



# Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

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May 11, 2021

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Chair, State Affairs Committee  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Rm 411  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Bill 198, Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day

Dear Chair,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)<sup>1</sup> writes in support of House Bill 198 to proclaim September 10 as Alaska Community Health Aide Appreciation Day. Community Health Aides and Practitioners (CHAPs) are the backbone of rural Alaska health care.

The CHAP Program was born out of necessity to have providers in our rural Alaska Native communities. Our Community Health Aides/Practitioners are the backbone of the Alaska Tribal Health System. Tracing their modern history back to the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1940s and 1950s<sup>2</sup>, the CHAP Program has grown to provide frontline care in our rural communities and they are usually the first providers our patients see in the Alaska Tribal Health System. They have continued their work to help their communities, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our CHAPs are often community members who have strong ties to and are respected and important members of their communities.

The Alaska CHAP Program is authorized in federal statute<sup>3</sup> and has been so successful at delivering care to our Alaska Native communities, that it now includes community level therapists in the disciplines of behavioral health and dental health care. The program has become an international model and the model is now being adopted by the federal Indian Health Service to help deliver care in rural areas of the lower 48, where providers are hard to recruit and retain.

Our CHAPs are an example of the hard work and self-reliance of our Alaska spirit. They

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 Tribes and over 177,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people throughout the state. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB helps Alaska's Tribes and Tribal programs achieve effective consultation and communication with state and federal agencies on matters of concern.

<sup>2</sup> *Project Jukebox*. "Community Health Aides Program". Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Accessed May 2021, (<http://jukebox.uaf.edu/CHA/htm/history.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 1616l.

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PRIBILOF  
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

MANIILAQ 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

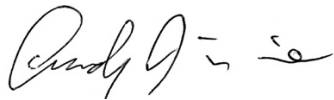
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HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE

work on the frontlines in their home communities to ensure that their family, friends, and neighbors have access to vital health care. In addition to the brilliant work of our CHAPs, their dedication to the program and its success have led Alaska to be a national and international model in the delivery of rural health care in the United States and around the world. We urge the Committee to pass this bill, and allow Alaskans to recognize the tireless efforts of our CHAPs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Jimmie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct loop at the end.

Andrew Jimmie, Tribally-Elected Leader of the Village of Minto  
Chairman  
Alaska Native Health Board

CC: The Honorable Tiffany Zulkosky, Bill Sponsor