

March 10, 2026

Alaska State Capitol  
State Senate Finance Committee  
120 4th Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SB41 K-12 MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION**

Dear Co-Chairs Hoffman, Olson, Stedman, Vice-Chair Merrick, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, a national nonprofit organization founded on the principle that mental health is inseparable from physical health, I urge you to support SB 41.

Inseparable works to close the treatment gap for Americans with mental health conditions, strengthen crisis response systems, and help young people get support early—before struggles become lifelong challenges or tragedies.

Across the country, youth mental health challenges have reached alarming levels. In fall 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children’s Hospital Association declared a national emergency in children’s mental health. Alaska’s young people are facing these challenges as well. In 2023, [over four in ten](#) Alaska high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless, and nearly one in five reported attempting suicide.

Behind those numbers are young people who may feel isolated, overwhelmed, or unsure where to turn. Too often, they carry those struggles quietly.

SB 41 offers a practical step forward. The bill directs the State Board of Education to develop guidelines for developmentally appropriate mental health education, in consultation with health agencies, tribal health organizations, and mental health experts. These guidelines will help ensure that school districts have tools to support students in understanding mental health and emotional wellbeing.

In communities across Alaska—whether urban, rural, or remote—young people benefit when they know they are surrounded by adults who care about them and want to help them succeed. Mental health education helps students recognize when something isn’t right and understand that reaching out—to a parent, teacher, coach, counselor, elder, or other trusted adult—is the right step.

Today’s youth are also navigating pressures that did not exist a generation ago. Social media, online environments, and rapidly evolving technologies—including AI-driven platforms and chatbots—can intensify feelings of isolation, comparison, and distress. These realities make it

even more important that young people understand mental health and know where to turn when they need help.

Prevention and early intervention work. Research consistently shows that when young people receive support early, outcomes improve for their health, their education, and their future. Yet more than half of Alaska's youth with major depression receive no treatment.

Mental health education helps bridge that gap. It builds awareness, reduces stigma, and encourages help-seeking. According to a national 4-H and Harris Poll, 70 percent of teenagers say they wish they had learned more about mental health and coping skills in school.

SB 41 helps ensure Alaska's students gain that understanding—so that when a young person begins to struggle, they recognize the signs and know they do not have to face it alone.

In Alaska's communities, there is a strong tradition of looking out for one another. This bill helps ensure that young people know that support is there—that their lives matter, their futures matter, and that when they face difficult moments, there are people ready to help them through.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Angela Kimball  
Chief Advocacy Officer  
Inseparable