

Brenda R. Hannah

Brenda Hannah
Project Director, 988 Athabascan Suicide Response Project
bhannah2@alaska.edu
907-322-8772

April 17, 2025
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Letter of Support for HB 138 – Behavioral Health Crisis Services Surcharge & Culturally Relevant 988 Outreach

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 138, which proposes the creation of a Behavioral Health Crisis Services Surcharge to ensure the long-term sustainability of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and related behavioral health services throughout Alaska.

As the Project Director for the 988 Athabascan Suicide Response Project, I lead outreach efforts focused on reducing stigma and improving help-seeking behaviors in Alaska Native communities, where suicide rates remain disproportionately high. Our work demonstrates that crisis response systems like the 988 Lifeline are only effective when they are seen as trusted, culturally aligned resources.

Through our culturally relevant awareness campaign, we used Alaska Native imagery, values, and language to promote 988 not simply as a number, but as a symbol of community care, cultural strength, and early intervention. These efforts are deeply rooted in the lived realities of the people we serve and are vital to fostering meaningful engagement with behavioral health services.

Currently, 988 operations and outreach—especially culturally grounded programming—are supported solely by time-limited grant funding. I should not have to remind you that in today’s political environment, relying on unstable federal or state grants is not a viable long-term strategy. HB 138 is essential. By establishing a modest telecommunications surcharge, this bill creates a dedicated, sustainable fund to maintain, expand, and adapt these services across Alaska.

This is more than a policy proposal—it is a lifeline for Alaska Native communities in crisis. Without this funding mechanism, we risk losing the trust we’ve worked so hard to build and compromising access to life-saving resources.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to support HB 138 and to prioritize a behavioral health crisis infrastructure that is sustainable, culturally responsive, and equitable for all Alaskans.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to mental health equity for all Alaskans.

Respectfully,
Brenda Hannah

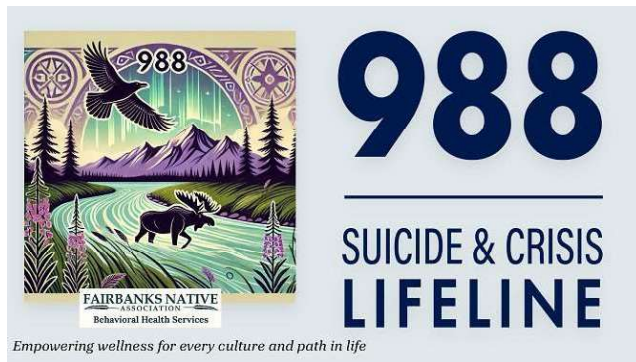
Project Director, 988 Athabascan Tribal Response Grant
Fairbanks Native Association



988 Athabascan Suicide Response
Project Director





Brenda Hannah

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<https://www.fairbanksnative.org>



Crisis Support Resources:

If you or someone you know is in crisis—whether you're concerned for yourself, a loved one, or a member of your community—please reach out for support.

-  Call or text **988** to reach the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**
-  Chat online at 988Lifeline.org/chat
-  Or visit 988Lifeline.org to connect with a trained crisis counselor
-  Text **“TALK”** or **“HOME”** to **741741** to connect with the Crisis Text Line

For our Alaska Native and American Indian relatives:
Please lean on your trusted community healers, Elders, Tribal behavioral health programs, and cultural support systems.

Your wellness matters, and you are not alone on this journey.

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A L A S K A
YOUTH & FAMILY
N E T W O R K

CULTIVATING WELLNESS AND STABILITY FOR ALASKAN FAMILIES WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGH
PEER-SUPPORTED ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES



Alaska's Chapter of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health/National Federation of Families

April 22, 2025
House Health and Social Services Committee
Attn: Representative Genevieve Mina, Chair

Re: Letter of Support for HB138-Behavioral Health Crisis Surcharge and Funding

Dear Representative Mina and Members of the Health and Social Services Committee,

Alaska Youth and Family Network (AYFN) supports House Bill 138 to expand Alaska's Behavioral Health Crisis Response continuum of care. As frequent providers of crisis support to Alaskan youth and families, and active members of the Mat-Su Crisis Community Care Team, we understand the transformative potential of this bill for those experiencing behavioral health crises. This legislation is crucial amidst a severe fiscal crisis and limited federal funding.

The bill recognizes the importance of investing in the entire continuum of care, from crisis intervention to long-term support. This holistic approach will benefit not only individuals in crisis but also their families, healthcare providers, and the community at large.

Since 2019, reduced Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants have impacted service quality. Alaska has the second highest adult suicide rate and the highest teen suicide rate in the U.S., indicating the urgent need for enhanced crisis services.

With increasing opioid-related deaths, HB138 proposes a \$0.98 per line surcharge to generate \$6-8 million annually for sustainable Crisis Now-related services. This builds on HB172 (2022) to relieve law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, and corrections through the 988/Crisis Now framework.

The bill offers flexible funding to expand local capacity and services, supporting mobile crisis teams, the Alaska Crisis Call Line/988, stabilization centers, outreach programs, and workforce stabilization.

Expanding the behavioral health crisis response continuum of care will contribute to the overall well-being of our community. It will help reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and promote a healthier, more supportive environment for all Alaskans, including our most vulnerable at risk children, youth, and families.

Please support HB138 to ensure adequate funding for Alaska's behavioral health crisis response services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Cornils".

Paul Cornils
Executive Director

A L A S K A
YOUTH & FAMILY
N E T W O R K

PO BOX: 233142, Anchorage, Alaska 99523-3142 Main Office: 740 Communications Ave, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

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Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

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ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL
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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

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Genevieve Mina
Chair, Health & Social Services Committee
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol Rm 416
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: ANHB Support for HB 138 Behavioral Health Crisis Surcharge & Fund

Dear Chair Mina:

On behalf of the Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)¹, I write in support of House Bill (HB) 138, an Act to establish a behavioral health crisis services surcharge and the behavioral health crisis services fund.

This legislation is a critical step toward addressing the urgent behavioral health needs of Alaskans, which have been chronically underfunded for decades. State funding for behavioral health in Alaska is more important than ever before to meet the needs of escalating mental health and substance use treatment for patients and providers statewide. Alaska is facing a dire fiscal situation while federal dollars for critical behavioral health and substance use disorder programs are being eliminated, and the future of these federal programs is uncertain. Alaska's Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants have been significantly reduced since 2019, at a time when investment in these services is most critical. Alaska now reports the second-highest adult suicide rate and the highest rate of teen suicide in the U.S. Alaska also saw opioid-related deaths significantly increase while other parts of the U.S. saw a decline. Failing to fund these services for even one more session has real life consequences for Alaskans.

The effort to stand up Crisis Now in Alaska began with the intent to improve the behavioral health system of care so that people experiencing a behavioral health crisis can get the right care in the right setting when they need it. The lack of timely and localized crisis support can lead to avoidable incarceration, hospitalization, or tragic outcomes. HB 138 provides a smart, targeted approach to developing and expanding a behavioral health crisis system that meets people where they are—before a crisis becomes a catastrophe.

¹ ANHB was established in 1968 to promote 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 over 234,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people throughout the state. As the statewide Tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB supports Alaska's Tribes and Tribal programs to achieve effective consultation and communication with state and federal agencies on matters of concern.

HB 138 would create a sustainable and predictable fund source for Crisis Now related services across Alaska. At \$0.98 per line, HB 138 is projected to generate \$6-8 million annually. In addition to providing funding directly to Crisis Now services, the expansion of those services would reduce the pressure on law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, and corrections. These funds will support mobile crisis teams, the Careline/988, 23-hour stabilization centers, workforce development, and increasing community driven culturally appropriate outreach, programs, and services, improving health outcomes statewide.

We applaud your leadership and dedication to advancing solutions that address the complex behavioral health needs of our state. ANHB supports HB 138 to fund chronically underfunded but critical services in Alaska and we ask the members of the House Health and Social Services Committee to move HB 138 forward and support its passage into law.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for the health and well-being of all Alaskans. If you have any comments or questions regarding our recommendations in this letter, please contact ANHB at anhb@anhb.org or via telephone (907) 729-7510.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.F. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chief William F. Smith, Chairman
Alaska Native Health Board

inseparable

April 22, 2025

House Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 106
Juneau, AK 99801

Via electronic submission

RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 138—Behavioral Health Crisis Services Surcharge

Dear Chair Mina and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Inseparable, a national nonprofit mental health advocacy organization, I write to urge the Committee's support of HB 138, which would generate an estimated \$6-8 million annually to sustainably support local crisis response options that save lives and help ensure that no one's worst day keeps them from living their best life.

Every minute in our nation, an average of two people will attempt suicide, three people with a mental health condition will be booked into a jail, and eight calls, texts, and chats are made to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Alaska experiences these crises even more acutely – with the second-highest rate of adult suicide in the U.S., the highest rate of teen suicide, and increases in overdose deaths even as other states' rates decline. Too often, those in crisis don't know who to turn to, and too many do not receive the care they need.

The "Crisis Now" model offers a better response with "someone to talk to, someone to respond, and a safe place for help." This three-part mental health crisis framework acts like an efficient funnel. Most people in distress get the help they need from a 988 Lifeline or Careline. Typically, only one in five people will need help from a mobile response team. And an even smaller number will need support from "a safe place for help," like a crisis stabilization facility. Communities that have implemented these crisis services have seen decreases in avoidable arrests, emergency department visits, trauma, and tragedy.

Over the past few years, Alaska has been developing innovative crisis services based on this model. However, with state general funds in scarce supply and already diminished federal funds slated for further, deeper cuts, establishing sustainable funding for Alaska's crisis services has never been more important. HB 138, with a \$.98 surcharge per telephone line, is a smart solution that would generate an estimated \$6-8 million annually. Ten states have already enacted a 988 surcharge to support their mental health crisis continuums of care.

Importantly, the funding from HB 138 would provide flexibility – through Division of Behavioral Health grants – for local communities to develop options that best meet their needs—whether for mobile crisis teams, peer respite services, crisis stabilization centers, increased Careline/988 Lifeline capacity, or culturally specific responses, like a crisis and help line for Alaska's Native communities.

We respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 138 and, with it, crisis services that offer safety, dignity, and the hope of recovery.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela Kimball".

Angela Kimball
Chief Advocacy Officer



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P.O. Box 230330, Anchorage, AK 99523
907.561.7500 | www.apdea.net

April 21, 2025

Chair Representative Mina and Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Bldg.
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for HB 138 – Behavioral Health Crisis Surcharge and Fund

Dear Members of the Health & Social Services Committee,

My name is Dennis Lasley, and I serve as the Secretary of the Anchorage Police Department Employees Association (APDEA), representing the dedicated professionals who serve in Alaska's largest law enforcement agency. I am also a 911 dispatch supervisor with nearly 17 years of experience in law enforcement, and I speak to you today not just from a professional lens, but as someone with a deep personal commitment to suicide prevention and mental health advocacy.

For over 16 years, I have also served as a volunteer leader with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), helping to build and lead the Alaska Chapter as its founding chair. This unique intersection of professional service and personal advocacy has given me a clear and unwavering understanding: **we must do more to divert individuals in behavioral health crisis from law enforcement and toward appropriate, lifesaving care.**

The vast majority of mental health crisis calls that come through our dispatch center do not require a law enforcement response. And yet, because of a lack of resources and sustainable funding, police officers are often the default—an approach that is not only ineffective but can be draining for our limited public safety resources and diverts those resources away from their core public safety mission.

HB 138 presents a much-needed, sustainable solution. By establishing a modest \$0.98 monthly surcharge on mobile and landline phones, HB 138 would generate an estimated \$6-8 million annually to support the Crisis Now model statewide. This investment is not only necessary—it is long overdue.

As Alaska faces deep fiscal challenges, with slashed federal support and reductions in our Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants since 2019, we must find ways to build resilience into our behavioral health systems. Alaska continues to have the second-highest rate of adult suicide and the highest rate of teen suicide in the country. Opioid-related deaths in Alaska have spiked while the rest of the country trends downward. We cannot ignore the reality any longer—lives are at stake.



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HB 138 builds upon the promising foundation of HB 172 (2022) by creating **predictable, flexible funding** for a range of community-tailored services, including:

- Mobile crisis teams to respond with compassion;
- 23-hour crisis stabilization centers to keep people out of jail and emergency rooms;
- Support for the 988 Lifeline and local Careline operations;
- Workforce stabilization to recruit and retain qualified behavioral health professionals;
- Culturally appropriate programs that meet the unique needs of our diverse Alaska communities.

This is not just a policy decision—it is a public safety imperative. It is a moral commitment to ensure Alaskans in crisis receive the right care from the right people at the right time.

I urge you to support HB 138 and provide the leadership necessary to secure long-term, effective, compassionate behavioral health crisis services across Alaska. Our officers, our dispatchers, our communities—and most importantly, those in crisis—are depending on it.

With respect and gratitude,

Dennis Lasley
Secretary, Anchorage Police Department Employees Association
911 Dispatch Supervisor, Anchorage
Founding Chair, AFSP Alaska Chapter

From: [Nicholas Haas](#)
To: [House Health and Social Services](#)
Subject: HB 138 Letter of Support
Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 8:09:19 AM

Health & Social Services Committee,

My name is Nicholas (Nick) Haas and I am the Security Manager at Mat-Su Regional Medical Center. I consistently see the need for additional Behavioral Health and Crisis Now support, specifically in Mat-Su Borough. Law Enforcement and EMS do not have the manpower or bandwidth to support the volume of Alaskans in behavioral health crises. The Mobile Crisis Team and similar organizations augment Law Enforcement and alleviate the excess load placed on their shoulders. Current funding for additional resources is critical to assisting first responders within our communities. I am also a member of the Crisis Intervention Team coalition and a graduate of the Crisis Intervention Team Academy. I have seen firsthand what a dedicated community can do to combat the behavioral health crises we are seeing in the Mat-Su Borough. As an Alaskan, and as a professional that sees the value in Behavioral and Crisis Support Services in my community, I fully support HB 138. My opinions are my own and not necessarily a representation of my organization or employer.

--

Very Respectfully,

Nicholas (Nick) Haas
Chief of Security
Public Safety Department
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center
2500 S Woodworth Loop
Palmer, AK 99645
907-861-6575 (Office)
907-982-5453 (Cell)

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**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Alaska

April 21, 2025

Chair Mina and Members of the Health & Social Services Committee,

Subject: Support for HB 138 – Sustainable Funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

On behalf of the Alaska Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), I write to express our strong support for House Bill 138, which would establish a sustainable funding mechanism for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and related behavioral health crisis response services across Alaska.

As our state continues to confront a growing mental health and substance use crisis, the need for accessible, immediate support has never been greater. The 988 Lifeline offers a critical connection to help for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts, mental health emergencies, or substance use concerns—by phone, text, or chat at 988lifeline.org. These services save lives.

Why HB 138 Is Urgently Needed:

- Alaska has the second-highest suicide rate in the country, and Alaska Native and American Indian populations continue to be disproportionately affected, with the highest suicide rates among all racial and ethnic groups nationwide. According to the newest data in 2023, Alaska had the *highest* age-adjusted suicide rate (28.2/100,000) in the United States.
- Careline Alaska, our state's 988 call center, answered over 24,000 calls last year. It was also one of the first centers in the country to join the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline back in 2005, demonstrating Alaska's long-standing leadership in this area.
- HB 138 builds on the Crisis Now framework authorized by HB 172 (2022), which is designed to reduce the burden on law enforcement, emergency departments, and correctional systems, while ensuring that individuals in crisis receive timely and appropriate care.

The legislation allows for flexible grant funding through the Division of Behavioral Health to support local crisis response systems, including:

- Mobile crisis teams
- Careline/988 operations
- 23-hour crisis stabilization centers

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
2440 E. Tudor #191 | Anchorage, AK 99507
afsp.org/alaska | alaska@afsp.org
Tax ID 13-3393329



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Alaska

- Culturally responsive programs and outreach
- Workforce stabilization efforts

These investments are critical for building a crisis care continuum that meets the unique needs of our diverse communities across Alaska.

AFSP-Alaska Chapter urges the Health & Social Services Committee to advance HB 138 and help ensure long-term support for Alaska's behavioral health crisis system. Stable funding is essential to maintaining and expanding life-saving services like the 988 Lifeline—and ensuring all Alaskans can access help when they need it most.

Thank you for your commitment to improving behavioral health care and saving lives in Alaska.

Sincerely,

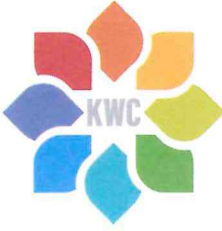
James Biela

Advocacy Ambassador AFSP – Alaska Chapter

Co-Chair National Public Policy AFSP

(907)-545-4675

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
2440 E. Tudor #191 | Anchorage, AK 99507
afsp.org/alaska | alaska@afsp.org
Tax ID 13-3393329



April 21, 2025

To: Chair Mina and the Health & Social Services Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB 138. With some of the highest rates for mental health and substance use related hospitalizations, incarcerations, and deaths, the need for funding remains high. We have seen previous grant and other funding go to organizations that are making a real difference. The State of Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin stated, "The decline in overdose rates in 2024 offers hope, but the persistence of high rates calls for continued, targeted efforts. Expanding harm reduction strategies such as naloxone distribution, overdose prevention education, and connections to treatment services are essential steps in addressing the ongoing opioid crisis in Alaska." Cutting back now would prove detrimental to the state.

HB 138 seeks to provide sustainable and predictable funding for Crisis Now-related services across Alaska. At \$.98 per line, HB 138 is estimated to generate \$6-8 million annually. The 988/Crisis Now framework seeks to alleviate the burden on law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, and corrections. 988, Mobile Crisis Teams, and Stabilization crisis counselors have saved the lives of our neighbors. 988/Careline in the state of AK has answered more than 32,000 calls in FY24.

The Crisis Now framework authorized in HB 172 (2022) has created funding flexibility allowing communities to expand capacity and services based on specific local needs and gaps. Grants available through the Division of Behavioral Health possess the potential to create and expand:

- Mobile Crisis Teams
- Alaska Crisis Call Line/988
- 23-hour stabilization centers
- Culturally appropriate outreach, programs, and services
- Workforce stabilization

Efforts to build out an improved crisis response needs your support for HB 138. Thank you for your time on this critical issue.

Lisa DeLaet

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa DeLaet".

Ketchikan Crisis Now Coordinator
Ketchikan Wellness Coalition

Chair Mina and Members of the House Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
April 23, 2025
Juneau, AK
RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 138

Dear Chair Mina and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Pierce, and I am the Lead Mental Health Clinician for the Anchorage Fire Department's Mobile Crisis Team (AFD MCT). I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 138, which proposes a sustainable funding mechanism to support the expansion and long-term implementation of the Crisis Now model across Alaska. The views expressed here are my own and do not reflect those of the Anchorage Fire Department.

My experience with behavioral health crises spans a range of roles. First as a police officer with the Anchorage Police Department for over eight years, then as a mental health therapist at Providence Hospital on both inpatient and emergency units, and now as the lead clinician for AFD MCT. In each of these positions, I have witnessed the shortcomings of our crisis response systems. As an officer, I felt unprepared to meet the needs of individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. As a therapist in a hospital setting, I saw people admitted to emergency rooms who could have been better served in the community. These gaps made it clear that we needed a different, more effective approach.

The Municipality of Anchorage acted on this need by investing in the Mobile Crisis Team through alcohol tax funding in 2020, launching a program based on the Crisis Now model. This approach changed how behavioral health crises are managed locally. Instead of sending police or EMS (who may not be equipped to help in a behavioral health crisis) AFD MCT dispatches a team of licensed mental health clinicians and EMTs or paramedics trained in trauma-informed, culturally responsive care. Our interventions help people remain safely in the community and connect them to meaningful resources.

In many cases, hospitalization is not only unnecessary but can inadvertently increase risk. A growing body of peer-reviewed research shows that the period immediately following psychiatric hospitalization is associated with a significantly elevated risk for suicide, particularly within the first week and month after discharge. These findings reinforce what we see in practice: unnecessary hospitalization can be traumatic, destabilizing, and, without proper follow-up, dangerous.

Mobile Crisis Teams are essential because they offer a safer, more stabilizing alternative to hospitalization in many cases. The AFD MCT model helps individuals remain in the community, connected to services, and avoids the risks associated with inpatient discharge. Supporting HB 138 means investing in crisis care that not only resolves immediate distress, but also prevents downstream harms like suicide after hospitalization.

In 2024 alone, AFD MCT responded to 4,658 calls of those 4,170 were 911 behavioral health crises. In 87.29% of these cases, individuals remained safe in their community with appropriate follow-up. Only 1.5% were transported by law enforcement and 11.12% by ambulance to a hospital. Law enforcement was only present on approximately 227 calls. Most importantly, there have been zero injuries to individuals, team members, or community members—underscoring the safety and efficacy of this model.

Our team also gathers anonymous feedback from the individuals we serve. In 2024, 100% of respondents reported they were treated with respect and were satisfied with the care they received. 98% stated the Mobile Crisis Team was helpful. Many noted the relief of receiving a non-law enforcement response, the accessibility of community-based help, and the value of being connected to the right services without entering the emergency system.

What we're seeing in Anchorage reflects what's possible statewide. The Crisis Now model is recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a national best practice. By supporting HB 138, Alaska will be joining other states in aligning with this evidence-based, integrated approach to behavioral health crisis care.

Equally crucial is expanding these services to Alaska's rural and remote communities. Too many areas across the state still lack access to appropriate crisis care. HB 138 would provide critical funding to build out this infrastructure beyond urban centers—ensuring that every Alaskan, regardless of location, can receive the right response, at the right time, in the right place.

The Mobile Crisis Team cannot operate in isolation. We rely on 988 crisis line professionals and behavioral health stabilization centers to complete the continuum of care. HB 138 provides the funding necessary to support this full crisis system, which is only effective when its parts—988, mobile response, and stabilization—are well-integrated and resourced.

I urge you to pass HB 138 and help create a comprehensive, community-based crisis response system that reaches every corner of our state. The Anchorage Fire Department Mobile Crisis Team is one example of what's possible. With your support, many more communities in Alaska could benefit from this model.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Pierce".

Jennifer Pierce, M.S., LPC-S
Doctoral Candidate, Clinical-Community Psychology
University of Alaska Anchorage
Lead Mental Health Clinician, Mobile Crisis Team
Anchorage Fire Department



Brenda McFarlane - Crisis Now Community Coordinator

22 April 2025

Representative Genevieve Mina
Health & Social Services Committee

Dear Health & Social Service Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity for the City of Fairbanks Crisis Now Coordinator to express strong support for House Bill 138 to expand crisis service capacity across the state.

The Fairbanks City Council passed [Resolution 5145](#) in December 2024 to ask the Alaska State Legislature to prioritize the development and expansion of a crisis behavioral health system in the State of Alaska.

Our community members have been advocating for an alternative to an emergency room or correctional facility for their loved ones for decades. The City of Fairbanks supports Careline Alaska, Mobile Crisis Teams across the state, and the formation of 'No Wrong Door' Crisis Stabilization Centers which accept 100% of referrals from law enforcement, emergency service providers, and the public.

The City has had the distinct privilege of partnering with Alaska Behavioral Health for the provision of Mobile Crisis Team response to citizens in distress for the last 3.5 years. The team is operated to the full fidelity of the Crisis Now model, integrated with our public safety professionals, and keeps over 82% of community members in their community—diverting them from the hospital and incarceration. We are seeing the fruits of our labor as the Alaska State Troopers are now partnered with the Mobile Crisis Team and the team's call volume is expanding—with 113 calls in March 2025. This is not the time to lose momentum in the provision of a secure funding source for these services which will eventually save the state money. Every diversion of an individual with Medicaid insurance from an emergency room stay, hospital admission, and possible transfer to the Alaska Psychiatric Facility saves the State of Alaska thousands of dollars.

The City of Fairbanks supports and asks the legislature to continue to support the establishment of crisis services to build capacity for individuals in crisis to be served appropriately in their regions.

Sincerely,

Brenda McFarlane
Crisis Now Community Coordinator
Mayor's Office, City of Fairbanks
bmcfarlane@fairbanks.us | | 907-459-9764

Phone: (907) 459-6793 Fax: (907) 459-6710

800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, AK, 99701





Actionable Data Consulting

Dear Representative Mina and the House Health and Social Services Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 138. This bill will allow crucial funding for our Behavioral Health Crisis Services. I am the Mat-Su Crisis Now Coordinator, and I have seen the development of these types of crisis services in my community. Twelve years ago, someone having a behavioral health crisis in our community would end up either at Mat-Su Pretrial or the local emergency room. In either place, they would receive no care specific to their crisis. Now, we have a crisis call line, a mobile crisis team, and some crisis stabilization. Our residents are getting the care they need to resolve the crisis and not end up in crisis again in the near future.

Grants are key to keeping these services alive because other funding streams either do not exist (private insurance and Medicare) or are insufficient (Medicaid). Alaska is in a dire fiscal situation; general fund dollars are slim/ we have a massive deficit, and federal dollars for critical behavioral health and substance use disorder programs are being slashed, and we expect to see more cuts. Alaska's Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants have been significantly cut since 2019.

HB 138 will allow us sustainable funding for Crisis Now-related services in Mat-Su and other parts of Alaska. This is key to having a parallel crisis system for behavioral health, as we do for physical health. This funding, which could generate \$6-8 million annually, could help us build out a complete continuum of care for people in behavioral health crisis. This would create a healthier state with Alaskans who are participating successfully in the workforce, with their families, and with their communities.

I urge you to support HB 138.

Sincerely,

Melissa Toffolon, PhD, MPH

Wasilla, Alaska



Dear Health & Social Service Committee Members,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 138 (HB138), which will establish a dedicated funding mechanism for Alaska's behavioral health crisis services, including our Careline Alaska Crisis Call Center—the state's only 988 crisis call center.

Careline Alaska provides life-saving crisis intervention, providing nearly 40,000 crisis contacts for vulnerable Alaskans last year alone. The crisis call center provides a critical service for individuals experiencing mental health crises, suicidal ideation, and emotional distress, connecting them with compassionate professionals who offer immediate support. Each timely intervention by Careline helps avert expensive hospital stays and transfers to psychiatric facilities, reducing the State's costs while emphasizing early assistance and sustained well-being.

Despite their immense public health impact, services like Careline's often struggle to secure reliable funding through traditional sources such as Medicaid. Implementing sustainable funding solutions for Alaska's crisis care system is essential. HB138 ensures funding for crisis response services to support operations like Careline Alaska. Passage of this groundbreaking legislation maintains and expands critical behavioral health resources, ensuring no Alaskan in crisis is left without help.

I urge you to support HB138 and advocate for its swift passage. Reliable funding for the Careline Alaska Crisis Call Center and other crisis care providers will save lives and strengthen Alaska's behavioral health crisis response system for generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me if you require further information or personal testimony regarding the importance of Careline Alaska and HB138.

Sincerely,

Susanna Marchuk
Executive Director
executivedirector@akccsi.org

April 22, 2025

Chair Mina and the Health & Social Services Committee

Subject: In support of HB 138

Dear Representative Mina,

My name is Barbara Mongar and I live in Palmer, Alaska. I am the Coordinator of the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition. I am writing in support of HB 138.

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and its partners provide hands-on support for Alaskans leaving incarceration and successfully returning to their communities. We help them get employment, housing, and access to treatment and healthcare.

Many of the individuals we work with have mental and substance abuse issues and would benefit from having access to Crisis Now-related services.

Alaska's Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants have been significantly cut since 2019. Alaska not only has the 2nd highest rate of adult suicide, it also has seen opioid- related deaths significantly increase in recent years.

HB 138 seeks to provide sustainable and predictable funding for Crisis Now-related services across Alaska by establishing a behavioral health crisis Service surcharge and establishing the behavioral health crisis fund. At \$.98 per line, HB 138 is estimated to generate \$6-8 million annually. The 988/Crisis Now framework seeks to alleviate the burden on law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, and corrections.

I support HB 138 because funding flexibility is built in to allow communities to expand capacity and Crisis Now related services based on specific local needs and gaps. Behavioral health crisis related services help individuals experiencing a crisis get stabilized and become contributing members of their communities.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mongar
5945 E. Bideford Blvd,
Palmer, Alaska 99645



Municipality of Anchorage
Mayor Suzanne LaFrance

April 23, 2025

RE: Support for HB 138

Dear Representative Mina,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 138, which proposes a dedicated funding mechanism to enhance Alaska's behavioral health crisis response system.

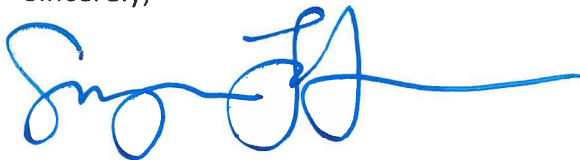
As with the rest of the state, Anchorage is facing a behavioral health emergency, with some of the highest rates of suicide and opioid-related deaths in the nation. HB 138 offers a responsible and sustainable solution by establishing a \$0.98 monthly surcharge on telephone lines to fund critical services including the 988 crisis hotline, mobile crisis teams, stabilization centers, and culturally-informed outreach.

This legislation builds upon the important foundation laid by HB 172 and aligns with federal guidelines allowing states to fund behavioral health crisis systems through telecommunications surcharges. The current reliance on unstable grants and limited general fund dollars is no longer sufficient to meet the growing need.

The Municipality of Anchorage recognizes the vital importance of a well-supported, responsive behavioral health infrastructure. HB 138 would help reduce the burden on emergency departments and law enforcement, while ensuring individuals in crisis receive timely, compassionate care.

I commend your leadership on this issue and urge your colleagues to support the passage of HB 138.

Sincerely,



Suzanne LaFrance
Mayor of Anchorage



From: [Dustin Morris](#)
To: [House Health and Social Services](#)
Subject: support for HB 138
Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 11:08:26 AM

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature, Health & Social Services Committee

I am writing in support of House Bill 138.

This bill will help people in Alaska who are going through mental health or addiction crises by creating a small monthly fee on phone bills. The money will go into a special fund to support the 988 crisis line and other important services, like training for workers, public education, and helping people in danger get the care they need.

This is a smart and fair way to make sure help is there when people need it most. A small cost each month can help save lives and build a stronger, healthier Alaska.

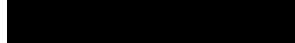
Please vote yes on HB 138.

Sincerely,
Dustin Morris
Anchorage, Alaska

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Dustin Morris (he/him/his)

2SLGBTQIA+ Ally



Email: dustin@northernrelations.com
[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [#dustindoodles](#)



Our Mission

To provide support, education and advocacy for people experiencing psychiatric disabilities, their families, friends, and interested community members.

NAMI Fairbanks

3504 Industrial Ave, Suite 102
Fairbanks, AK 99701

April 23, 2025

Representative Genevieve Mina
House Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for House Bill 138 – Behavioral Health Crisis Services Surcharge

Dear Representative Mina and Members of the House Health and Social Services Committee,

On behalf of NAMI Fairbanks, I write in strong support of House Bill 138, which establishes a much-needed behavioral health crisis services surcharge to fund Alaska's Crisis Now framework and 988 response system.

As Alaska faces a dire fiscal climate and ongoing reductions to critical behavioral health and substance use programs, HB 138 offers a sustainable and predictable funding mechanism to ensure that people in crisis receive timely, appropriate care. This is especially critical in our state, which continues to experience some of the highest suicide and opioid-related death rates in the nation.

The flexibility built into this legislation empowers communities like ours to expand mobile crisis response, improve 988 call center services, develop stabilization centers, and invest in culturally responsive outreach. These services are essential to reducing strain on law enforcement, emergency departments, and correctional facilities—while offering more compassionate and effective care.

At NAMI Fairbanks, we see firsthand the gaps in crisis services that leave individuals and families vulnerable. We believe HB 138 is a necessary step forward to strengthen Alaska's behavioral health system and save lives.

Thank you for your leadership on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nenette Rogers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nenette Rogers
Executive Director
NAMI Fairbanks
nenette.rogers@namifairbanks.org
(907) 456-4704

April 22, 2025

To: Representative Genevieve Mina

From: Linda Setterberg, [REDACTED] Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

Dear Health & Social Service Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity for the Fairbanks community to express strong support for House Bill 138 to expand crisis service capacity across the state.

The Fairbanks City Council passed Resolution 5145 in December 2024 to ask the Alaska State Legislature to prioritize the development and expansion of a crisis behavioral health system in the State of Alaska. Along with many community members I have been advocating for an alternative to an emergency room or correctional facility for our loved ones for twenty years. My own son was stabilized on psychiatric medications at FCC after a chaotic and expensive crisis in his mental health. I support Careline Alaska, Mobile Crisis Teams across the state, and the formation of 'No Wrong Door' Crisis Stabilization Centers which accept 100% of referrals from law enforcement, emergency service providers, and the public.

Our community has witnessed Alaska Behavioral Health mobilize the Mobile Crisis Team response to citizens in distress for the last 3.5 years. The team is operated to the full fidelity of the Crisis Now model, integrated with our public safety professionals, and keeps over 82% of community members in their community—diverting them from the hospital and incarceration. With the Alaska State Troopers partnering with the Mobile Crisis Team and the team's call volume is expanding—with 113 calls in March 2025. This is not the time to lose momentum in the provision of a secure funding source for these services which will eventually save the state money. Every diversion of an individual with Medicaid insurance from an emergency room stay, hospital admission, and possible transfer to the Alaska Psychiatric Facility saves the State of Alaska thousands of dollars.

As a mom, pastor and mental health advocate I support and ask the legislature to continue to support the establishment of crisis services to build capacity for individuals in crisis to be served appropriately in their regions.

Sincerely,

Linda Setterberg

Pastor of New Beginnings Church

FCC Volunteer Chaplain

Board Member of City Recovery

[REDACTED]

lindassett@gmail.com

April 22, 2025

To: Representative Genevieve Mina

From: Linda Setterberg, 109 Kniffen Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

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Sincerely,

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Pastor of New Beginnings Church

FCC Volunteer Chaplain

Board Member of City Recovery

907-378-5859

lindassett@gmail.com