



February 28, 2022

Adam Crum, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
3601 C St., Ste. 902, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

RE: Executive Order 121 Letter of Support

Dear Commissioner Crum,

The joint mission of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) is to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans. AMHB/ABADA are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska.

The Boards support Executive Order 121 to divide Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) into the Department of Health and Department of Family and Community Services. We have not identified any negative impacts of this proposed bifurcation and support the idea of increased leadership and organizational capacity at the State of Alaska to benefit the Alaskans we serve.

Along with our support, we respectfully offer a few comments:

- Alaska's Comprehensive and Integrated Mental Health Plan (Goal 9) encourages a culture of data driven decision-making that includes data sharing, analysis, and management to link support services across DHSS divisions and other departments. Two strategies identified in the plan are to create a data streamlining and data sharing plan and obtain legal counsel for final determination on the opportunities and constraints of inter-divisional data sharing, including new regulations found in 42 CFR Part 4. We highly encourage the State of Alaska to allocate resources to obtain the legal and technical assistance needed to assess, plan and improve data collection and data sharing between the two proposed Departments and their respective divisions.
- Public outreach and engagement on the proposed Department bifurcation has been transparent and robust and thank you for meeting with our staff and Board about these proposed changes. During these meetings, Department staff noted that one goal of the bifurcation is additional leadership capacity will allow more time and opportunity for stakeholder and advisory board engagement. We thank the Department for that insight and look forward to our ongoing partnership to improve Alaska's behavioral health continuum of care.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we offer our support on this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Sharon Clark
AMHB Chair

Renee Schofield
ABADA Chair