



# Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

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April 6, 2022

The Honorable Michael J. Dunleavy  
Office of the Governor  
State of Alaska  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Committee Substitute House Bill 172

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

Thank you for introducing House Bill 172 and Senate Bill 124, the “Crisis Now” legislation. The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)<sup>1</sup> fully supports the passage of the House Judiciary Committee Substitute for House Bill 172 which establishes the legal framework for the operation of crisis stabilization and crisis residential centers throughout Alaska. We share your concern that crisis facilities, programs and services need to be stood up across Alaska as soon as possible, especially considering the behavioral health impacts of the pandemic.

The behavioral health continuum of care in Alaska is in dire need of investment and reform. The state agencies and private sector groups that have worked on establishing crisis services are to be commended. Right now, the continuum of care mostly consists of outpatient clinical services, a few hospital-based facilities, and API.

Alaskans facing a psychiatric emergency often cannot access care at API or hospital facilities leading to long waits in emergency departments or jails. Both of these locations are not staffed or designed to provide needed services to individuals experiencing a behavioral health emergency. These crisis programs will help plug major gaps in that continuum and give Alaskans the care they need in the environment that best suits them.

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<sup>1</sup> ANHB was established in 1968 with the purpose of promoting the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and cultural well-being and pride of Alaska Native people. ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 Tribes and 180,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people throughout the state. The ATHS administers clinical and public health programs for AI/AN people throughout the state of Alaska. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB supports Alaska's Tribes and Tribal programs achieve effective consultation and communication with state and federal agencies on matters of concern.”

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PRIBILOF  
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

ARCTIC SLOPE  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL BAY AREA  
HEALTH CORPORATION

CHICKALOON VILLAGE  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

CHUGACHMIUT

COPPER RIVER  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN  
TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES

KARLUK IRA  
TRIBAL COUNCIL

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE

KETCHIKAN  
INDIAN COMMUNITY

KODIAK AREA  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

MANIILAQ ASSOCIATION

METLAKATLA INDIAN  
COMMUNITY

MT. SANFORD  
TRIBAL CONSORTIUM

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF EKLUTNA

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF TYONEK

NINILCHIK  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

NORTON SOUND  
HEALTH CORPORATION

SELDOVIA VILLAGE TRIBE

SOUTHCENTRAL  
FOUNDATION

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

YAKUTAT TLINGIT TRIBE

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM  
HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE

Several Tribal Health Organizations are planning to develop programs and facilities that meet the behavioral health care needs of the community which includes crisis stabilization centers and crisis residential center. Southcentral Foundation is currently planning and designing a crisis stabilization center on the Alaska Native Medical Center campus which will be jointly managed with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium.

With these programs in development the legal framework found in CSHB 172 is timely and passage vital in order for these programs to operate successfully. Providers standing up these services will rely on the laws and policies that will be enacted by the legislation to safely and effectively operate crisis services. ANHB strongly urges the passage of this law in this legislative session to allow crisis services to meet the needs of all recipients (voluntary and involuntary) by giving providers the options needed to deliver care in the best way possible.

Thank you for championing House Bill 172 and Senate Bill 124. ANHB stands with you and partners to urge all legislators to take the time to understand the issues facing the behavioral health system and why this is so important to accomplish this legislative session. Alaskans depend on it, please act quickly to pass this legislation into law. Should you have questions regarding our letter you may contact ANHB by e-mail at [anhb@anhb.org](mailto:anhb@anhb.org) or by phone at (907) 729-7510.

Duk'idli (Respectfully),

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diana Zirul".

Diana L. Zirul, Tribally-Elected Leader, Kenaitze Tribal Council  
Chair, Alaska Native Health Board  
ATHC Co-Lead Negotiator, Alaska Tribal Health Compact

CC: House Finance Committee