

The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Alaska Behavioral Health

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 249 - Creation of a SMVF Help Desk

Dear AK Legislative Session 2023-2024

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 249, which proposes the creation of a dedicated help desk for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) in the state of Alaska. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to voice my opinion on this legislation and would like to commend Representative Groh and the entire legislative body for their commitment to addressing the unique needs of the SMVF population.

The proposed community military help desk outlined in HB 249 is a commendable initiative that aims to provide essential support and resources to our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. I am particularly enthusiastic about the key functions outlined in the bill, which I believe will significantly contribute to improving the overall well-being of the SMVF community in Alaska.

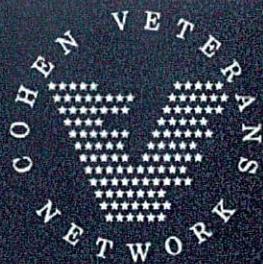
The importance of collaboration cannot be overstated, and the provision that mandates the help desk to collaborate with local Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), resources, healthcare agencies, and other 503K agencies is a crucial step toward holistic support of the SMVF population. By actively engaging with these entities, the help desk can identify and address the unique challenges faced by the SMVF population, ensuring that the support provided is comprehensive and tailored to their specific needs.

The establishment of a central point of contact for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families is a practical and much-needed feature. This will simplify the process for individuals seeking information, resources, and services, thereby reducing potential barriers and ensuring that those in need can easily access the support they require.

Facilitating coordination and communication among local agencies is another key aspect of the proposed help desk. Streamlining the delivery of services to the SMVF population is essential for efficiency and effectiveness. By fostering collaboration, the help desk can contribute to a more cohesive and responsive support system that addresses the multifaceted needs of our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families.

The emphasis on establishing partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations, resources, healthcare agencies, and other nonprofit agencies is commendable. These partnerships will not only enhance the range of services available but also contribute to the quality of support provided to the SMVF population. Such collaborations can leverage diverse expertise and resources, creating a more robust and comprehensive support network.

Finally, the commitment to sharing relevant information and data with local agencies is a strategic move towards continuous improvement. By actively participating in data exchange, the



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help desk can contribute to the enhancement of the overall support system for the SMVF population, ensuring that it remains responsive to evolving needs.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support HB 249 and urge you to consider the positive impact it can have on the lives of our Service Members, Veterans, and their Families in Alaska. This legislation aligns with our shared responsibility to honor and support those who have selflessly served our country. Thank you for your dedication to this important cause, and I trust that HB 249 will receive the support it deserves.

Sincerely,

MaryBeth Goodman, MA, LPC, NBCC

Clinic Director

Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Alaska Behavioral Health

1450 Muldoon Road #111, Anchorage, AK 99504

Direct: 907-762-8625 | Clinic: 907-762-8668 | Mobile: 907-744-9776 | Fax: 907-375-3177