



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES
Pioneer Homes Advisory Board

P.O. Box 110690
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0690
Main: 907.465.4416
Fax: 907.465.4108

December 13, 2021

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy
Office of the Governor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

On behalf of the Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board, I am pleased to inform you of the board's support of your reintroduction of the proposal to reorganize the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) into two smaller departments, the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services.

The board recognizes that with the large size and diverse nature of the current DHSS structure, it is difficult to ensure that adequate time, attention, and resources are equally divided across the needs of each division and the general public whom they serve. With the reorganization into two departments, greater efficiencies, responsiveness, and flexibility can be achieved to aid in each divisions' ability to provide the foremost service possible to their end users. For the Division of the Alaska Pioneer Homes, that is ensuring our vulnerable elderly residents and future residents can be provided the quality of life they deserve while in residence. The change will also allow the six Alaska Pioneer Homes' staff, administrators and division leadership to better focus on their efforts and communicate the needs to the new Department of Family and Community Services leadership. Focus on the needs of the Pioneer Homes will best be served by this new department including health and wellness measures, staff development and recruitment, and addressing each home's deferred maintenance.

Thank you for providing the leadership to enable the Alaska Pioneer Homes to succeed and be better served under the new Department of Family and Community Services.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Pawlowski".

Robert Pawlowski,
Chair, Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES
& SPECIAL EDUCATION

550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1230
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Main: 907.269.8990
Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

January 19th, 2022

Commissioner Adam Crum
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Via Email: adam.crum@alaska.gov

RE: Executive Order 121

Dear Commissioner Crum,

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 and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. Our council membership is composed of self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities (60%), as well as agency and partner representatives (40%). One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on proposed recommendations that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is asked to perform an enormous amount of work and service for Alaska, while also navigating a landscape where healthcare delivery systems and economic support structures lack efficiency and face escalating threats to long term sustainability. There have been many approaches to streamline, improve, enhance, and reorganize state health and welfare services in Alaska over the years. We have struggled to implement good public policy relating to the physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being that lasts beyond the next election cycle and health and social programs suffer from a lack of systemic strategic planning.

Across ten (10) separate divisions, over three thousand two hundred (3,200) employees balance increases in work complexity and volume and try to responsibly manage the day-to-day operations of a very diverse department. They are asked to simultaneously remain informed and aware of developments happening at the local, state, and federal levels, to control costs, to maximize resource utilization, and to provide policy recommendations based on quality data analysis. DHSS staff work to ensure Alaskans' healthcare and social programs are easier to access, are based on best practices, and result in increased health and wellbeing across communities. The diversity and complexity of these programs require dedicated, informed, and

practical leadership during the best of times. And we have had several years of extraordinary challenge, which have pushed many critical programs and services close to the breaking point.

The current resources available to the Commissioner of DHSS must be given adequate support and capacity to engage meaningfully on issues of utmost importance. There have been requests in previous years to provide additional staff and resources within DHSS to help mitigate the demand. However, little to no progress was made in securing additional personnel, funding, and/or capacity despite good faith efforts to do so through multiple different approaches. GCDSE believes that the Commissioner, Governor, and Legislature all want to see improvements made in the Alaskan healthcare system but struggle with the current level of resources available to them to do so.

Reducing incidents of harm and neglect, decreasing the numbers of individuals unable to access or afford essential services, provide medical care to those with complex needs, recognize and heal generational traumas, and minimize workforce erosion are not simple problems to solve. And those are just a few of the big picture issues. Urgent crises arise with alarming regularity including abuse/neglect within institutional settings, natural disasters, and the ongoing COVID19 pandemic which all require immediate response and quickly consume the available capacity within DHSS leadership and leave little to none left over for pursuing systemic changes.

Thank you for meeting with the Governor's Council members and staff multiple times over the last year to discuss the reorganization of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and to engage meaningfully on the questions, concerns, and recommendations brought forward by GCDSE. People with disabilities and their families face many obstacles in their daily lives, and these issues deserve to have adequate engagement and prioritization from department leadership so that we can work together to find and implement solutions to complex problems.

During this process, GCDSE raised questions relating to the very specific federal requirements which govern many of our functions, and which are unique to GCDSE. We believe that we will continue to need robust engagement with and support from the department going forward and understand the need to provide a more defined structure within the Executive Branch which will allow for more focused and deliberate efforts, and we believe lead to higher caliber supports and services for Alaskans with disabilities.

To conclude, GCDSE strongly supports the reorganization and separation of DHSS into two new smaller departments better aligned with the size and scope of other state departments and agencies. We urge the legislature to engage in robust discussions with the Administration regarding your vision for the future and to learn more about how this proposed bifurcation will help move you closer to your goals. The Council looks forward to continuing to work with you during and after this transition period and are excited to begin substantively engaging on the issues most important to the disability community. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,



Myranda Walso
Acting Executive Director, GCDSE



Heidi Lieb-Williams
Council Chair, GCDSE



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, AK 99811-0693
Main: 907.465.3250
Fax: 907.465.1398

January 21, 2022

Commissioner Adam Crum
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Commissioner Crum,

On behalf of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA), I am pleased to inform you of the commission's support of your reintroduction of the proposal to reorganize the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) into two smaller departments, the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services.

The ACoA recognizes that with the large size and diverse nature of the current DHSS structure, it is difficult to ensure that adequate time, attention, and resources are equally divided across the needs of each division and the general public whom they serve. With the reorganization into two departments, greater efficiencies, responsiveness, and flexibility can be achieved to aid in each divisions' ability to provide the foremost service possible to their end users.

You and your staff reached out to our commissioners and other similar organizations to explain why this restructure is necessary and the steps that will be taken to ensure a smooth transition. ACoA's mission is to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans and to assist them to lead useful and meaningful lives through planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation. A restructure of DHSS will not only better assist the commission in this mission but will be beneficial to all Alaskans. After two years in a pandemic, ACoA understands that to have adequate time, attention, and resources to ALL of DHSS divisions, there needs to be a change. Two smaller departments will allow greater responsiveness, flexibility, and over time, more efficiencies that will deliver better services.

ACoA thanks the department and the Commissioner for the many meetings on this subject and for taking the time to ensure members understood the proposed reorganization and its benefits. We look forward to serving under the new Department of Health as we continue to advocate for Seniors across Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Morley".

Lisa Morley, Executive Director
Alaska Commission on Aging



ELECTRONIC MAIL

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Adam Crum, Commissioner
Department of Health & Social Services
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, AK 99503-5923

RE: ASHNHA Supports Reorganization of the Department of Health & Social Services

Dear Commissioner Crum,

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) represents more than 65 hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and other health care partners distributed across Alaska's vast expanse of over half a million square miles, from PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center in Southeast Alaska to Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital in Utqiagvik, north of the Arctic Circle. For over 60 years, ASHNHA members have worked together to improve health care in Alaska.

ASHNHA is pleased to support Executive Order 121 to reorganize the Department of Health and Social Services into two units - the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services.

We appreciate the time taken to meet directly with ASHNHA members on the plans for the reorganization. We support the administration's efforts to effectively and efficiently manage state resources to strengthen the focus on improving the health and safety of Alaskans.

Given ASHNHA's priority of harnessing innovation to transform health care through demonstration projects, we are particularly supportive of the new Department of Health's focus on the delivery of health care, providing robust health statistics and analysis, and responsible management of health care costs. ASHNHA members are ready to work with the new Department of Health to ensure our health care system is stable and supported with opportunities for transformation of care as we move forward.

We hope that the reorganization will support ease of access and continuity of care across departments for Alaskan citizens and health care providers. As always, thank you for your leadership and partnership on working to solve Alaska's health care challenges.

Sincerely,

Jared C. Kosin, JD, MBA
President & CEO

Tom Chard
Chief Executive Officer
Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA)
P.O. Box 32917 Juneau, Alaska 99803
907-321-5778
tom@alaskabha.org



February 16, 2022

Adam Crum, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Health & Social Services
3601 C St., Ste. 902, Anchorage, Alaska 99503
BY EMAIL AT: adam.crum@alaska.gov

Re: ABHA Supports Governor Dunleavy's Executive Order 121 – The Reorganization of DHSS

Dear Commissioner Crum:

The Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA) is a membership organization with over seventy statewide mental health and substance abuse treatment providers who constitute the core of behavioral health treatment services in Alaska. We are committed to advancing access to quality, cost effective behavioral health treatment services to all people in need across the state, whether in remote, rural, or urban areas.

ABHA would first like to thank you for spending time with us on February 7th to provide an overview of Executive Order 121 and to share the Department's plan to reorganize DHSS. We would also like to thank you and the administration for taking the time to answer all of our questions and for providing specific detail on how the proposal might affect behavioral health services in Alaska. Finally, we both recognize and appreciate the Department's engagement with a broad range of stakeholders on this important decision.

ABHA is especially interested in two benefits of the reorganization. First, we are hopeful that the reorganization will provide better opportunity to partner and collaborate with leaders at the State. We recognize this is a goal of the reorganization and suggest formalizing opportunities for partnership where possible. Second, ABHA has long-recognized that sharing data with policymakers, system leaders, and the Alaskans served by our programs can enlist everyone in continuous quality improvement. It is apparent from the thoughtful approach to rethinking how data is collected, analyzed, and shared that this reorganization shares that priority.

ABHA looks forward to continuing our collaboration and partnership with leaders at the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services to achieve the goals of the reorganization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Chard", is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

Tom Chard
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA)



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