



Alaska Food Policy Council

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March 6, 2024

RE: Letter of Support for HB 344 and SB 241

Dear Dear Members of the Alaska Legislature:

On behalf of the Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC), I am writing to express our full support of HB 344 and SB 241. We are enthusiastic about the opportunity for the Department of Health to apply for a new 1115 Medicaid waiver for health-related needs. Health care in Alaska should not be a one-size fits all approach, and through partnership and collaboration, we believe the State can improve health outcomes for Alaskans through evidence-based targeted projects.

AFPC's focus is on food security and nutrition access for Alaskans. We strongly support directed efforts to improve wellness and increase food access as a path towards health, and believe this legislation provides an excellent opportunity in this direction. Additionally, we see specific support for this action in the Governor's Alaska Food Security and Independence Task Force Report (2023, page 114):

"Recommended Action: Support the inclusion and education of local foods in prescription produce programs and the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services in the education and messaging around the benefits of local Alaskan foods"

These bills will enable the Department of Health to provide new health-related support services for the Alaskans. These bills will enable Alaska Medicaid to build on this groundwork to pursue coverage for new services tailored for Alaskans in a manner that prevents negative health outcomes and shifts payment towards more cost-effective and preventive interventions. Services covered under a new health-related needs 1115 waiver would provide much-needed relief for Alaskans with health conditions that are deteriorating as a result of their unmet health-related needs.

We support the collaboration that has gone into the development of this legislation, and we strongly encourage the Department of Health to continue in this effort. Tribal consultations and both tribal and non-tribal partnerships are of paramount importance to the success of targeted efforts that would be possible with this 1115 waiver in place.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Robbi Mixon, Executive Director
Alaska Food Policy Council