

Trust

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

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March 16, 2016

Representative Vazquez
Alaska Legislature

RE: HB234 - Telemedicine and mental health benefits.

Dear Representative Vazquez,

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority serves as a catalyst for change and improvement in Alaska's mental health and home and community-based service systems. HB234, the bill regarding telemedicine and mental health benefits compliments the work and efforts made by the State and the Trust to enhance access to mental health services across the Alaska.

Our charge at the Trust is to help provide mental health services for beneficiaries who do not have access to treatment services through other resources. There are many Alaskans living in remote or urban areas with insurance who need greater access, specialization of services and flexibility than provided now under current insurance practices. The ripple effect of tele-counseling will result in more people living healthier lives which will benefit all Alaskans.

Contemporary technology is available to work in remote villages that may only have access to phone or internet service. As an example, Vsee, <https://vsee.com/> is free encrypted software that allows for video conferencing using low bandwidth.

All of the Alaska licensed mental health professionals have statutes and regulations that mandate codes of ethics and continuing education. The codes of ethics now cover appropriate use of technology for psychotherapy.

If the technology is available, Alaskans have insurance, and the practice of using technology is seen as approved by the professions on a national level, then it only makes sense that the State should pass this bill requiring insurance companies that work in Alaska reimburse for counseling services delivered by Alaska licensed professionals via telemedicine.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Jessee, Chief Executive Officer
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority