



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE

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February 7, 2018

The Honorable Representative Geran Tarr
State Capitol Room 126
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: HCR 2- Adverse Childhood Experiences

Dear Representative Tarr;

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are the state agencies charged with planning and coordinating behavioral health services funded by the State of Alaska. The joint mission of ABADA/AMHB is to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans.

The Boards offer our full support to House Concurrent Resolution 2 in response to the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Alaska. The Boards have been instrumental in educating Alaskans about ACEs through the use of Alaska specific data regarding the correlation between childhood experiences and adverse health outcomes as adults. We appreciate the work you have done to support the conversation for improved policies, evidence-based programs and research for statewide solutions.

More than two-thirds of Alaskan adults have experienced ACEs prior to their eighteenth birthday. The neural networks being "wired" in the developing brains of children and youth are especially susceptible to traumatic events. Research shows that ACEs can affect the normal development of children and that these are the mechanisms behind the poor outcomes associated with childhood trauma. From poor school and work performance to substance abuse and mental illness to poor physical health outcomes, the link to ACEs has been shown in Alaska and other state's populations as well.

Each year Alaska spends hundreds of millions of dollars in state and private funds as a result of traumatic events experienced during childhood. Even modest reductions in childhood trauma would have immediate and long-term benefits to our state financially and socially.

Communities across Alaska are coming together to address ACEs in a big and small ways. HCR2 recognizes and supports the need for continued research and evidence-based efforts to prevent and mitigate the impact of ACEs. Thank you for this opportunity to support and comment on HCR2 and please contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison L. Kulas".

Alison L. Kulas, MSPH
Executive Director