

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 196(FIN)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATOR KAWASAKI

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act establishing a behavioral health crisis services surcharge; establishing the**
2 **behavioral health crisis services fund; and providing for an effective date."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** AS 43.98 is amended by adding a new section to read:

5 **Article 5. Behavioral Health Crisis Services Surcharge.**

6 **Sec. 43.98.080. Behavioral health crisis services surcharge; behavioral**
7 **health crisis services fund.** (a) A behavioral health crisis services surcharge of \$.98 a
8 month is imposed for each wireless telephone number and for each local exchange
9 access line for wireline telephones, except for wireless or wireline telephones that are
10 provided at a discounted rate to qualifying low-income consumers.

11 (b) A local exchange telephone company that provides service in the state
12 shall bill each month and collect a behavioral health crisis services surcharge from
13 each customer. A wireless telephone company that provides telephone service to a
14 customer with a billing address in the state shall impose a behavioral health crisis

1 services surcharge each month and collect the surcharge from the customer. A local
2 exchange telephone customer may not be subject to more than one behavioral health
3 crisis services surcharge on a local exchange access line for a wireline telephone. A
4 wireless telephone customer may not be subject to more than one behavioral health
5 crisis services surcharge for each wireless telephone number. A customer that has
6 more than 100 local exchange access lines from a local exchange telephone company
7 in the state is liable for the behavioral health crisis services surcharge only on 100
8 local exchange access lines.

9 (c) A local exchange telephone company or wireless telephone company shall
10 include the appropriate behavioral health crisis services surcharge, stated separately
11 and included in the total amount owed, in the bill delivered to a customer. The
12 Regulatory Commission of Alaska may not consider the behavioral health crisis
13 services surcharge as revenue of the telephone company and has no jurisdiction over
14 behavioral health crisis services. A customer is liable for payment of the surcharge in
15 the amount billed by the telephone company until the amount has been paid to the
16 telephone company.

17 (d) A local exchange telephone company or wireless telephone company that
18 has collected the behavioral health crisis services surcharge shall remit the amount
19 collected to the department not later than 60 days after the end of the month in which
20 the amount was collected. From each remittance made in a timely manner under this
21 subsection, the telephone company is entitled to deduct and retain the greater of one
22 percent of the collected amount or \$150 as the cost of administration for collecting the
23 surcharge.

24 (e) A local exchange telephone company or wireless telephone company is not
25 obligated to take legal action to enforce collection of the behavioral health crisis
26 services surcharge. However, if a telephone company attempts to collect an unpaid
27 debt from a customer, the telephone company shall also attempt to collect any unpaid
28 behavioral health crisis services surcharges that the customer owes. If a customer pays
29 a portion of a bill that includes a behavioral health crisis services surcharge, the
30 amount paid is prorated between the telephone company and the surcharge. The
31 telephone company shall annually provide the department with a list of the amounts

1 due for the nonpayment of behavioral health crisis services surcharges, together with
2 the name and address of each customer who carries a balance that can be determined
3 by the telephone company to be for the nonpayment of the surcharge. The telephone
4 company is not liable for an uncollected amount.

5 (f) The department may, at its own expense, require an annual audit of a local
6 exchange telephone company's or wireless telephone company's books and records
7 concerning the collection and remittance of the behavioral health crisis services
8 surcharge.

9 (g) The behavioral health crisis services fund is established in the general
10 fund. The Department of Administration shall separately account for the behavioral
11 health crisis services surcharge collected under this section and deposit the surcharge
12 into the behavioral health crisis services fund. The fund consists of the money
13 deposited by the Department of Administration under this subsection, donations to the
14 fund, interest earned on the fund, and appropriations made to the fund. The legislature
15 may appropriate the annual estimated balance in the fund to the Department of Health
16 for the purposes of

17 (1) establishing, operating, maintaining, and improving the single
18 three-digit number 988 for reporting a behavioral health issue or crisis, including
19 personnel costs, technology, and infrastructure enhancements necessary to achieve
20 operational and clinical standards and evidence-based best practices;

21 (2) providing services to a person experiencing a behavioral health
22 crisis;

23 (3) recruiting and retaining qualified behavioral health services
24 personnel;

25 (4) providing specialized training related to providing behavioral
26 health services to at-risk communities, including providing culturally and
27 linguistically competent behavioral health services;

28 (5) providing prevention services tailored to populations that
29 experience higher rates of suicide than the rest of the state;

30 (6) providing behavioral health education and raising public awareness
31 of the single three-digit number 988 and other behavioral health crisis services

1 available in the state;

2 (7) collecting, analyzing, and reporting data, including seeking
3 feedback from behavioral health services recipients and related quality improvement
4 activities;

5 (8) administration, oversight, and evaluation of the behavioral health
6 crisis services fund.

7 (h) Nothing in this section creates a dedicated fund.

8 (i) In this section,

9 (1) "local exchange access line" has the meaning given in
10 AS 29.35.137;

11 (2) "local exchange telephone company" has the meaning given in
12 AS 29.35.137;

13 (3) "wireless telephone" has the meaning given in AS 29.35.137;

14 (4) "wireless telephone company" has the meaning given in
15 AS 29.35.137;

16 (5) "wireline telephone" has the meaning given in AS 29.35.137.

17 * **Sec. 2.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2026.