

Dear Honorable Matt Claman,

Hello! My name is Lillian Yang and I am a 9th grader at West Anchorage High School. I am writing this with my club Amnesty International to push for mental health education to become mandated in school. Coming into high school, I have realized the importance of mental health awareness. With the pressures of college, social life, academics, and sports, I can see how many high schoolers can fall into a dark place over these years. Today, I ^{even} have friends who have suffered from depression and anxiety already - and I am worried about the situation. If those incredible people are at risk, what about everyone else? I additionally have a sister who has suffered from weight loss disorder for the past year, which has lead me to believe the need for increased mental health awareness.

In Alaska...

- 48% of females in grades 7-12, 2017 reported to have felt sad or helpless almost everyday for 2 weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities - HHS.

I think a mandated mental health education in Alaska could really help lead to better/increased treatment and access in the state and help address mental illness overall. I really hope you can sponsor the bill, HB 181, to help make this an addition to our education system. Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Lillian Yang

Dear ALASKA State Legislature,

My name is Naomi Taylor. I am an 18 year old West High~~er~~ student and future voter. I believe that mental health advocacy is very important and is crucial to the wellbeing of youths in today's America. Though things are getting better, there is still a long way to go before the stigma of mental health is eradicated. Especially in Alaska, where the winter darkness makes seasonal depression much more popular, integrating mental health education and desensitizing the youth to the stigma behind mental health will make a huge step in the ~~discovery~~ progression of ~~mental health~~ normalizing and helping mental health in youths

Thank you,
Naomi Taylor

Dear Representative,

I would like you to know how beneficial the HB 181 Bill would be for our Alaskan youth. As a high schooler myself I would just like to express that I myself would have found meaning in learning about mental health. I think inherently for me, being apart of a black family, I have always had this stigma about mental health. I think these are times when minority children are often influenced to develop a mentality of 'push, push, push, go, go, go, survive, achieve, succeed' that ~~when there are times~~ we develop an extremely unhealthy mentality. Even in moments of weakness when I personally could have needed or used help — I didn't ask for it, I got this idea that I had to do everything for myself, solve every personal problem I had myself because no one was going to do it for me. However that is a lie. Mental health is NOT a weakness and more importantly it's not something to be ignored. As an 8th grader we begin a long trek of difficulties and growth as we grow into ourselves. Children need guidance — ~~and~~ and you have the opportunity to change the course of childrens lives.

Thank you,

Asya Copson.

Dear Alaskan state legislature,

Mental health advocacy is extremely important. As a senior in high school, it is something that I, along with many of my peers and friends, consider to be integral to our development as youth, and also struggle with at times. Hearing several people speak on this pertinent issue tonight at the MHATS event really brought to my attention just how important it is. Introducing and enacting House Bill 201 would be a great step towards advocating for and ensuring the development of this aspect of students that often goes unaddressed. Introducing a class about the importance and details of mental health to young students would help them deal with this sometimes sensitive subject, and make it a topic that is more widely recognized and easily discussed.

Sincerely,

a student ☺

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

Hi, My name is Sophie Meyers. I am a Sophomore at West Anchorage Highschool. Mental Health is such a large part of everyday life and it is essential for young children to be exposed to information about this stuff at a young age. Many kids start feeling things ~~like~~ at a young age but because of the lack of the fact that not much is shown about mental health, it is hard ~~to~~ for them to speak up for themselves. Did you know that 1 in 5 students already consider suicide? Bringing mental health education to middle schools can help kids to learn about all the options they have and that they are not alone. If this bill is passed ~~we will be one step closer to~~ we will be one step closer to a better world!

Thanks for your time,
Sophie Meyers

Dear Alaska State Legislation,

My name is Ian Beals. I am a senior at West High School. This is my first time attending MHAIS tonight. We are only 3 stories in and I already feel more whole as a person and it has most definitely affected me. I know for a fact that education such as this would have an enormous impact on our state as a whole. It will affect our today and future for the better.

Thank you,
Ian Beals

Hello!

Thank you for taking the time to read our thoughts on why we think advocating for mental health is essential for our youth. As a high schooler who has had experience of depression in the past — I know that having the ~~my~~ wrong mindset while going through the experience has significantly drove me in the wrong direction. Having the right education and support in our schools will prepare our youth for the potential struggles that may rise as they grow up. When I was young, no one had ever told me about mental illnesses, signs of having them, as well as methods to cope. The only solution that I had thought of as a 13 year old was isolation, ~~my~~ sadness, and suicide. Teaching our youth ^{how} to react when we ever come ~~to the~~ ^{to that} point in our lives of giving up is an Important life Skill that must be brought to popular attention.

Passing this bill will not only teach our next generation on how to cope, but will also lead to a more happier, safer society for our community.

Dear Harriett Drummond,

I am a student at West High School, and I am writing to you about the importance of mental health advocacy in middle schools. It is important to teach about mental health in middle schools, because middle school can be really hard for kids, and it is important to teach them that a lot of what they're feeling can be explained, and they can get support.

From,
Annel Kaplan

Please support HB 181

Dear Harriet Drummond,

My name is Ivy Marshall and I am a freshman at West Anchorage High School. Mental Health Advocacy is very important to me, because personally I struggle with mental health issues and I think it's something everyone should know about and be aware of.

According to a 2017 Alaska High School Youth Risk Survey, over 1 in 5 students seriously ~~attempt~~ considered attempting suicide, which is a crazy big number, too big.

The symptoms, risks and everything surrounding mental illnesses need to be talked about, and the stigma needs to be abolished.

P.S. thank you for introducing me and my sister a few years ago in the senate to be a page :)

Sincerely,
Ivy Marshall

Dear Ark State Legislature,

My name is Lorenz. I'm a senior at Service High School and enacting HB 181 in health education will be crucial in improving the mental wellness of our youth. Every day, I see kids suffering from issues like depression, social anxiety, and mental abuse in their relationships and daily lives. Whether they're gifted, going through adversity, or seemingly happy, there are so many students going through internal struggles that affect ~~the~~ various facets of their health. As a student, I wholeheartedly believe that educating youth on how to recognize and combat these issues will enrich the culture of our overall community.

Sincerely,

A student

Dear AK State Legislature,

I am a senior at West Anchorage High School and am writing in support of HB 181. Middle school students are uniquely receptive to mental health education and are at a point in their lives where such education would be uniquely beneficial. To not support such an effort would be remarkably ignorant.

I am writing to support HB 181. Too often, mental health issues are not addressed and I believe that educating youth on mental health and giving them the information to know how to get support is vital. ~~Offering~~ offering mental health education in schools will help destigmatize mental health issues. Thank you.

Melissa Jacobs

Dear AK Governance,

I am a student in the Anchorage School District who experienced the 8th grade health class. I also believed that they severely lacked mental health ed. and as we all know, middle school and beyond is hard & mentally challenging. I'm in support of this bill!

Thank you!

Piper

Dear Alaska,

I think it is very important to implement this bill because mental health issues need to be normalized. I watch my peers at school struggle everyday with mental health & it really hurts my heart. This is something that needs to be addressed.

Thank you,
Maya Kemp

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

My Name is Devon James, I am a junior at West Anchorage High School. I am writing to you for your support for HB 181.

In 2017, 36.1% of Alaska High School Students reported to the Alaska High School Youth Risk ^{Behavior} Survey that they had experienced a depressive episode. 22.8% of those students considered suicide seriously. I regret to inform you that I was one of those students.

I ~~have~~ regret in that I even thought of ending my life. If I had an awareness of mental health in my community I believe my life would have turned out for the better. I am in a constant struggle to feel content. I hope you consider and approve HB 181 for the betterment of your state and its future. There's honestly no excuse in my eyes not to do it. Money should never be an issue over youth mental health. One in every five teenagers have a diagnosable mental condition. Those are your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, neighbors. And you can save them. Please, please, please support HB 181!

Sincerely, Devon James

Dear Alaskan Leaders

I strongly support House Bill No. 1810. Sometimes the importance of our mental health is overshadowed by the importance of our physical health. In a state with one of the worst epidemics of mental health issues, we have to bring mental health education into the light where it belongs. Teaching the importance of mental health in schools is the first step in what will be a long road to making every Alaskan citizen a healthier, happier person.

Hopefully,

Julia

Dear Representative

As someone who's lived in Ak >50 years
I feel very strongly that mental health
education is needed in Alaska. I
practiced Neurology during those 50 years
and often noticed depressed people who were
unable to get help for crippling depressions.
Often, the depression was linked to epilepsy,
Multiple Sclerosis or other illnesses. In
American society, too much shame and ignorance
about sadness exists and people have no idea
how to find help or even consider finding
help. House Bill 181 is greatly needed.

Shirley A. Fisher MD
1000 F St # 704, 99501

Dear Representative,

My name is Aleya and I am a freshman at West High School in Anchorage. I am writing this to strongly urge you to add mental health to our health curriculum. It is incredibly important for students to learn about mental health throughout school so that they can understand the things that they and their friends are feeling in order to be able to address them and handle them, especially through the stress of high school. Being able to handle these issues when students are young results in happier adults who know how to handle their mental health issues as they arise. I personally dealt with anxiety and panic attack disorders in fourth grade, and had I not had an understanding teacher and supportive parents and been able to understand what I was feeling, I would not have been able to take the necessary steps (having a plan with my teacher to leave the classroom when I had panic attacks and later becoming homeschooled) to become stable and would have only deteriorated and would not be in the good place I am in today. I hope you will consider adding mental health education to health classes to help create a healthier, happier, well educated generation of students.

Sincerely,

Aleya

Aleya Brown

Amnesty International

~~Dear~~ Dear Alaska Legislature, my name is Isaiah Cruz and I'm a student. I think mental health is important because it just needs to be addressed everywhere and to everyone. It's now getting recognized because people are now speaking about their experiences. I love that MHATS is an actual thing where people can speak openly.

From my experience, I've struggled for a very long time because certain problems plus school. It was mostly overwhelming for everything I encountered. I couldn't ~~balance~~ balance a lot and problems just got worse. I just want an outlet for other kids so they never feel the same feeling.

Please support K-12 mental health education in Alaska. Please support HB 181.

Dear Alaska Legislature,

My name is Cassidy Austin and I am a 12th grade student from McCarthy / Anchorage, Alaska. I am writing in support of HB 181 because I believe that mental health education in ALL grades is crucial for a healthy and beneficial educational experience. Mental health is just as important as physical health and I hope that the future youth of Alaska have opportunities to learn about mental health and its importance.

-Cassidy

1/25/20

Dear Representative Claman,

Thank you so much for your advocacy for early education about mental health. This topic is near to my heart, as a parent of a 7th grader, and as a person diagnosed with Bipolar I and from a long line of family living with mental illness.

Middle school is already hard enough with hormones, new school work, social structures, pressure and opportunity. ~~Youth~~ I see firsthand the pressure teen boys have to fit in, and constantly compare their lives with those of their peers. I also see how my son struggles with how normal/abnormal it is to have a mom who is occasionally hospitalized for a medical condition that is inexplicably "all in her head."

Education is key to normalizing and providing community and safety to those who need extra support. It teaches youth that it isn't something they need to tough through, and gives them permission and vocabulary to open up. It gives them tools to ~~learn~~^{recognize} warning signs in themselves and their peers. It destigmatizes something their grandparents saw as unnamable. It saves lives.

Thank you so much for seeing the value in education and role as an advocate for youth in Alaska.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

Aurora Hablett

Andy Josephson ☺

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

1/25/2020

Hello! My name is Stephanie O'Connor. I myself have been in recovery from Bipolar I disorder. I believe, education about Mental

Health in school would have been very beneficial to me. It is also my belief that mental Health education would be/can be helpful to Alaska's students. Therefore, please support K-12 mental health education in Alaska. Please support HB181. Thank you.

since I was a teenager

Sincerely,

Stephanie O'Connor

Dear Alaska State Legislature

I am a native American student and activist. Mental health support in schools is vital and the first step to normalizing mental health in schools. We need to know how to take care of ourselves and also how to ask for ~~mental~~ help when we are struggling. ~~We deserve~~ we deserve to be supported and taught about our bodies

With hopes of a better
future

Selak Judge

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

I am a student at West High School and am writing to you as an advocate for mental health education for students through K-12. As a teenager myself I grapple with anxiety, the struggles of body-image, social acceptance, stress from loneliness, friends, family and work. There are times everyday that I question who I am, where I am going in life in general. Statistics show that 36.1% of students experience a depressive episode and honestly I see the affects of this everywhere. Especially here where darkness and cold keep us indoors alone, mental health is extremely important. We need to learn to love ourselves before we can even begin to love the world around us. ~~The~~ future

- Beatrix

Dear people who decide my education,
please help Alaskan students ~~be~~
learn to be happy and healthily sad.

with love, Abby.

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

I am a student at West Highschool and I think that mental health, unfortunately, a big aspect in many ~~people's~~ adolescents lives.

Because of this I think that it is really important it is normalized. To do this it should be discussed in school, which would be possible if the Bill 181 is passed.

Thank you for your concern,

Tatum Hartlieb

Dear Rep. Kelly Merrick,

Hello, my name is Ana Smith, and I am currently a student at West High School in Anchorage. I am aware that a bill for mental health education has been introduced and as a student I completely support this bill and hope you will as well.

Numerous mental health issues are filled throughout the student life, the most common being anxiety and depression. I wouldn't be able to count the number of friends I've known that have or have had struggles with their mental health

The feeling of wanting to help someone but with no idea how to is a devastating feeling. With the mental health bill, it would benefit everybody, and allow my friends and other people with mental health struggles to seek guidance.

I urge you to sponsor or support this bill. I advise you to think of all the students that struggle with the mental health issue. Think of what is truly better for our future.

Sincerely,

Ana Smith

Dear Ms. Drummond,

My name is Lauren and I'm a freshman at West High. I'm a member of Amnesty International, and I want to ask you to support House Bill 181. I'm writing this because I think that mental health is a big issue today and we should educate more youth about it. My parents are therapists and they strongly believe that mental health isn't talked about enough. Teaching it in our schools will help create a brighter future. Please sponsor this bill, as it will help youth everywhere in Alaska.

Thanks,

Lauren

Im sad, this makes
me not sad, support it

-Carnage

Dear honorable Chris Tuck,

I am a freshman at West High School in the amnesty international. Please vote for the house bill 181 because mental health is important. I have had family members who have suffered so please do it. 19% of US adults experienced mental illnesses in 2018, please take action.

Sincerely,

Leo

Dear Alaska State Legislature,

My name is Fua Veselani and I am a student at West Anchorage High School.

I am writing to tell you why mental health is important to Alaska. Mental Health is important because when people go through it they feel as if no one is beside them, they feel as if they are all alone. Eventually, if they do not get help it will sadly end in a suicide. When teenagers reach out, they feel as if they are being judged, like an outcast. No one should ~~EVER~~ feel that way, we should have classes that ~~spread~~ spread awareness about mental health, we should inform people it's okay to reach out, it's okay to feel this sort of way.

Did you know that 36.1% of students reported experiencing a depressive episode, 22.8% considered attempting suicide. This has to stop we should lower these percentages.

Sincerely,

Fua Veselani.

Dear representative Chris Tuck,

My name is True Spangler, and I am a member of the West High Amnesty International club. Amnesty International aims to campaign for human rights. Today I am writing this letter to urge you to vote in favor of the House Bill 181, which would require mental health education for K-12 students in the state of Alaska. Personally, there are many adults, and even children, in my life that suffer from mental health issues. I believe that all students would benefit from mental health education, whether it impacts them personally or the people around them. According to the organization Resources to Recover, nearly 4.2% of adults in Alaska are living with serious mental health disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression — 64.3% of these people receive no mental health treatment. Many Alaskan residents are unaware of the mental health assistance offered in their community, and some residents are uneducated about the importance of seeking help at all. If students were educated about mental health, they would be more likely to ask for help when they have symptoms of being mentally ill, and they will grow up knowing how to help others in mental health related crises. For these reasons, I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 181.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

True Spangler

1000 W 70th Ave
Anchorage, AK 99518

Dear honorable representative Tuck,

I am a freshman at West Anchorage High School. I'm also involved in Amnesty International.

I think you should pass House Bill 181, as mental health is very important. Many big problems are caused by mental health, such as school shootings, and suicides. Teaching kids about mental health should be the first step to stopping these.

Sincerely,
Kian Flynn

Dear Rep. Kelly Merrick,

Hello my name is Mary Kim. I am currently a student at West High School. I've heard that a bill for mental health education has been introduced and as a student I entirely support this bill and hope you will as well.

Mental health issues are filled throughout the student life. I wouldn't be able to count the number of friends I've known that have or had struggles with their mental health.

The feeling of wanting to help someone but having no idea how to is a crushing feeling. The feeling of not being able to do anything to help your friends and family leaves you hopeless.

So please sponsor or support this bill. I urge you to think of all of the kids that struggle with this issue and think of what is truly better for our future.

Best Wishes,

Mary Kim

an urging student

Dear Honorable Chuck Kopp,

Hello, my name is Kim and I am a highschool freshman. I am writing this letter to advocate for HB 181. I have many friends who are and who have struggled with mental health such as depression, and it saddens me that some do not know the meanings of their feelings or know the resources to go to for help.

If mental health was taught at schools, a very large number of teens would be aware of signs to help themselves or others, as well as resources for help. Mental health accounts for 16% of diseases, and most people who have a mental illness don't even know it. Schools as well as the world will be a safer environment to those who need help.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and I hope you consider passing this bill. Alaska's teens will thank you!

Sincerely, Kim

Dear Honorable Matt Claman,

I am a freshman at West High School and I think the bill HB 181 would be very fundamental and necessary in our education. I am writing this because I believe mental health is very important and a mystery to most. In school we only touch the tip of mental health and don't really talk about how to prevent and treat this. Especially since mental health conditions account for 16% of the global burden of diseases and most people who suffer from mental health issues don't even know they have it. With this bill people will be aware of mental health and know the symptoms to prevent it. Please keep this in mind when discussing the bill. We truly need this bill in school.

Sincerely,
anonymous

Dear senator Kopp,

"Hi! my name is Marisol and I'm a senior at West Anchorage High School. I am the publicist of Amnesty International. I don't know if you're familiar with Amnesty but West houses the only club charter in Alaska. We are very proud and we hope to keep being young members in the activism community. I am writing this today to beg you to please vote YES on the HB 101 Bill that begins on January 15th. For a long time, mental health is something that has been ignored or mistaken for other physical conditions. In other cultures it is largely dismissed and we are told to just "get over it". I think this bill would help so many young students & teenagers process their feelings during this tumultuous time. I think this would help create a safe environment for teenagers that might be struggling at home or in other areas of their life. Did you know that 1 in 4 teenagers experience some type of depression. This is actually a troubling number. Personally, I don't think I have been super depressed but the stress & anxiety that is caused by school and my job is definitely overwhelming. I think that if I could have had a trained professional to talk to or even learn about ways to de-stress I could have done better in tests and not experienced severe burnout last year. Please take into consideration the amount of youth that would be helped by this bill and please help make Alaska youth safer.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely Marisol

Y6

support mental health

!

- Emma Knapp. Carers Oxford

Olive Heatwole