



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

Electronic Mail

March 15, 2022

Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senate Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol Building
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: ASHNHA Supports Senate Bill 124

Dear Senator Wilson:

The Alaska State Hospital & Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is a membership organization representing Alaska's hospitals, nursing homes, home health and hospice agencies, and other health care partners. Our mission is to advance the shared interests of the health care industry to build an innovative, sustainable system of care for all Alaskans.

ASHNHA supports SB 124, which seeks to implement crisis stabilization services that will prove critical to improving Alaska's behavioral health system and our overall continuum of care. Allowing for facilities to support individuals in behavioral health crisis situations will offer additional supports to those in need, reduce stigma surrounding mental health, and promote resilience within our community by meeting people where they are in their darkest moments.

Alaska's hospitals see the impact of mental health crises every single day. The lack of availability of behavioral health services translates to challenges for finding an appropriate placement, and often results in patients waiting in hospital emergency departments for days and sometimes weeks until care becomes available.

Stakeholder groups comprised of providers, hospitals, tribal health, advocacy groups and government have been collaborating to find solutions and to begin building out Alaska's behavioral health continuum of care. There is no single solution, but rather a series of steps that must be taken to address the growing need to safely care for Alaskans experiencing behavioral health struggles. SB 124 is one such critical step to addressing these growing needs and advancing system transformation.

We urge the swift passage of SB 124 to allow for a more robust continuum of behavioral health care services for our communities. Thank you for your consideration and service to our state.

Sincerely,

Jared C. Kosin, JD, MBA
President & CEO



March 17, 2022

Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senate Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Testimony in support of HB172/SB 124 – Subacute Treatment Facilities

Dear Senator Wilson and members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee,

Please include this testimony in support of Senate Bill 124/House Bill 172 regarding Subacute Treatment Facilities into the Senate HSS committee records.

NAMI Alaska is part of NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

In fact, mental illness affects more than 1 in 5 adults (50 million people) in the U.S. In Alaska, that translates to over 108,000 individuals – more than three times the population of Juneau! We know first-hand how those with mental health challenges can struggle with an inadequate system of care, especially those who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Emergency rooms and jails are not the appropriate 'holding rooms' to assist those individuals who need professional evaluation and treatment in an expedient fashion. We need to reimagine our crisis response system to one that offers help, not handcuffs.

Subacute treatment facilities, (or crisis stabilization centers) are a proven care alternative offering prompt support and evaluation to assist with the real issues of why the individual was brought there in the first place, evaluating what resources they may require, and taking steps to help resolve their mental health challenges.

We support the work of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders including emergency service responders, hospitals and health care providers, and Trust beneficiaries throughout the state who are a part of making the *Crisis Now* initiative work in their communities. There is still much work to be done, and this legislation is an important step in the continuum of care for mental health. We look forward to a future where this type of behavioral health system is in place throughout Alaska.

We strongly support HB172/SB124 and ask you to support this important legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ann Ringstad", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ann Ringstad, MPA
Executive Director

NAMI Alaska • PO Box 201753 • Anchorage, AK 99520-1753
(907)277-1300 • Fax (907)277-8456 • alaskanami@gmail.com

cc: Steve Williams, CEO, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Katie Baldwin-Johnson, Senior Program Officer, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

NAMI (*National Alliance on Mental Illness*) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Our mission is to end the stigma of mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to mental health services, treatment, support, and research and is committed to raising awareness and building hope. NAMI Alaska is the statewide umbrella organization for Alaska's four local and regional NAMI Affiliates including NAMI Anchorage, NAMI Fairbanks, NAMI Juneau and NAMI North Slope. As the state chapter, NAMI Alaska has helped people affected by mental illness since 1984. We envision a state where all people affected by mental illness live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a caring, culturally sensitive community.



DISABILITY LAW CENTER

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March 18, 2022

By scan and e-mail to Senate.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

The Honorable David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health and Social Services Committee
The Honorable Mia Costello
Member, Senate Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol
120 Fourth Street, M/S 3100
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

Re: CSSB 124

Dear Senators Wilson and Costello:

One of the reasons Disability Law Center endorsed the most recent version of SB 124 was that the language you were considering made it clear that an ex parte order holding someone at a crisis residential center would include appointment of an attorney for the respondent. Unfortunately, when the committee passed Amendment No. 6 yesterday at the behest of the Court System, the amendment eliminated the explicit cross-reference to the one place in existing statutes that clearly provides for appointment of an attorney, that is, to AS 47.30.700(a).

If it is not possible for you to return to this issue as the Committee continues to consider amendments, we do note that SB 124 has one more Senate committee of referral, Senate Judiciary. We will urge that committee either to restore the original language or to add language to proposed AS 47.30.707(b) and proposed AS 47.30.708(c) directly requiring that when a court issues an ex parte order, the order includes the appointment of an attorney for the respondent.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mark Regan
Legal Director

cc: Nancy Meade, General Counsel, Alaska Court System, at nmeade@akcourts.us
Heather Carpenter, Steven Bookman, Alex Hildebrand, at heather.carpenter@alaska.gov,
steven.bookman@alaska.gov, and alexander.hildebrand@alaska.gov

THE PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY SYSTEM FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA

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Jasmin Martin

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2022 6:33 PM
To: Sen. David Wilson
Cc: Sen. Lora Reinbold; Kelli Toth; Rep. Geran Tarr
Subject: SB1224
Attachments: Legislators and Patient Advocates March 16th 22.docx

Sen. David Wilson,
Attention: Jasmine,

Attached is a testimony I would like to add to the testimony concerning Senate Bill 124. Ninety-eight percent of the testimony concerning SB124 is done by providers of psychiatric services, including police. There is a real underestimation of the mistreatment of disabled psychiatric patients during transportation, evaluation and treatment.

I would ask that you would review the state Ombudsman's reports concerning just API since 2018.

The point I tried to make in a committee hearing today—private psychiatric facilities and units, even the ones financially supported through state grant money or direct funding, are able to keep secrets. There will be no state Ombudsman's reports concerning private facilities because the state ombudsman does not have that authority.

Additions need to be made to SB124 requiring that all psychiatric facilities and units keep and share statistics of the number and type of psychiatric patient complaints and injuries and traumatic events experienced by patients.

Attached is a document I would like to have added to the testimony concerning SB124, including this statement.

Mental Health Advocates, Faith J. Myers, [REDACTED]

As I have told the story multiple times, I spent over 7 months locked in acute care psychiatric facilities or units.

The 3 days I spent locked in psychiatric units in Seattle was almost like going back a hundred years in time. Within 72 hours, I passed through 4 different psychiatric units. For hours I was strapped to a gurney in an overcrowded hallway with other patients. I could hear the patients pleading to go to the bathroom or for a drink of water, but staff would just pass by.

In Providence Hospital Psychiatric Emergency Room, to subdue me, (a 54-year-old grandmother), a staff member struck me in the face and gave me two black eyes. It came down to poor staff training and oversight.

In the months I spent locked in the Alaska Psychiatric Institute I was often denied basic rights and unnecessarily mistreated, to the point that when I left API, I had to seek treatment for institutional trauma.

My fellow psychiatric patients, many were disabled to the point where they could barely tie their own shoes. The one thing every patient I met had in common, they had no real voice to protect themselves.

HB172 and SB124 have a provision that if passed there will be a study that will put forward recommendations whether psychiatric patients need improved grievance rights and if statistics of patient complaints, injuries and traumatic events should be kept. It is not going to help patients, because the people who will be sitting on the committee have already expressed their opinion by their actions—“The patients do not need improved rights.”

Patient rights must be added to HB172 and SB124—improved grievance rights and a requirement that psychiatric facilities must keep and share statistics of psychiatric patient complaints, injuries and traumatic events.

Mental Health Advocates, Faith J. Myers, [REDACTED]
Author of the book, “Going Crazy in Alaska: A History of Alaska’s Treatment of Psychiatric patients.”