



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education

Anchorage
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Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5923
Main: 907.269.8990
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March 25, 2019

Senator Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Capitol, Room 7
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Kawasaki

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the "Council") fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

We partner with other boards and commissions all the time, and have been very supportive of the great work that Suicide Prevention Council has done to bring awareness, support and hope to Alaskans on this very difficult issue. Therefore, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education wishes to offer support for SB 10, to extend the "Statewide Suicide Prevention Council" to June 30, 2027. As you are aware, Alaska has a very high suicide rate and it affects all segments of our population, including those who experience intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. The Council stands ready to assist in the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to increase outreach and awareness to our beneficiaries. The Council itself lost one of its valued employees to suicide four years ago and our entire staff and members mourn her loss deeply.

Thank you for taking the lead to extend the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council for ten more years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie Winston".

Maggie Winston, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Reinhart".

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693
Main: 907.465.3250
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March 21, 2019

Senator Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Capitol, Room 7
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Subject: ACoA Letter of Support, SB 10

Dear Senator Kawasaki:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer support for SB 10, to extend the "Statewide Suicide Prevention Council" to June 30, 2027. Alaska has one of the highest rates of suicide in the U.S., and among older Alaskans specifically, there is a high rate of suicide. According to 2017 data from the Alaska Bureau of Health Analytics and Vital Records, Alaska's age-adjusted suicide rate for people age 65+ is 27.3, twenty-five percent higher than the age-adjusted suicide rates for older Americans at 19.7. Nationally, elderly white men have the highest risk of suicide with a rate of 32 suicides per 100,000 each year, using firearms as the most common means to complete this act (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Although older adults attempt suicide less often than those in other age groups, they have a higher completion rate.

The higher rate of senior suicide in Alaska parallels the higher risk of suicide among younger Alaskans. While reasons for the higher rates of suicide among Alaskan seniors are not completely known, there is some evidence to suggest that colder, darker northern climates are more conducive to depression, which is one of the leading causes of suicide. Depression in older people often goes untreated as it may be more difficult for seniors to access behavioral health care in many Alaskan communities while others view depression as a "normal part of aging." In addition, Alaskans age 65+ self-report higher rates of binge drinking, obesity, and frequent mental distress than seniors in the lower 48. These behavioral health conditions may contribute to depression and the higher rates of senior suicide in Alaska (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey).

The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council created a Statewide Suicide Prevention Plan, 2018-2022 that is intended to be custom-fit to each community and group. Strategy 2.7 of the Suicide Prevention Plan recommends that senior service providers should become familiar with the warning signs of suicide as well as risk factors for suicide such as substance abuse, violence, and depression. Senior centers and other senior service settings offer a primary environment for seniors to address those conditions and feelings, as well as their feelings about suicide. Strategy 3.7 of that plan recommends the state and communities participate in efforts to de-stigmatize suicide and improve access to treatment in order to prevent mental health crises. Seniors do not always access behavioral health services that are provided in community settings and are more likely than younger individuals to live in isolation and choose not to seek help.

The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is working towards breaking the silence and stigma surrounding the problem of suicide in Alaska that are contributing to suicide and preventing people from accessing the help they need. This work needs to continue to effect change and turn the curve in Alaska. The Commission supports the work of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and appreciates your leadership on SB 10.

Sincerely,



Gordon Glaser
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director



February 6, 2019

The Honorable Senator Kawasaki
Alaska State Senate

Dear Senator Kawasaki:

On behalf of the Alaska Peace Officers Association (APOA), I am writing to convey our support of SB10, "An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date."

The APOA wholeheartedly supports the extension of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council. As first responders, members of APOA see firsthand the devastation of suicide. SB10 extends the term of the council and allows its valuable work to continue. Please contact the APOA office in Anchorage at 277-0515 if there is anything our organization can do to help with the passage of this bill. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to our state.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Pearson
State President
Alaska Peace Officers Association

PO Box 240106
Anchorage, AK 99524
apoa@gci.net
(907)277-0515

About APOA

The Alaska Peace Officers Association (APOA) is a dynamic, professional and non-partisan organization. Our membership consists of law enforcement, corrections, prosecutors, security professionals and others at the local, state and federal levels. APOA has served as a voice for peace officers and issues impacting the law enforcement profession for over half a century. We are one of the oldest and largest 501c(3) charitable, nonprofit organizations in Alaska. www.apoaonline.org



April 25, 2019

The Honorable Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Senate
Alaska State Capitol, Room 7
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Kawasaki,

On behalf of the over 2,000 employees at GCI, I am pleased to write this letter in support of Senate Bill 10 to extend the Alaska Suicide Prevention Council until 2027.

Over the past 40 years, GCI has been dedicated to connecting tens of thousands of Alaskans in 240 communities across the state. Unfortunately, suicide is a tragedy that affects our customers, our employees, and the communities we serve. That's why GCI launched the GCI Suicide Prevention Grant in 2016. The grant provides funds for Alaska programs that focus on suicide prevention and creating healthy communities. Since 2016, GCI has provided more than \$200,000 in grant funds to 18 Alaska organizations in communities across the state including Juneau, Bethel, Soldotna, Kotzebue, Point Hope, Newhalen, Wasilla, Nome, Unalakleet, Fairbanks, Tunanuk and Anchorage. I am pleased to report that GCI will launch our third round of grant funds this summer. More information can be found at our website: <https://www.gci.com/why-gci/gcigives/gci-suicide-prevention-fund>.

The Alaska Suicide Prevention Council's state plan, *Recasting the Net: Promoting wellness to prevent suicide in Alaska*, has been a valuable tool in the development of GCI's grant program. Based on guidance from the report, GCI encourages grant proposals for intervention efforts, prevention through community-building, and growing resilience. We have also used the report guidance to inform our grant evaluation process. It has been an excellent resource.

The efforts of the Council help ensure that GCI's grant program is consistent with a statewide, strategic effort. We strongly support the Alaska Suicide Prevention Council's mission and support Senate Bill 10 to extend the Alaska Suicide Prevention Council termination date until 2027.

We appreciate your time and effort on this important issue and we look forward to working with you and other stakeholders in the future.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Heather Handyside", written over a horizontal line.

Heather Handyside
Vice President
Corporate Communications & Community Engagement



National Alliance on Mental Illness

nami

Alaska

February 27, 2019

Alaska State Legislature

Re: Letter of support for SB 10 and HB 22, extending the “sunset” date for the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council.

To Whom It May Concern:

NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness), is the largest grass-roots organization in the country providing education and advocacy for families affected by mental illness. NAMI Alaska is the Alaska state chapter of NAMI. There are nearly 1,000 local NAMI affiliates, nationwide, of which four are in Alaska: NAMI Anchorage, NAMI Fairbanks, NAMI Juneau, and NAMI North Slope. These are volunteer-centered organizations providing classes and support for families impacted by mental illness.

NAMI Alaska supports SB 10 and HB 22, which would extend the “sunset” date of the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to 2027.

Alaska, tragically, leads the nation in rates of suicide. We must do what we can to reduce the horrific toll suicide takes on Alaskan families. Suicide is preventable. “Treat the mental illness; prevent the suicide.” Like most illnesses, the earlier mental illness is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcome.

Information, and access to resources prevent suicide. The Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is an inexpensive and effective way to reduce Alaska’s rate of suicide. Extending the sunset date – keeping the Council from having to close its doors – is essentially free. Please support these bills. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sheila Harris
Executive Director
NAMI Alaska



ALPHA

☆
ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed to Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

April 9, 2019

The Honorable Mike Shower, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Shower and Committee Members:

The Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) is a non-profit membership organization with over 150 health members dedicated to improving the health and well-being for all Alaskans. ALPHA is also the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association.

ALPHA strongly supports SB 10, to extend Alaska's Statewide Suicide Prevention Council to June 30, 2027. As outlined in Alaska Statute 44.29.350, the functions of the Council are necessary to improve health and wellness throughout the state by reducing suicide and its effects on individuals, families and communities.

The Statewide Suicide Council has done a remarkable job of raising awareness; coordinating and improving statewide prevention programs and resources; collaborating with national, state and local stakeholders and resources; and developing, updating, and implementing statewide prevention plans.

Reducing suicide rates in Alaska has been one of the goals of the [State's Healthy Alaskans 2020](#) and is also a priority of ALPHA. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, suicide rates in Alaska remain high and still much higher than the national average.

It is crucial that the Statewide Suicide Council continue its work and remain the primary entity in Alaska for Alaska's collective approach to preventing suicide.

Sincerely,

Patty Owen
Policy Committee Co-Chair

Jayne Andreen
Policy Committee Co-chair

cc: Senator Kawasaki



February 15, 2019

[Sent Via Email]

Andrew Jimmie, Chairman
Alaska Native Health Board
4000 Ambassador Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Re: Support the continuation of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and the addition of a Tribal Health Representative

Dear Mr. Jimmie:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I am sending this letter to support the Alaska Native Health Board's (ANHB) efforts to amend SB 10 "An Act extending the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and providing for an effective date," through the addition of a representative to be nominated by ANHB and its Tribal Behavioral Health Directors Committee. Suicide prevention, education, and awareness have been priorities of AFN for many years. AFN representative William Martin serves as a Vice Chair for the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council (SSPC). We fully support the continuation of the SSPC and the work of ANHB.

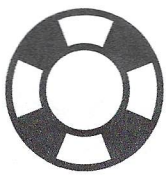
AFN is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska. Our membership includes all 12 regional for-profit corporations, all 12 regional non-profit organizations, 171 for-profit village corporations, 191 federally recognized tribes, and several tribal consortia that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community. AFN serves as the principle forum and voice of the Alaska Native community in dealing with critical issues of public policy and government.

Alaska Natives and American Indians are the only ethnic population specifically listed as at-risk for suicide by SAMHSA. Since suicide disproportionately affects Alaska Natives and American Indians, AFN supports ANHB's efforts to add a seat to the SSPC to include a subject matter expert in prevention who has program experience in the tribal health system. The individual's knowledge and experience would add tremendous value to the work of the SSPC. Suicide is preventable, and an additional tribal representative on the SSPC would be a critical resource in providing a unique perspective to promote resiliency and raise awareness.

Should you require more information about this information, please contact me directly at (907) 274-3611.

Sincerely,

Julie Kitka
President



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Alaska Chapter
2440 E Tudor Rd. #191
Anchorage, AK 99507

**Alaska Board of
Directors:**

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Morgan Clay
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Bristol Bay Native Corp.

Wendy Fick
Matson Navigation

Kim Isada
Community Volunteer

20 March 2019

The Honorable Senator Kawasaki
State Capitol Building
120 4th St. , Room 111
Juneau, AK, 99801

RE: **SB 10** (Kawasaki)/**HB 22** (Tarr)

Dear Senator Kawasaki:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is pleased to write you in support of SB 10/HB 22, to extend the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council until 2027. Established in 2001, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council has served as an advisory council to the Legislature and Governor regarding suicide awareness and prevention. In 2018, the council released an updated 2018-2022 state plan, *Recasting the Net: Promoting wellness to prevent suicide in Alaska*.

The council serves the public interest by actively broadening the public's awareness of suicide prevention and coordinating the efforts of other suicide prevention entities including state agencies, regional groups, coalitions, and local communities. Overall suicide ranks as the fifth leading cause of death in Alaska, it is the first leading cause of death among residents ages 15-24 and the second leading cause of death among those 25-34. We must continue to let the council advise us on this public health problem and coordinate efforts across the state to save lives.

Please support SB 10/HB 22

Dennis Lasley
Board Chair
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Anchorage, AK 99515
Ph: 907.250.1890
Email: Alaska@afsp.org

AFSP Mission:
*To save lives and bring hope
to those affected by suicide.*



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION – ALASKA CHAPTER

March 7, 2019

Senator Kawasaki
State Capitol Room 7
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: **SB 10** (Kawasaki)/**HB 22** (Tarr)

Dear Senator Kawasaki:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention – Alaska Chapter is pleased to write you in support of SB 10/HB 22, to extend the termination date of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council until 2027. Established in 2001, the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council has served as an advisory council to the Legislature and Governor regarding suicide awareness and prevention. In 2018, the council released an updated 2018-2022 state plan, *Recasting the Net: Promoting wellness to prevent suicide in Alaska*.

The council serves the public interest by actively broadening the public's awareness of suicide prevention and coordinating the efforts of other suicide prevention entities including state agencies, regional groups, coalitions, and local communities. Overall suicide ranks as the fifth leading cause of death in Alaska, it is the first leading cause of death among residents ages 15-24 and the second leading cause of death among those 25-34. We must continue to let the council advise us on this public health problem and coordinate efforts across the state to save lives.

This Chapter of the American Foundation supports SB 10/HB 22

Sincerely,

James Biela
POB 3543
Bethel, AK 99559
Lead Ambassador/Suicide Survivor Outreach Coordinator/
National Public Policy board member