

SB 196

“An Act establishing a behavioral health crisis services surcharge; establishing the behavioral health crisis services fund; and providing for an effective date.”

Sponsor: Senator Scott Kawasaki

Staff: Jenna Colquhoun



“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.” – Maya Angelou


What SB 196 Does

- Establishes a \$0.98 behavioral health crisis services surcharge for each wireline and wireless phone that has a billing address in Alaska
 - Wireless telephone customers may not be subject to more than one behavioral health surcharge per wireless line
 - Customers who have more than 100 local exchange access lines will only be subject to a behavioral health surcharge for the first 100 lines
- Dictates that the behavioral health crisis services surcharge must be its own line item on a customer's phone bill
 - Will be included in the total amount owed by the customer
 - Not considered to be revenue by the telephone company
- Creates the expectation that telephone companies will remit the behavioral health crisis services surcharges not later than 60 days after the end of the month in which the amount was collected
 - Telephone companies will be entitled to the greater of 1% of the collected amount or \$150 in consideration of their administration costs

What SB 196 Does Cont.

- Dictates that telephone companies are not obligated to take legal action to enforce the collection of the behavioral health crisis services surcharge
 - Though if a telephone company attempts to collect an unpaid debt, they must also attempt to collect any unpaid
 - Telephone companies must provide an annual list of that includes the name and address of customers with unpaid behavioral health crisis services surcharges
- Establishes the behavioral health crisis services fund within the general fund
 - The Department of Administration will separately account for the behavioral health crisis services surcharge
 - Then deposit that sum into the behavioral health crisis services surcharge
- Legislature will then appropriate the annual estimated balance in the fund to the Department of Health
 - Estimated to generate \$6-8 million annually
- Does NOT create a dedicated fund

Purpose of the Fund

- Establish, operate, maintain and improve the 988 initiative to achieve operational and clinical standards
 - Provide services to a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis
 - Recruit and retain qualified behavioral health services personnel
 - Provide specialized training related to at-risk communities, including culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health services
 - Provide prevention services tailored to populations that experience higher rates of suicide than the rest of the state
 - Raise awareness of the 988 number and other behavioral health crisis services available
 - Collect, analyze and report data relevant to behavioral health crisis services
 - Provide administration oversight and evaluate how the behavioral health crisis services fund is being administered
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Why SB 196 is Needed

- Alaska has the highest rate of adult and teen suicide
- Rising rates of overdose deaths
- 988 number fielded 22,458 calls in 2025 *
 - Increased from 16,878 in 2024 *
 - Alleviated the burden on 911 dispatchers and responders
 - In 2017 an average of 10% of law enforcement agencies' total budgets and 20% of total law enforcement staff time was spent responding to mental health crises
- Current fiscal situation does not guarantee stable funding of current behavioral health crisis services
 - SB 196 would generate income to ensure these life-saving measures continue
 - \$6-8 million revenue generated

* 988lifeline.org/professionals/our-network/state-based-monthly-reports/

Purpose of the Fund

Save Alaskan Lives

Save public safety
dollars and time

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Questions?



24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT

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