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January 28, 2020

Representative Matt Claman
House of Representatives

Dear Representative Claman,

We were so pleased to learn about House Bill 181, the bill requiring public schools in Alaska to include mental health curriculum in eight grade health classes. Thank you for championing this important piece of legislation. We are honored to be named as one of the organizations to help develop the curriculum and look forward to that work!

As part of our work at the Power Center (formerly Alaska Youth Advocates) and Alaska Seeds of Change, we were selected to be part of a national learning collaborative to improve access to mental health care and reduce anxiety and depression for transition age youth, ages 13-23. One of the biggest goals of the project is to increase young people's awareness of their own mental health, what common mental health conditions are and how they might manifest themselves, and to reduce the stigma and increase knowledge about getting help for those conditions. What isn't known can be scary, and young people need to know that mental health treatment CAN help and that is possible to live full and satisfying lives, even with a chronic serious mental illness. This legislation goes a long way toward expanding that knowledge base in Alaska!

As an agency, we have previously worked with the Department of Education and Early Development on initiatives to promote trauma-informed schools, and we are eager to partner again for this work. Some of our staff are in the process of finalizing a "Mental Wellness 101" workshop that we will use internally, so they are primed and ready!

Thank you again for your leadership in introducing this legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Myers
CEO



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alaskachildrenstrust.org

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3 February 2020

Representative Matt Claman
Alaska State Legislature
Capital Building, Rm 420
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: HB 181: An Act Relating to Mental Health Education

Dear Representative Matt Claman,

Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) extends its support for HB 181, "An Act relating to mental health education." Alaska Children's Trust works to prevent child abuse and neglect across the state.

House Bill 181 works to expand existing health education requirements by directing the Board of Education and Early Development to develop guidelines ensuring the inclusion of mental health education in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. ACT supports HB 181 both for its capacity to increase identification of child abuse and neglect through greater discussion of mental health; and to promote resilience within our childhood population.

Alaska has one of the highest per capita rates of child abuse and neglect in the country. HB 181 works to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental illness, which supports early identification and intervention in cases of child abuse and neglect. HB 181 also works to reduce stigma surrounding mental health by empowering youth to seek resources for support and treatment in cases of mental illness.

Alaska Children's Trust also supports HB 181 for working to promote resilience within Alaska's youth population. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study demonstrated the significant influence of childhood experiences in shaping lifetime health. Abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction both directly affect a child's mental health status in the short term and as they grow to become members of society. While recognizing that adversity is a natural part of life, ACT supports this bill's aim of providing youth with the tools necessary to address trauma through healthy coping skills.

House Bill 181 aligns with our core goals of fostering healthy development in children, promoting resilience, and strengthening families across Alaska. ACT applauds Representative Claman's willingness to openly address the importance of mental health in our childhood population. We look forward to continuing to work together to advance these shared goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trevor J. Storrs", is written over a large, light-colored circular watermark.

Trevor J. Storrs
President/CEO

Together we can prevent child abuse and neglect

From: [Jordan Posamentier](#)
To: [Rep. Matt Claman](#)
Subject: Letter of Support for HB181
Date: Thursday, February 06, 2020 8:47:23 AM
Attachments: [Outlook-5aknjcet.png](#)

Dear Representative Claman,

On behalf of [Committee for Children](#), I am writing to express our support for HB181. As a global nonprofit dedicated to helping children everywhere, including Alaska, thrive socially, emotionally, and academically, we applaud your efforts to include instruction standards on mental health into health guidelines and to encourage this type of instruction in public school systems.

If there is opportunity to work on this bill, **we would suggest including the insertion of *evidence-based instruction on SEL with mental health instruction***. Skills from all five SEL competencies, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and healthy relationships, demonstrate an impact on promoting student well-being; thus, it would be beneficial to add SEL in instruction for students. As a case in point, Anchorage School District provides a shining [example](#) and leadership in SEL.

Perhaps of further interest to this legislation, Committee for Children recently published a resource that examines the connection between SEL and youth suicide prevention, which you can access [here](#).

Your educator workforce probably knows us by our flagship evidence-based SEL program, Second Step. But we do more than develop programs. As you advance this and related policy, we are here to serve as a resource, whether it be to connect you with our researchers, experts in the field, or SEL experts in your state, or to provide advocacy, policy support, or thought partnership.

Thank you for your work to further and improve students' learning experiences in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Jordan Posamentier

Jordan Posamentier | Director of Policy & Advocacy

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