



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

March 17, 2017

House Speaker Edgmon
State Capitol Room 208
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HJR 14 – Increase Rural Health Care Budget

Dear House Speaker Edgmon,

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is writing this letter in support of HJR 14 – Increase Rural Health Care Budget. We represent more than 65 hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and other health care organizations. Our membership spans geographically from PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center to Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital in Utqiagvik. Our diverse association unites every small rural hospital and large hospital system in the state around common goals. For over 60 years, ASHNHA members have worked to improve health care in Alaska.

As health care providers, our members understand the critical importance of the Rural Health Care (RHC) Universal Service Support program that enables providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase in demand from 2014.

The RHC Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options. Telehealth services play an important role in our region.

Sincerely,

Becky Hultberg
President/CEO

Bartlett Regional Hospital

3260 Hospital Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801

907.796.8900

www.bartletthospital.org

November 16, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski

We ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

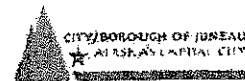
Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014. If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

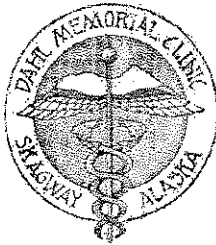
Rural Health Care support enables Bartlett Regional Hospital to access telehealth services from Providence Hospital in Anchorage through our eICU program, accelerate diagnosis by facilitating communication with specialists in Seattle and Anchorage to whom we send x-ray and other files. Through improved telecommunications we avoid unnecessary medivacs and expand local treatment options. The Rural Health Care Program facilitates our being able to locally serve patients effectively and economically as possible.

Please urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.


Charles Bill, CEO
cbill@bartletthospital.org





Dahl Memorial Clinic
Municipality of Skagway

January 25, 2017

Representative Sam Kito
State Capitol Room 404
Juneau AK 99801

Dear Representative Kito,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

Dahl Memorial Clinic has utilized broadband telehealth services for several years to send x-ray and ultrasound imaging to radiologists in Juneau for reading and interpretation. It is a vital part of the medical services we provide to our small community and the thousands of seasonal visitors who come to our town each year.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.

Shelly O'Boyle
Clinic Executive Director
(907) 983-2255
s.oboyle@skagway.org

CC: FCC Secretary and staff

St. Paul

St. George

Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.

1131 E. International Airport Rd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1408
Phone (907) 276-2700
Fax (907) 279-4351



10 March 2017

Representative Bryce Edgmon
Speaker of the House
Capitol Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Edgmon:

I understand that House Joint Resolution 14, urging the Federal Communications Commission to increase the Rural Health Care Program Budget was introduced on March 6, 2017 and referred to the House Labor and Commerce Committee. The Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc. is in full support of this effort.

Rural clinics and health care providers in remote areas of Alaska depend on the Rural Health Care Universal Services Support program to offer essential telehealth services, crucial in providing adequate health care. Sadly, the support budget that makes this possible has been capped at the same level since it was established in 1997. After twenty years of advances in technology, increases in demand, and the effects of inflation, it is expected that the 2017 demand may exceed that cap for the first time. These services are critical in providing adequate health care in rural Alaska, and we urge the FCC to increase the Rural Health Care Universal Services Support Budget sufficiently to adjust for inflation, technological advancement, and increased demand for broadband-based services.

Sincerely,

Dimitri Philemonof
President/CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dimitri Philemonof', written over a horizontal line.



March 22, 2017

Representative Bryce Edgmon
Speaker of the House
Capitol Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Edgmon:

I understand that House Joint Resolution 14, urging the Federal Communications Commission to increase the Rural Health Care Program Budget was introduced on March 6, 2017 and referred to the House Labor and Commerce Committee. The Aleut Corporation is in full support of this effort.

Rural clinics and health care providers in remote areas of Alaska, including our region, depend on the Rural Health Care Universal Services Support program to offer essential telehealth services, crucial in providing adequate health care. Sadly, the support budget that makes this possible has been capped at the same level since it was established in 1997. After twenty years of advances in technology, increases in demand, and the effects of inflation, it is expected that the 2017 demand may exceed that cap for the first time. These services are critical in providing adequate health care in rural Alaska, and we urge the FCC to increase the Rural Health Care Universal Services Support Budget sufficiently to adjust for inflation, technological advancement, and increased demand for broadband-based services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas Mack".

Thomas Mack
President



**Bristol Bay Area
Health Corporation**
6000 Kanakanak Road
P.O. Box 130
Dillingham, AK 99576
(907) 842-5201
(800) 478-5201
FAX (907) 842-9354
www.bbahc.org

*Bristol Bay Area
Health Corporation is
a tribal organization
representing 28 villages in
Southwest Alaska:*

— Aleknagik
— Chignik Bay
— Chignik Lagoon
— Chignik Lake
— Clark's Point
— Dillingham
— Egegik
— Ekuk
— Ekwok
— Goodnews Bay
— Ivanof Bay
— Kanatak
— King Salmon
— Knugank
— Koliganek
— Levelock
— Manokotak
— Naknek
— New Stuyahok
— Perryville
— Pilot Point
— Platinum
— Port Heiden
— Portage Creek
— South Naknek
— Togiak
— Twin Hills
— Ugashik

*Our mission is to
provide quality
health care with
competence and
sensitivity*

January 19, 2017

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Rural Health Care Universal Services Support

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young:

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and bush communities.

The Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC) was formed by a consortium of Bristol Bay tribes in 1973 to provide comprehensive health care services to a diverse population in the Bristol Bay Region. Our mission is to provide quality healthcare with competence and sensitivity.

BBAHC has been a long time recipient of the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support specifically under the Telecommunications Program. These program funds have been key for our organization to deploy and use telehealth tools supporting high speed broadband that has become a platform for 21st Century Electronic Health Records that can be shared securely with other medical providers directly improving patient care throughout Alaska and allows us to avoid the high cost of travel where and when we can.

For funding year 2016, the FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap of \$400 million. If the cap is hit; and without knowing the result or impact of requested support by BBAHC, we may have to reduce or interrupt broadband services currently used to provide healthcare which would have a huge negative impact on patient care adversely affecting lives a thousands of Alaskans.

BBAHC has worked with our GCI service provider of broadband services for funding year 2016 have already been contracted and provisioned and are already six months in the funding year. BBAHC is very concerned about the continuity of existing and new rural health care services if funding requests are reduced (pro-rated) or denied entirely. Our non-profit Kanakanak Hospital and the 28 villages served simply can not afford to go back to paper, snail-mail and 20th Century Medicine.

Please urge the FCC to increase the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Clark, President & CEO

Port Graham
Nanwalek



Chugachmiut

October 18, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

In order for our organization to recruit and retain a dynamic primary healthcare team working within a rural setting to reduce health disparities amongst those we serve within the Chugach Region, service connectivity to provide Telehealth services is a necessity.

Telehealth services serves as an extended healthcare support system for our community health aides, primary care providers, and patients and family members in need of emergent and specialty care.

Telehealth has enabled us to provide a higher level of support and care that is quick, convenient, and desperately needed. With our Telehealth service connectivity and equipment, we have been able to provide emergent and specialty care services such as cardiology, nephrology, dermatology, and oncology service support amongst other specialty care for our people.



Undoubtedly, without service support and telehealth connectivity our healthcare teams and communities would suffer loss of life and equality.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.



Angela J. Vanderpool
Executive Director

jan@chugachmiut.org

CC: FCC Secretary and staff



IT IS IN THE SHUTTER
OF EACH OTHER THAT
THE PEOPLE LIVE.

Irish Proverb

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

Specifically, Community Connections routinely utilizes our telehealth system to provide psychiatric care to children throughout southern southeast Alaska communities. We also utilize it to provide mental health therapy and occupational and physical therapy. Telehealth is a vital and integral part of our service delivery system. Without the FCC support, we would not be able to provide these necessary services to our remote island communities.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.

Bess Clark
Executive Director
CC: FCC Secretary and staff

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Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
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Fax: (907) 225-1541

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Tel: (907) 826-3891
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{G:/505553/597/00090184.DOCX-1}

P O Box 5
Gleannallen, AK 99588
(907) 822-5686 Phone
(907) 822-5684 Fax



November 7, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: INCREASE NEEDED IN RURAL HEALTH CARE UNIVERSAL SERVICE BUDGET

Dear Senator Murkowski,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband tele-health services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million. Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband tele-health services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband tele-health services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.


Rural health care support enables tele-health services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

Cross Road Health Ministries, Inc. has greatly benefited from Rural Health Care (RHC) Program funding since 2004. The RHC Program has enabled us to implement telecommunications that significantly improve healthcare services in the regions of rural Alaska we serve. In particular our patients have benefited from us moving from film-based to digital diagnostic radiology services enabled by secure private connectivity between our clinics and radiology vendor. The same connectivity enables us to securely, reliably and efficiently share information and services between sites, including access to our EMR and integration of our IP phone systems. The connectivity also facilitates increased Internet bandwidth, which has allowed us to more fully utilize cloud-

based services for training and collaboration, for example, and video teleconferencing for meetings.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband tele-health services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.



Joel Medendorp

CBO

Cell phone: 907-320-0557

Email: jmedendorp@crossroadmc.org

JM:jm



SITKA COUNSELING & PREVENTION SERVICES, INC

113 Metlakatla Street, Sitka, AK 99835 Ph: 907-747-3636 Fax: 907-747-5316

November 14, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

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Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

The communities of Yakutat and Sitka have been significantly affected by the ability to provide Tele-Behavioral Health services. The small community of Yakutat can access eight master level Clinicians across the Vidyo system. The access to services continues to help and support a number of families. We welcome all clients and don't place barriers to service, we help connect people to the services they need, whether those services are available within the agency or through referral. We recognize that healing is for the whole person; each person is assisted in developing a plan for their recovery and encouraged to develop new skills.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.



Amy Zanuzoski
Executive Director
907-747-3636
amyz@scpsak.org

CC:
FCC Secretary and staff



October 25, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Rural Health Care Universal Services Support

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young:

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska Tribal Administrators' Association to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and bush communities. For those communities who do not have affordable broadband telehealth services, we ask that access to those services be provided.

You may know the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

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Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

The Mission of ATAA is to develop a collaborative atmosphere of knowledge sharing and professional support among Alaska's Tribal Administrators; and to promote effective tribal administration resulting in greater self-governance, community sustainability, and leadership.

We work collaboratively with tribal organizations, tribal leadership and tribal staff to improve local access to quality medical/health care services. Affordable broadband is the most significant factor in the delivery of quality health care services through the use of telehealth tools. Without affordable broadband, many rural clinics across Alaska could not afford to use telehealth tools to provide and promote patient-centered health care and patient safety. In Alaska, telehealth is heavily utilized to connect patients with a higher level of care and specialty services. Using telehealth technologies is a key factor in avoiding high cost and travel stress on elders or as routinely happens, separating children from a parent who cannot afford to travel with their child.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.

ALASKA TRIBAL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION



Teresa Jacobsson
Founder/Chair

CC: FCC Secretary and Staff



Ninilchik Traditional Council

P.O. Box 39070

Ninilchik, Alaska 99639

Phone: 907 567-3313 / Fax: 907 567-3308

E-mail: ntc@ninilchiktribe-nsn.gov

ninilchiktribe-nsn.gov

October 26, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski,

My name is Ivan Z. Encelewski, Executive Director for the Ninilchik Traditional Council, governing body for the Ninilchik Village Tribe. I am writing to ask for your support to ensure Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural villages. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural villages. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskan villages are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

The Ninilchik Traditional Council Community Clinic, the primary care facility for the rural village of Ninilchik, appreciates the opportunity to utilize the telehealth services that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, enable video conferencing for remote consultation with patients, as well as ability to improve the VMware infrastructure between facilities. We recognize the increased need for affordable broadband telehealth services in rural Alaska, as it has certainly enhanced our capability to provide better healthcare service to our rural residents.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years.

Respectfully,

Ivan Z. Encelewski, Executive Director
Ninilchik Traditional Council

C: Heather Cavanaugh, APR Director - Corporate Communications



230 East Marydale Avenue • Soldotna, Alaska • 99669 • www.pchsak.org
We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Please consider a donation.

ADMINISTRATION Soldotna tel 907.260.7300 • fax 907.260.7301
MEDICAL Soldotna tel 907.262.3119 • fax 907.262.9290
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH Soldotna tel 907.260.3691 • fax 907.262.9290
MEDICAL Kenai tel 907.283.3600 • fax 907.283.3601
DENTAL Kenai tel 907.283.7759 • fax 907.283.4883

November 8, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

We are writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014. Alaska has some of the highest overall utility rates and that is true for telecommunication and internet service as well, so the support is critical to keep down the high cost of healthcare.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate for schools and libraries. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand. Rural healthcare needs a comparable increase.

Page two

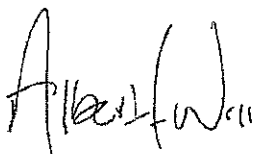
Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options. The need for telecommunications and internet service has also grown over the past several years, with CMS requiring electronic health records and meaningful use to obtain incentives and avoid penalties. Our healthcare practitioners, as well as patients, have come to expect that their prescriptions are transmitted electronically and that their medical imaging is instantly accessible.

In recent years the Rural Health Care program has added new programs. First the Healthcare Connect Fund, which gives a flat 65% discount for broadband expenses was added. Now the eligibility is going to be expanded to include Skilled Nursing Facilities starting in 2017. The additional competition for funding beyond the initial Telecommunications Program has not been met with additional funding. We are now facing situations where our current multi-year contracts which had previously been awarded full funding will now need to compete with all new requests and may not be funded in full, although contracts and budgets were put in place with set dollar values.

We have attached some comments from our providers, who work so hard in our patient centered medical home to accomplish our mission of strengthening our community by providing accessible, affordable health care and who support our core values of innovative, comprehensive, integrated care for the whole person.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.



Albert E. Wall
Chief Executive Officer

Peninsula Community Health Services of Alaska, Inc.
907-260-7300
awall@pchsak.org

CC:
FCC Secretary and staff

Statements from our providers:

Collette Reahf, MD

Medical Provider - Kenai Medical

Having high speed internet access, I am able to access the hospital medical server remotely. For my patients who are hospitalized, I am able to view critical results quickly and order remotely interventions in a timely manner. Last week, I was able to easily track the progress of labor for a mom prior to delivery of my newborn patient which saved multiple phone calls to the nursery. This also gives me the ability to appropriately plan around my scheduled patients and in a timely way notifies my office staff of the anticipated time I need to leave to take care of an impending delivery with complications requiring my attendance. This is pretty big for me since our PCHS Kenai office is a 25-30 minute drive to the hospital. This saves multiple phone calls between my office and the nursery and avoids a surprise call where I need to leave and travel to the hospital for an Emergency while affecting the care of my office patients without reasonable or timely notification.

Carlos A. Valenzuela, ANP, FNP-BC

Interim Medical Director

Family Nurse Practitioner-Medical

I am writing on behalf of my patients and employer to discuss the positive impact of high speed internet access on my current patient care. At our community health center, we serve a significant population with complex medical and psychosocial issues that require immediate evaluation and interventions. With high speed internet, I am able to access our secured electronic health record and review large volumes of relevant patient clinical history, medications, and diagnostic reports. I am able to immediately respond to patient and clinical issues which then results in delivery of high quality care. For example with high speed internet, I am able to remotely access our electronic health record, review lab results and reports from a remote location. I am then able to contact my patients and make further recommendations without any delay. Without this vital technology, I would not be able to efficiently manage this data by any other means. I hope that you continue to provide this support for the Rural Health Care Universal Service Support to allow our community health center to access our services.



**South Peninsula
Behavioral Health Services, Inc.**

3948 Ben Walters Lane, Homer, Alaska 99603

November 8, 2016

The Honorable Senator Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Sullivan
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

I am writing to ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014.

If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

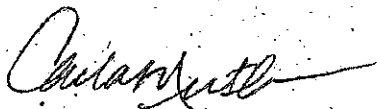
Rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that dramatically improve access to care, accelerate diagnosis and treatment, avoid unnecessary medivacs, and expand local treatment options.

South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services provides behavioral health services on the lower Kenai Peninsula, which include mental health treatment services, development disability support services, and limited substance abuse treatment. We also provide psychiatric services

including medication management. We use an electronic health record which is internet based, requiring us to have fast and reliable internet service in order to provide accurate and timely client records. We also participate in a couple of intensive therapeutic programs which require transfers of large data files in order for us to comply with the requirements of the programs, which greatly benefits our clients. Our agency often hosts web-based training for our staff as well as the surrounding community, and we depend upon a fast and reliable internet connection to maintain a well trained staff and community. As our electronic health record grows, and as the State Of Alaska requires more real-time data, we will be even more reliant on a reliable connection, and will be requesting higher bandwidth to accommodate our growing needs.

We ask that you urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget; index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.



Carla Meitler
Chief Operating Officer
South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services
Homer AK
907-235-9233

CC:

FCC Secretary and staff