mary A. Calmes

[REDACTED]
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Mary Calmes

Laughter: The tangible evidence of hope.

From: Deborah Boettcher <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 2:45 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Funding Public Radio

Hello Alaska Legislators,
I am writing on behalf of public radio in rural communities and hope that you will support funding for it. KHNS in Haines broadcasts local news about Haines and Skagway 3 times daily. It's the only source for up-to-date news since Skagway's newspaper is published every two weeks. Plus, not having a television, I depend on it for emergency messages, weather advisories and marine weather, state and world news. When I lived in a remote location outside of Petersburg, it was my sole company at times and Muskeg Messages were how people would communicate with me. A similar service is provided on KHNS, as well.

Public radio is truly a vital source of information for rural communities. Thank you very much for considering funding it in this year's budget. Sincerely, Deborah Boettcher

From: Gary Miller <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 2, 2022 3:30 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget

Here are my budget priorities:

1. Fund education fully – I have a 13-year-old in school.
2. Increase the funding to our ferries – my family depends on the ferries and with the cuts to the system, we no longer can trust getting between ports.

Don't just do federal stimulus money, put state money into the system too. We need new ferries, just like people up north need new roads and repairs to them.

Thank you.

Gary Miller

[REDACTED]

Juneau, AK 99801-8211

[REDACTED]

From: Eileen Arnold <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 5:01 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Budget Testimony

Greetings,

My name is Eileen Arnold and I'm the Executive Director of the Tundra Women's Coalition in Bethel, Alaska. We are a shelter and resource center for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

I'd like to thank the finance committee for continuing to fund victim services--especially through the shortfall VOCA. We appreciate that support and we are using it to continue to provide services.

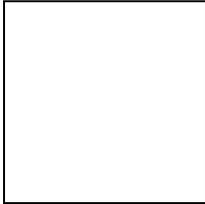
I wanted to highlight how we use our funding. One thing that I'm very proud about in our region is our excellent collaboration with Multi-Disciplinary partners like law enforcement and medical. We have thrown a lot of resources, intention, and time into training our partners on high lethality situations like recognizing and responding to strangulation and I believe this has resulted in better services for those victims.

We've also expanded our SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) response to several subregional clinics in our area in an effort to make SART responses more available to communities that are extremely remote. We're doing this through Tele-SART/Tele-Medical advancements, and though it's been a challenge during these COVID times, we've learned a lot and made the SART response available to people in the most remote communities.

Finally, our advocate have created protocols and an MOU with local and state law enforcement to begin an Advocate Initiated Response (AIR) in our communities. Lots of times when violence happens the perpetrator gets arrested which means the victim might not need shelter, but in that process doesn't get hooked up with victim services, missing an opportunity. With our AIR, local and state law enforcement will seek the permission of victims to release their names and contact information to advocates so our staff can call them and see if they have any non-resident needs, even if they don't need shelter. We believe this will help address the high levels of violence that exist in our region and wouldn't be able to do it without the excellent partnerships that we enjoy in Bethel.

--

Eileen Arnold
She, Her, Hers
Executive Director
Tundra Women's Coalition
907-543-3444



NOTICE-

Tundra Women's Coalition, Box 2029, Bethel, AK (907)543-3444

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Sent: Monday, February 28, 2022 9:42 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Grant Funding

Representatives -

I am a member of Wasilla Senior Center, an AARP volunteer and obviously a senior, so I am very aware of the need for SeniorHome and Community Based Services. The HCBS allow seniors to stay in their homes, rather than being forced into much more expensive assisted living or nursing homes.

Please support the \$912,200 increment to Senior Community Based Grants as proposed by the House Finance HSS Subcommittee.

Most seniors, as I do, wish to age in their homes and SCBG funding has been flat for the past 10 years with a 50% increase in senior population. You are probably aware that Alaska's senior population is increasing faster than any other state.

This increase will essentially save money and allows seniors a better quality of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mary Jo Towne

Wasilla, Alaska

From: Christine Hess <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 3:26 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject:

For the record my name is Bryan Hawkins and I am the Harbormaster for the Port of Homer.

The Port of Homer is working with the Corps of Engineers to begin a General Investigation Study to expand Homers Port facilities, for the purpose of building a dedicated large boat harbor. We are requesting State Department of Transportation receive authorization and 750,000 in funding to be used as matching funds for the purpose of joining and completing this important study for expanding maritime support infrastructure in Homer Alaska.

Bryan Hawkins
Port Director/Harbormaster
Pres. AAHPA



Homer Port & Harbor
4311 Freight Dock Road
Homer, AK 99603
(907)-235-3160 ext. 6203
(907) 399-6003 cell
bhawkins@ci.homer.ak.us

From: Becky Stoppa <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 4:35 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for Senior Community Based Grants

Dear House Finance Committee Members:

I am writing in support of the **\$912,200** increment to Senior Community Based Grants proposed by the House Finance HSS Subcommittee. As a former Senior In-Home Services

program manager at Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc., I saw firsthand the vital role that senior grant services play in helping Alaska seniors live as independently as possible for as long as possible.

- Senior grant services have remained essentially flat for the past ten years, neither keeping up with inflation or accounting for the 50% increase in Alaska's senior population during that time.
- These grants to senior centers and other non-profits across the state are used to provide meals on wheels, education and support for family caregivers, adult day services, transportation, help with chores at home and more – critical services that help older Alaskans to age in their own homes.
- Senior grant services are the most economical long-term care support services that help at an average of \$509. They help to avoid more expensive care and/or the need to move elders into facilities.

Please help support Alaska seniors by supporting the \$912,200 increment to Senior Community Based Grants.

Thank you,

Becky Stoppa
Wasilla

From: Lizette Stiehr <director@aaddalaska.org>

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 2:11 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Testimony on the Operating Budget

Dear Alaska House Finance Committee members:

AADD, the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities, is the statewide provider association, 65 members strong, of organizations supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

AADD stands in support of the proposed amendments to the budget that the HSS department develop a five-year plan, in collaboration with stakeholders, to eradicate the waitlist for the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities waiver and to prevent waitlists for other Home and community [LS1](#) Based Waivers. The amendments require the department to submit the plan to the co-Chairs of the finance Committees and the Legislative Finance Division by December 20, 2022 and that the department draw a minimum of 70 new individuals from the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities waiver waitlist in FY23 to receive services.

AADD recognizes that with over 700 individuals on the waitlist, they are primarily drawn when a crisis occurs and they require more extensive and more expensive services than when they first request services. Additionally there are a number of aging parents, whose adult children have been on the waitlist for years that are concerned that the transition to services will only happen upon their death. Please support the eradication of the IDD waitlist.

We are very grateful to the members of the House Committee who have responded to this Key Coalition priority which supports the DD Shared Vision.

[\[LS1\]](#)

Sincerely,

Lizette Stiehr

AADD Executive Director

907-854-0322 phone and text

<http://www.aaddalaska.org>

We build better lives. From the Shared Vision work

Alaskans share a Vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our Vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the stat



AADD
ALASKA ASSOCIATION ON
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
P.O. Box 241742
Anchorage, Alaska 99524

To facilitate a united provider voice for best practices, advocacy, partnerships and networking.

March 3, 2023

Dear Alaska House Finance Committee members:

AADD, the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities, is the statewide provider association, 65 members strong, of organizations supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

AADD stands in support of the proposed amendments to the budget that the HSS department develop a five-year plan, in collaboration with stakeholders, to eradicate the waitlist for the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities waiver and to prevent waitlists for other Home and community Based Waivers. The amendments require the department to submit the plan to the co-Chairs of the finance Committees and the Legislative Finance Division by December 20, 2022 and that the department draw a minimum of 70 new individuals from the Intellectual and Development Disabilities waiver waitlist in FY23 to receive services.

Commented [LS1]:

AADD recognizes that with over 700 individuals on the waitlist, they are primarily drawn when a crisis occurs and they require more extensive and more expensive services than when they first request services. Additionally there are a number of aging parents, whose adult children have been on the waitlist for years that are concerned that the transition to services will only happen upon their death. Please support the eradication of the IDD waitlist.

We are very grateful to the members of the House Committee who have responded to this Key Coalition priority which supports the DD Shared Vision.

Sincerely,

Lizette Stiehr
Executive Director, AADD

City of Seward
PO Box 167
Seward, Alaska 99664



City Manager's Office
Janette Bower, City Manager
Phone: 907-224-4012
Email: jbower@cityofseward.net

March 3rd, 2022

To Whom it may concern,

On behalf of the City of Seward and Happy Youth Programs and Educational Resources (HYPER), we would like to inform you of our local efforts in addressing our licensed childcare deficit. The City of Seward has granted HYPER \$500,000 of the Norwegian Cruise Line donation to address the desperate need for licensed childcare in our community. However, these funds are only a starting point due to the overhead of operating a childcare center which has extremely thin margins and unattainable without federal, state, and foundational subsidies.

There have been two community surveys conducted in Seward recently that included data related to the lack of early childhood care resources. The surveys identified only two available licensed childcare settings, leaving Seward with 78% deficit.

The definition of a childcare desert is any census tract with more than fifty children under age 5 that contains either no childcare providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots. From the information collected through the community surveys, Seward qualifies as a childcare desert.

The work being done under HYPER has experienced barrier after barrier in securing funding for increasing licensed childcare opportunities due to majority if not all state funding is being allocated for childcare stabilization. However, Seward has near to no childcare programs that qualify for this funding.

Outlined in the *Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025* produced by The Early Childhood Alaska project it is stated under objective 4: Accessibility it states, 'Increase the number of licensed and regulated early childhood education programs, prioritizing equitable access in rural and underserved areas of the state'. The City of Seward would like to support HYPER in their work to encourage the state to start allocating funds to support this objective.



Janette Bower
City of Seward

From: Alan Nickell <anickell@cityofseward.net>

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 10:43 AM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for Jail budget increase

Please accept the attached letter of support for the proposed \$4 million increase to the State of Alaska Community Jails.

Thank you,

Alan D. Nickell
Chief of Police
Seward Police Department
(907) 224-3338

**SEWARD POLICE DEPT.
P.O. BOX 167
SEWARD, ALASKA 99664**



**Main Office (907)224-3338
Animal Control (907)224-7495
Community Jail (907)224-3645
Motor Vehicles (907)224-4037
Fax (907)224-8480**

House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Seward Police Department and the citizens of Seward we serve, I would like to extend my thanks and support of the proposed \$4 million increase to the Community Jail budget. As many of you are now aware, these State of Alaska facilities which are operated by local municipalities by contract are sorely underfunded and in these economically challenging times are becoming nearly impossible to keep operating.

If the proposed monies are spread equally among the 15 jail facilities, I can see our jail operating at levels of funding which will ease some of the strain. While this will not cover all our expenses, it would surely allow us to remain in operation until the next contract can be resolved. It is important to the Seward community to have the jail here and we desperately want to continue our long partnership with the state.

Just as a reminder for quick reference, the current contract of the Seward Community Jail is for \$368,952.00. The current annual budget to keep the Seward Jail operating is \$785,852.00. This difference of \$416,900.00 is too much burden for a small community like Seward to manage. If you approve these additional funds, you are demonstrating you care about the municipalities, the citizens, and are interested in keeping these partnerships alive and functioning.

In closing, we look forward to working with the state in the years ahead and we sincerely hope we can get these contract issues resolved in such a way we may all be satisfied. Again, we thank our legislators for their attention on this critical situation and the willingness to take meaningful action to assist us.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Nickell
Chief of Police

From: Tommy Sheridan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 9:08 AM
To: LIO Cordova <Lio.Cordova@akleg.gov>; House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: UA budget amendment advocacy/testimony

Hello,

There was a meeting of the House Finance Committee's University of Alaska subcommittee last Friday, February 25, where the following language and attached flyer were discussed: http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=32&docid=79890

Friday's discussion is further described at <https://www.alaska.edu/govrelations/report/> as follows:

"Amendment 4 from Representative LeBon (R-Fairbanks) adds \$7 million to support UA's mariculture programs including UAS' undergraduate fisheries and overall workforce capacity expansion.

The subcommittee passed the first three amendments and they recommended the fourth concerning mariculture, should be taken up by the House Finance Committee where members would have the ability for a more in-depth discussion about it."

I have longstanding ties to the University of Alaska Southeast Fisheries Technology Program, which is implied in this budgetary amendment request. I have advocated for the program over the years in public forums such as these, and if the opportunity exists for public comment in this forum, I would appreciate any insights on when and how I can testify in support of this opportunity. I am a resident of Cordova, and so have included our local LIO office on this email.

Thank you!

Tommy Sheridan (he/him)
Sheridan Consulting
Email: [REDACTED]

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/tommy-sheridan-9b369115b](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tommy-sheridan-9b369115b)

"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."--Harry S. Truman



Invest in the new blue economy



UA is actively working on expanding opportunities in mariculture.

Mariculture, North Pacific Fisheries, Arctic and Pacific North Ocean Sciences \$7.0M

Alaska's coastline is longer than all other 49 states combined, and roughly two-thirds of the nation's fishery is harvested from Alaskan waters. Within the state, the combined seafood and fishery industries are the largest private employer. At the same time, environmental factors threaten continued success of wild harvest. A new industry is emerging, seaweed and shellfish farming, called mariculture. UA is actively working on expanding opportunities in mariculture. Mariculture can become the economic driver for the state as the field is only in its infancy. There are applications for pharmaceuticals, food additives, and food stability. The Governor's Mariculture Task Force set a goal to grow a \$100 million industry in 20 years, with university training and research and development being critical to reaching this goal. UAF and UAS coordinate with state and federal agencies in fisheries, mariculture, and ocean sciences making UA a leader in these arenas. Investment will increase Alaska's market share in a global economy.

Investment Priorities

- Funding (\$5.0M) would support efforts to build capacity in Decision Support for Production Scale Development (including graduate workforce research and partnerships) to:
 - build workforce capacity in Fisheries/Mariculture for reducing harmful algal blooms pervasive in Alaska;
 - develop a decision support tool for stakeholders to assess economic feasibility of production-scale hatchery supported mariculture in Alaska;
 - establish foundational genetic infrastructure for seaweed farming in South Central Alaska;
 - develop applications for kelp mariculture;
 - evaluate climate and local environmental factors on economic impacts to fishery dependent communities; and
 - engage and strengthen connections with coastal and Indigenous communities to answer relevant research questions and train the workforce.
- Funding (\$1.75M) would be used for maricultural and undergraduate fisheries in southeast Alaska.
- Funding (\$0.25M) will support the Institute of Social & Economic Research (ISER) research studying the Economic Shock and Workforce Development in Commercial Fisheries. Project will provide a better understanding of how shocks in commercial fisheries impact community employment and youth educational outcomes.

From: Schoonover, Bev K (HSS) <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 3:19 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: Tibbett, Teri (HSS) <teri.tibbett@alaska.gov>; Hopkins, Stephanie F (HSS) <stephanie.hopkins@alaska.gov>; Schofield, Renee (DOA sponsored) <renee@tss-safety.com>; Sharon Clark <aksherrie@gmail.com>
Subject: AMHB/ABADA LOC HB 281/HB 282

Dear House Finance Committee Members,
On behalf of the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, please find a letter of comment on HB 281: Approp: Operating Budget/Loans/Funds and HB 282 Approp: Mental Health Budget.
Thank you!

Beverly Schoonover
Executive Director
Statewide Suicide Prevention Council
Alaska Mental Health Board/Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Desk: 907-465-5114
Cell: 907-419-7421





March 3, 2022

Representative Neal Foster
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Kelly Merrick
House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 281: Approp: Operating Budget/Loans/Funds and HB 282 Approp: Mental Health Budget

Dear Representative Foster and Representative Merrick;

The joint mission of the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) is to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans. AMHB/ABADA are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska.

The following is an overview of House Finance budget subcommittee recommendations for the FY23 Operating and Mental Health Budgets that impact Alaskans with behavioral health disorders:

- **Behavioral Health Grant Programs (DOH).** The House HSS budget subcommittee reverses the Governor's recommendation to reduce funding to *Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants* and includes \$959,500 GF/MH (20% increase of UGF funds). Additionally, the subcommittee added +\$346,700 (20% increase of UGF funds) above the Governor's recommendation to the *Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention Grants* program. These grant programs pay providers for community based mental health and substance misuse services, residential and outpatient treatment, intervention services, FASD awareness, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol misuse prevention for Alaskan youth and Alaskans with behavioral health disorders and other disabilities.
- **Address the Intellectual-Developmental Disability (IDD) Waiver Waitlist (DOH).** The House HSS budget subcommittee adds +\$1,741. million (\$870,900 GF Match; \$870,900 Fed) (DOH) above the Governor's recommendation to reduce the IDD waitlist by a minimum of 70 individuals. Legislative intent language directs the department to submit a waiver amendment to the federal government for matching dollars, and to develop a five-year plan for eliminating the IDD Waiver waitlist for Home and Community-Based Services.
- **Centers for Independent Living (DOH).** The House HSS budget subcommittee recommends through intent language that the department distribute \$586,000 GF to Senior and Disabilities Services, and \$916,200 GF to Community-Based Grant recipients who serve seniors and people with disabilities across the lifespan. Community grant recipients for senior and disabilities services are experiencing an urgent need to address financial challenges currently experienced by for independent living service providers across the state.

- **General Relief/ Temporary Assisted Living (DOH).** The House HSS budget subcommittee recommends adding +\$3.4 million GF (DOH). Intent language directs the Department to increase the daily rate for General Relief/Temporary Assisted Living. The daily rate of \$70 has not increased since July 1, 2002. General Relief Assistance provides for the most basic needs of many Alaskans without the personal resources to meet an emergent need and ineligible for assistance from other programs. It is designed to meet the immediate, basic needs of Alaskans facing extreme financial crisis and is a temporary funding source for assisted living home placement.
- **Legal and Advocacy Services/Office of Public Advocacy (DOA).** The House DOA budget subcommittee adds +\$250,000 GF/Match (Inc) above the Governor’s recommendation for legal and advocacy services and additional Medicaid billing. The Office of Public Advocacy manages the finances, benefits, medical decisions, housing, and more for Alaskans who cannot independently manage their own affairs without support. Funds directly support clients under the care of Public Guardians.
- **Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) Program (DPS).** The House DPS budget subcommittee adds +\$2,328. million GF (DPS) for 10 new VPSO officers to serve in rural Alaska and adds +\$125,500 GF for a statewide VPSO tribal liaison. Intent language directs the department to work in conjunction with each VPSO program grantees’ leadership to improve recruitment and retention and to identify regional training opportunities, which can include training in crisis intervention, de-escalation, mental health first aid, and more.
- **Domestic Violence Sexual Assault (DVSA). (DPS)** The House DPS budget subcommittee recommends using +\$3.5 million GF (Inc) instead of federal funds for grants to community based DVSA programs statewide serving children and families experiencing violence in their homes or sexual assault. Grants support 24-hour emergency shelters, advocacy services, child advocacy centers, legal services for victims, and mental health care for young victims of DVSA and witnesses. These programs provide wrap-around services that promote safe access to appropriate services—housing, counseling, community support, peers, healthcare, and more.

Thank you for your consideration of these budget additions and thank you for your work and service to Alaska. Please reach out to our staff if you need additional information about these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Sharon Clark
AMHB Chair



Renee Schofield
ABADA Chair