



A RESOLUTION

Urging the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services to quickly bring about the opportunities available through the public-private partnership proposed in SHARP III.

WHEREAS Alaska has workforce challenges that affect access to affordable and quality healthcare; and

WHEREAS these problems are particularly challenging in rural and remote areas; and

WHEREAS the SHARP Support for Service Program has proven to be successful in helping address multiple aspects of the healthcare workforce challenge in Alaska; and

WHEREAS SHARP I, a program created by the federal government, depends heavily on federal funding to help recruit and retain healthcare practitioners in Alaska; and

WHEREAS SHARP II, a program created by the Alaska Legislature, depends heavily on state funding to build on the successes of SHARP I while addressing some of the unique challenges faced in Alaska; and

WHEREAS a SHARP III concept was created that models the best of the federal and state approaches; and

WHEREAS given the state's economic challenges, SHARP III was created as a public-private partnership that requires no state funding; and

WHEREAS SHARP III provides support for service and strives to accomplish many of the same outcomes as SHARP I and SHARP II; and

WHEREAS SHARP III has been developed, reviewed, and supported by the SHARP Council – a cross-industry advisory body; and

WHEREAS current federal law allows for tax-exempt benefits that support the SHARP program's approach, and major employers and other would-be contributors to the SHARP III program have expressed an interest to start as soon as possible, and Alaskans need for access to healthcare exceeds our system capacity to provide that care, and the consequences for limited access to healthcare are costly – time is of the essence.

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Alaska Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers strongly urges the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to work to enact the SHARP III program as quickly as possible.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Valerie Nurr'araaluk Davidson; Alaska Division of Public Health Director Dr. Jay Butler; Alaska Division of Public Health Deputy Director Jill Lewis; SHARP Program Manager Dr. Robert Sewell; and SHARP Council members.

Passed and Approved by the Alaska Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers this 6th day of January, 2018.

Leigh Bolin, MSW, LCSW
President 2016-2018
NASW-Alaska Chapter



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

March 19, 2019

SHARP Council

Co-Chairs Eric Boyer & Rachel Gearhart

Dear SHARP Co-Chairs:

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is offering this letter of support for SHARP-3. As a member of the SHARP Council we have been involved with the program since its inception and believe in the value of the program to support high quality care through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaska.

The SHARP program has helped Alaska's hospitals ensure an adequate supply of healthcare providers and is an important tool to help with recruitment and retention. We support the addition of a third component through SHARP-3 legislation.

SHARP-3 will support a variety of practice settings, locations (especially those not eligible as a HPSA or other federal programs for SHARP-1) and provider types. We need to use whatever tools are available to support healthcare organizations to recruit and retain employees. SHARP-3 would expand the use of federal tax exemption for education loan repayment and enhance the number and variety of financial contributors. There is a need to give local control to allow communities to designate funds to support recruitment of providers. SHARP-3 utilizes the existing SHARP infrastructure while maximizing contributions from local communities or foundations. Money could be contributed from different local sources such as a business, private foundation, trade association, government entity, foundations or employers.

SHARP 3 provides valuable state infrastructure, without additional state general funds, and will provide us the ability to expand the benefits of SHARP to areas that are not Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), a require for SHARP 1.

ASHNHA is prepared to support our members in efforts to utilize SHARP 3 as soon as it is available. We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and to support workforce development efforts in Alaska in this way.

Respectfully,

Jeannie Monk
Senior Vice President



**ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM**

March 20, 2019

Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate HSS Standing Committee
Alaska State Legislature

Re: Senate Bill 93

Dear Senator Wilson,

On behalf of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), I write in support of Senate Bill (SB) 93 – An Act relating to a workforce enhancement program for health care professionals employed in the state; and providing for an effective date.

ANTHC is a statewide tribal health organization that serves all 229 tribes and more than 173,000 Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) individuals in Alaska. ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation co-manage the Alaska Native Medical Center, the tertiary care hospital for all AN/AIs in Alaska. ANTHC also provides a wide range of statewide public health, community health, environmental health and other programs and services for Alaska Native people and their communities.

Alaska's SHARP program provides recruitment and retention services for Alaska's health care workforce, and continues to be of great value to ANTHC. As outlined in the proposed legislation, ANTHC supports its intent to expand health professional types and sites eligible for the program.

ANTHC currently employs five health professionals that have benefited from the SHARP program and looks forward to the continued partnership this legislation would enable. Thank you for the opportunity to provide support and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or if additional information can be provided.

Sincerely,

Gerald Moses
Vice President, Intergovernmental Affairs

Cc: Rachel Gearhart, SHARP co-chair
Eric Boyer, SHARP co-chair

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
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Main: (907) 729-1900 | Fax: (907) 729-1901 | anthc.org

Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center
1915 E Rezanof Dr
Kodiak, AK 99615
907-486-3281
www.providence.org



March 21, 2019

SHARP Council
Co-Chairs Eric Boyer & Rachel Gearhart

Dear Co-Chairs:

Please accept this letter of intent for SHARP 3.

SHARP, as a recruitment and retention tool has been vital to our organization. Our ministry firmly believes in the value of the SHARP program and model in providing high quality care to our state's citizens through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaska. With SHARP 3 there is a clear ability to expand (1) loan repayment, (2) partnership funding, and (3) establish a standard program administration fee. The strategy is to expand practitioner and site eligibilities beyond the strictures of SHARP-1 and SHARP-2, and thereby increase the number and variety of health professionals and sites, like ours, who participate.

SHARP 3 provides valuable state infrastructure, without additional state general funds, and will provide us the ability to expand the benefits of SHARP to areas that are not Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), a require for SHARP 1.

As such, our ministry is prepared to utilize SHARP 3 as soon as it is available; finding that the 100% match requirement is not a barrier, in that we can utilize our community partnerships to fund this match how we see fit.

We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and to support workforce development efforts in Alaska in this way.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina L. Bishop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gina" and last name "Bishop" clearly legible.

Dr. Gina L. Bishop, RN, PhD, CEN
Chief Executive Officer

Jody Simpson

From: Sen. David Wilson
Sent: Sunday, March 24, 2019 8:22 PM
To: Jody Simpson
Subject: FW: Email Your Senator Form Submission

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

-----Original Message-----

From: no-reply@alaskasenate.org <no-reply@alaskasenate.org>
Sent: Friday, March 22, 2019 7:35 PM
To: Peter Torkelson <Peter.Torkelson@akleg.gov>; Sen. David Wilson <Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov>
Subject: Email Your Senator Form Submission

There has been a submission of the form Email Your Senator through your website.

Your Senator
David Wilson

Your Name
Thomas Hunt, MD

Your Email or Phone
tom.hunt.viii@gmail.com

Question or Concern
Alaska State Legislature

Senator Wilson

I support the SHARP-3 efforts. I speak today as a practicing hospitalist in Anchorage but also one who -- in prior positions as Medical Director of the FQHC Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center and then CEO of the Providence Medical Group, Alaska -- recruited over a hundred providers to Alaska. I've also worked in resource-poor rural Alaska settings (Bethel, Unalaska, Kodiak, Cordova). I've been practicing in Alaska for 25 years.

SHARP 1 and 2 were very helpful in recruitment and I helped qualify a few recruits through the process. Alaska is the better off for their retention.

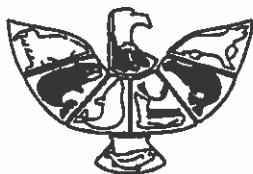
SHARP-3 is complementary, targeting those specialists who provide niche specialty services that make Alaskan healthcare equivalent to large urban Lower-48 centers of excellence. We've forgotten the recent past, when

patients needing tertiary care flew to Seattle or beyond. This is now rare thanks to an trickle of specialists who make it possible for Alaskans to receive care close to home. Unlike mainstream specialties like orthopedics or cardiology, these more rare species don't have a large referral base for high-volume practice and proportionately high reimbursement. Many of them are employed because that's what it takes to recruit and retain them. These specialists deserve our support as much as do the courageous and under-recognized primary care providers supported by earlier versions of SHARP.

Thank you.

IP Address

https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__216.67.15.112&d=DwlFaQ&c=Q8iJasR7RZ-J0Fd9RXD9ZA&r=KVJII8e3-3-3m_dhDNmvUkYA7ZCSAZDV6BnDUf8ox9w&m=qEqFKGknRRvmWCj09hodCPydOWJnpdxh_TnWAbVt7Ik&s=S1UaLROuU6IL9mQn-mxCy4EMIKIK5zs_V_NR8WYncKE&e=



Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

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March 25, 2019

SHARP Council

Co-Chairs, Eric Boyer and Rachel Gearhart

RE: Letter of Support for the SHARP 3 Program

Dear Co-Chairs,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) is writing in support of the SHARP 3 Program.

ANHB was established in 1968 with the purpose of promoting the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and cultural well-being and pride of Alaska Native people. ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the AHS, which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 tribes and over 175,000 Alaska Natives and American Indians throughout the state. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB assists tribal partners, state and federal agencies with achieving effective communication and consultation with tribes and their tribal health programs.

ANHB has been a long-time supporter of the SHARP Programs. SHARP, as a recruitment and retention tool, has been vital to Alaska's Tribes and Tribal Health Organizations who work in some of the state's most remote locations. ANHB firmly believes in the value of the SHARP program and model in providing high quality care to our state's citizens through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaska. With SHARP 3 there is a clear ability to expand (1) loan repayment, (2) partnership funding, and (3) establish a standard program administration fee. The strategy is to expand practitioner and site eligibilities beyond the strictures of SHARP 1 and SHARP 2, and thereby increase the number and variety of health professionals and sites, like our members', who participate.

SHARP 3 provides valuable state infrastructure, without additional state general funds, and will provide ANHB's members the ability to expand the benefits of SHARP by allowing the recruitment of health care professional types in very short supply in our rural communities, which are not currently allowed under SHARP 1 and 2.

ANHB sees SHARP 3 as an important extension of Alaska's workforce development programming, and we want to continue the forward momentum of this program. If you would like to have further dialogue on this issue, please contact ANHB at (907) 562-6006 or anhb@anhb.org.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jimmie

Chairman

Alaska Native Health Board

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PEBLOF
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

ARCTIC SLOPE
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL BAY AREA
HEALTH CORPORATION

CHICKALOON VILLAGE
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

CHUGACHMIUT

COPPER RIVER
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN
TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES

KARLUK IRA
TRIBAL COUNCIL

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE

KETCHIKAN
INDIAN COMMUNITY

KODIAK AREA
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

MANILAQ ASSOCIATION

METLAKATLA INDIAN
COMMUNITY

MT. SANFORD
TRIBAL CONSORTIUM

NATIVE VILLAGE
OF EKLUITNA

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

NATIVE VILLAGE
OF TYONEK

NINILCHIK
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

NORTON SOUND
HEALTH CORPORATION

SELDOVIA VILLAGE TRIBE

SOUTHCENTRAL
FOUNDATION

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

YAKUTAT TLINGIT TRIBE

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM
HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE



**MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION**

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March 25, 2019

Senator David Wilson
Senator John Coghill
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Tom Begich

Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK. 99801

Dear Senator Wilson and Members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee,

Please accept this letter of support from the Mat-Su Health Foundation for SB 93, SHARP-3 Medical Provider Incentives, Loan Repayment. Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) is the official business name of Valley Hospital Association, which shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (MSRMC). MSHF invests its share of the profits back into the community through grants and scholarships to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the fastest growing region in Alaska. Our current population of 104,168 people is projected to grow to 167,500 by 2045. One of our fastest-growing demographics is older Alaskans, who have a higher need for healthcare services than many other populations. Along with this growth comes the need for more health care workers. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development stated in the October 2018 issue of Alaska Economic Trends magazine that that of the 25 Alaska occupations expected to grow the most in the next 10 years, 23 are related to health and human services.

Workforce Development is a key Mat-Su Health Foundation focus area, and we are committed to filling gaps in the community's healthcare workforce through programs that include scholarships, professional development opportunities, and support of SHARP. SHARP provides incentive for clinicians to work in Alaska by offering student loan repayment for designated providers in high-need healthcare settings. As a public/ private partnership, SHARP-3 requires no monetary investment at the State level, but it does require this legislation to pass. The Mat-Su Health Foundation invested \$25,000 over the last three years to support seven new healthcare practitioners in Mat-Su: five in Behavioral Health and two in nursing. Since the inception of the SHARP program our community has benefited from 45 practitioners who may not have been here otherwise.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation fully supports SB 93 and the SHARP-3 program. We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and we respectfully ask you to move this vital piece of legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer

"Improving the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su!"



ANCHORAGE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTER

4951 Business Park Boulevard • Anchorage, AK 99503 • ANHC.ORG • 743-7200

March 27, 2019

SHARP Advisory Council
Co-Chairs Eric Boyer & Rachel Gearhart

Subject: Letter of Intent for SHARP 3

Dear Co-Chairs:

As a recruitment and retention tool, SHARP has been vital to the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center (ANHC). Our organization firmly believes in the value of the SHARP model in enabling the provision of high-quality care to our state's citizens through an equitable distribution of health professionals throughout Alaskan organizations.

We see SHARP-3 as a program that will provide an important mechanism to support health workforce recruiting and retention in Alaska communities. This program would provide clear opportunities to expand loan repayment, as well as funding partnership opportunities and setting a standard program administration fee. Additionally, by expanding eligibility from their definitions in SHARP-1 and SHARP-2, SHARP-3 will allow an increase to the number and variety of health professionals and sites, like ours, who participate.

At ANHC, we have seen competition for providers continue to increase, due to retirements and growth in community demand. With this increase in challenges to recruit and retain high-quality providers, SHARP-3 provides our organization with a competitive edge. It allows nonprofits like us to have support in sharing the load when offering the important incentive of loan repayment for our providers, which is something that we would be unlikely to afford otherwise. In many cases, it is a substantial factor in obtaining service commitments that keep our highly talented providers here in the state, and we have heard that it is also a factor in recruiting new providers to Alaska.

As such, our agency is prepared to utilize SHARP-3 as soon as it is available. We do not see the 100% match requirement as a barrier, as we are committed to utilize our community partnerships to fund this match as needed.

We're eager to continue the momentum of SHARP and to support workforce development efforts in Alaska with this invaluable program.

Respectfully,

Scharla K. Baker, SHRM-CP
Chief Human Resources Officer
Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center

From: Heidi Robichaud <scrimqueen@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 5:36 PM

To: Boyer, Eric D (DOR) <eric.boyer@alaska.gov>

Subject: SB - 93 support

To Whom it May Concern,

As a past recipient of Alaska's SHARP program, I am strongly in support of SB - 93. SHARPs support allowed me to pay off my student loan much faster, kept me motivated and committed to my work at Lynn Canal Counseling Services in Haines and inspired me to move on to my current private practice in Haines, Chilkat Counseling. My practice is very successful and I am rewarded to be able to use my skills to help people through their troubles. SHARP allowed me to move into my goal as a private practitioner sooner. It also allowed me to fund further educational trainings and workshop to develop expertise in my specialty, which is hypnotherapy.

This program is important to Alaska because it definitely helps retain and attract clinicians. Rural areas in Alaska face many challenges in attracting and retaining talented professionals. SHARP made a big difference for me.

Respectfully,
Heidi Robichaud
Chilkat Counseling
Haines, AK



March 28, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to encourage the passage and ratification of SB93.

I have just completed my first quarter as a SHARP participant. I am blessed for this assistance with repaying my loans. Currently I work as a Certified Nurse-Midwife at the Maniilaq Association in Kotzebue. I did not apply for this position, or any other position simply for assistance with my loans. I accepted this position because I have committed my professional career to working in underserved areas.

Long past are the days when students can work their way through schools and graduate debt free. SHARP 3 may be the carrot that brings qualified health professionals to my adopted home. Since SHARP-3 is a public/private partnership that our legislators from both sides of the isle should support it.

Although there are some lovely cities in our state there are also many remote villages like Kotzebue that have a tough time attracting qualified professionals. Just perusing the Maniilaq web site we need four physicians, four registered nurses, a dentist, and several physician assistants and nurse practitioners. I know that the ability to advertise loan repayment programs is helpful to our recruiting efforts.

F

inally, I have had many wonderful opportunities to share my leadership skills here in Alaska. I am the President of the Alaska Affiliate of the American College of Nurse-Midwives. I am also the first Alaskan to be chosen as a Duke - Johnson & Johnson Nurse Leadership Fellow. Offering the SHARP programs will continue to bring world class professionals to this the Last Frontier!

Kouadio
Theresa M. Coley-Kouadio, CNM, MSN
Maniilaq Association
PO box 256 Kotzebue, AK 99752
907-442-7384
fax 907-442-7306
Theresa.kouadio@manillaq.org

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Kotzebue Okiqtagruk, Ambler Ivisaappaat, Buckland Nunatchiaq, Deering Ippatchiaq, Kiana Katyaak, Kivalina Kivaliniq,
Kobuk Laugviik, Noatak Nautaaq, Noorvik Nuurvik, Point Hope Tikigaaq, Selawik Akulligaaq, Shungnak Isinnaaq

March 29, 2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dr. Zachary Barrickman and I am a dentist for the Copper River Native Association and a proud recipient of SHARP-1. Personally I could not be happier with the program and how it has helped me personally deal with the stress of tackling the large student loans that are necessary to take on in order to join so many medical professions these days.

More and more we hear about the shortage of providers for underserved areas and the gaps in wages between private sector health care jobs versus what can be provided at public health institutions. The sad reality is that when someone leaves school and finally realizes what they owe, more times than not, their focus moves from trying to help people to figuring out how fast they can make as much money as possible to start paying those loans back. The major problem with this is that once a person has chosen to go private vs public health, they rarely will make a change the other way later in their career. I can only speak to the dentistry world on this, but almost everyone I know in public health got into it right out of dental school. If you don't get them right out of school, you are probably never going to get them. With tuitions creeping ever higher, it is harder to attract people to public health jobs, most of which are in rural and bush communities, without some form of help to pay off student loans.

I count myself lucky and blessed every day that I was able to get a SHARP-1 loan repayment option and am so thankful for it because it allows me to live and work in a community that I love and want to stay in without wondering how the loans will ever be paid off.

Looking at our own facility, I see so many openings for positions that can't be filled currently. We have been without a hygienist for over 15 months now. Facility wide, there are shortages in nurses, doctors, PA's, and other mid-level providers across the board. I can't help but think that if there was more opportunities for loan repayment, recruiting new, young, and talented individuals would be much easier. Currently, we are using Locum services to try and fill many of these rolls, which is both very expensive & only short term fixes.

Loan repayment help is not just a way to recruit people to underserved populations; it is also a very important tool to helping retain these people for a long period of time. One of the biggest complaints of my patients is that before I arrived, they had no less than 5 different dentists over the previous 3 years before I started. Treatment was inconsistent and large cases were not followed through on because of the high turnover that can happen with short term providers. I feel that loan repayment is one way to eliminate that because it ensures that the individual providers are invested in staying at a location for long periods of time. Moreover, if you are like me, you can fall in love with your community and can see yourself staying for a very long time. Which I personally feel is the most important outcome of these programs; long term, continuous, high quality, patient care. This truly is what every patient deserves and one of the best results of these programs.

I have read over the concept of the SHARP-3 Program and I think that the ideas behind it are sound and line up perfectly with things I have already mentioned. I like the idea of facilities being able to shift recruitment dollars for short term staff to the more efficient use of those same dollars for long term staff retention. The fact that it requires no state general fund money and can potentially be self-sustaining is huge. Lastly, it provides the ability to help such a large and broad amount of health care professionals, not just the top tier, and really help facilities recruit and retain quality, young, and fresh personnel to hard to fill positions. Simply put, this program is greatly needed and would be very enthusiastically received by public health facilities across the state.

Zachary Barrickman, DDS, Dental Director
Copper River Native Association

To Whom It May Concern,

I have been involved in recruiting medical providers to Alaska for over a decade. The existing and previous SHARP programs have provided me with a strategic advantage for successful recruitment and retention of physicians, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, dentists and physician assistants.

The creative expansion proposed in SHARP 3 would be a welcome addition to my recruitment tool-kit. Thinking back a decade or more to the 2006 Alaska Physician Supply Task Force Report, and further back to the SORRAS one and two reports (State of Recruitment Resources and Strategies) to quote Bob Dylan, it has been a "slow train coming". We need proactive, strategic workforce development strategies for the State of Alaska. We are facing a national shortage of healthcare professionals. I strongly endorse and recommend SHARP 3 and SB-93.

Respectfully,

Brad Clark

Director of Physician & Executive Recruitment & Retention | Tanana Chiefs Conference

122 1st Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

phone: 907.452.8251 Ext. 3079 | Long Distance: 800.478.6822 Ext. 3079

Email: brad.clark@tananachiefs.org

**Rachael Woods
P.O. Box 211015
Auke Bay, AK 99821
March 28, 2019**

Dear Rachel:

I am writing to tell you of my experience as a SHARP recipient and why I think this is a valuable program. I am a recipient of the SHARP-2 grant and continue to encourage colleagues to apply for the SHARP-3 in the hopes that they will have as positive an experience as I did.

Because of the SHARP-2, I was able to pay the remainder of my student loan from graduate school. This was a tremendous benefit as it enabled me to allocate more money towards my family and relieved the stress of this financial burden I had been carrying since I graduated in May 2000. An additional benefit was the support I received from Robert Sewell who was my contact for the SHARP-2. He made himself available to me whenever I had questions and helped me to problem-solve issues with the agency where I was working.

As well as encouraging colleagues to apply for this grant I have encouraged the agency where I work to use it for recruiting clinicians. The SHARP program is a great benefit both to those who receive the grant and to those who benefit from practitioners being made available to them.

Please feel free to call me at (907) 523-6631 with any follow up questions.

Sincerely,

**Rachael Woods
Teen Health Center Clinician**



CAMAI COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

To: SHARP Advisory Council
C/O Robert Sewell, SHARP Program Manager
Eric Boyer Co-Chair
Rachel Gearhart, Co-Chair

From: Peter Tallman
Behavioral Health Director
Camai Community Health Center
2 School Road, PO Box 211
Naknek, AK 99633
Cell: (907) 469-1111

RE: Letter of Support for SHARP Funding

SHARP Advisory Council,

I am writing to offer my support for the SHARP program. I am a former SHARP recipient (Dec. 1st, 2012 to Nov. 30th, 2014). I received the SHARP loan repayment while I was a child therapist in Dillingham. At the time I was a freshly licensed social worker with a large debt hanging over my head from a top ranked-and top priced, graduate program. To me SHARP was an absolute win/win. I was able to pay down a portion of my graduate school debt while working in a community with a high cost of living and with great need. The communities I served benefited from having a well-trained, motivated and well supported clinician who felt committed to giving full effort. It felt like a fair deal to me and I hope those I served felt the same.

In my current position in another Bristol Bay community I can say that the greatest challenge for our program is the recruitment and retention of qualified and talented mental health professionals. There isn't even a close second. It is extremely difficult to recruit providers from out of state, especially if you expect them understand and connect with the unique circumstances of rural Alaska, and it seems nearly impossible to convince clinicians on the road system to venture off it for a while. As an example I have a behavioral health position that's been unfilled for two years.

I support SHARP because to me it's a fair deal for everyone. Alaska gets providers where we need them most, and providers get the practical support they need to be able to focus on their work and the reasons they entered their respective fields to begin with. SHARP is a good deal for providers and a great deal for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Peter Tallman, LCSW, CDC-I

Mission Statement: *Camai Community Health Center promotes and provides compassionate medical care for the health and well-being of our communities.*

Values: *Professionalism, honesty, respect, integrity, responsiveness, and trust*

www.camaihc.org

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today about my experience with the SHARP Program in hopes that it will convince you to vote for SB-93.

I first came to Bethel, Alaska as a pharmacy student for one of my final clinical rotations. The first day I arrived, several pharmacists told me they were in desperate need of pharmacists. They proceeded to tell me all the benefits of working and living in Bethel, including the potential of securing a SHARP loan repayment contract.

In case you are not aware, SHARP is a support-for-service program to help offset the cost of student loans and rural living for healthcare professionals providing care to the state's residents. This program, which requires zero general funds, helps keep practitioners within the state of Alaska.

During the rest of my clinical rotation, the pharmacists continued to recruit me, using SHARP as a tool. It worked! I was back after graduation working hard and applying for the SHARP contract. That year, I was the only full-time professional to receive the 2-year SHARP-II award at my facility. And, for the next year, I watched several pharmacists (and other professionals) come and go because they weren't awarded the SHARP contract. The staffing issue made my job very difficult, and there were many times I wanted to quit, but I stayed due to my contractual obligation to SHARP. And, thankfully I "had" to stay, because a few months later I met my husband, who was a SHARP-I recipient at the time, and we are both still living and serving the people of Bethel almost 5 years after moving here! When our contracts ended, we decided not to reapply because we wanted to share the opportunities we had with other professionals looking to move to rural Alaska.

Please vote for SB-93 to give other professionals the opportunity I had to fall in love with Alaska and its people.

Thank you for your time,

Kathryn Reynolds, PharmD