



April 20, 2022

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 175 – Access to Telehealth Delivery of Medical Services

Dear Senator Costello and members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your support of Senate Bill 175 dealing with behavioral health care services via telehealth delivery.

NAMI Alaska supports this important legislation to assist mental health beneficiaries in Alaska to obtain access to behavioral health supports. There are approximately 105,000 adults in Alaska that have a mental health condition – that's more than three times the population of Juneau! Over 276,000 people in Alaska live in a mental health professional shortage area. In some cases, telehealth access provides the **only** support available in many of our communities. You never know when a mental health issue will manifest itself. This legislation will assist many Alaskans who otherwise do not have access to health care.

Telehealth has been a pivotal element in access to health care in Alaska, especially where resources are limited, in urban AND rural regions. It has been a silver lining to the COVID pandemic. These possibilities continue to grow.

We ask for your support of this important legislation. Help Alaskans obtain the health care they need by the use of telehealth as an option in their continuum of care.

Respectfully,

Ann Ringstad, MPA
Executive Director
NAMI Alaska, Inc.

NAMI stands for the National Alliance on Mental Illness – we advocate for access to mental health services, treatment, support and research, and we are steadfast in our commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope for those in need throughout Alaska.

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