



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health

SENIOR AND DISABILITY SERVICES
Governor's Council on Disabilities
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February 4, 2025

The Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 73 AND SENATE BILL 76 ON COMPLEX
CARE RESIDENTIAL HOMES

Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 73 and its companion Senate Bill 76. These critical pieces of legislation aim to establish a new category of care through Complex Care Residential Homes, addressing a long-standing gap in services for individuals with complex behavioral health needs in Alaska.

As you know, individuals with complex behavioral health needs often require specialized support that does not rise to the level of care provided by the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) but exceeds the capabilities of traditional residential or community-based programs. This mismatch in services often results in inappropriate placements, including corrections facilities, which are ill-equipped to provide the therapeutic interventions and supports these individuals need. Such placements not only fail to meet the needs of these Alaskans but also contribute to unnecessary strain on our criminal justice and healthcare systems.

The creation of Complex Care Residential Homes represents a compassionate, cost-effective, and long-term solution for addressing these challenges. These homes would provide:

- A tailored, less-restrictive environment that meets the unique needs of individuals with complex behavioral health issues.
- Access to a variety of waiver services and Medicaid supports, ensuring sustainability and continuity of care.
- An alternative to inappropriate institutionalization, reducing reliance on corrections facilities and acute care settings.

We would like to suggest the following language changes to the draft legislation to further enhance the effectiveness and safety of these homes:

- **Adjusting the Bed Capacity:** The current limit of 15 residents per home may be too high to ensure the safety of residents and the proper delivery of services. A lower resident-to-

staff ratio is crucial for providing individualized care and maintaining a therapeutic environment. We recommend reducing the bed limit to 10 residents per home to better support these goals.

- **Separate Facilities for Different Age Groups:** To ensure the safety and appropriate care of all residents, we propose language specifying that Complex Care Residential Homes should be designated separately for children under 18 and adults aged 18 and older. Mixing adult and child populations can present significant risks and challenges, including differing developmental needs, legal considerations, and safety concerns. This separation aligns with best practices in behavioral health care and will better serve the distinct needs of these populations.

By supporting HB 73 and SB 76, with these suggested amendments, the Legislature has an opportunity to enhance the continuum of care available in Alaska, ensuring that individuals with complex behavioral health needs receive the right care in the right setting. This approach aligns with the principles of person-centered planning and the state's commitment to improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities and behavioral health challenges.

We applaud the sponsors of this legislation for their leadership and vision in addressing this critical issue. The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education stands ready to partner with the Legislature, state agencies, and community stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of this initiative.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We urge you to support HB 73 and SB 76, incorporating these essential changes to create a more inclusive, safe, and effective system of care for Alaskans.

Sincerely,



Caitlin Poindexter
GCDSE Legislative Committee Chair



Patrick Reinhart
GCDSE Executive Director