

House Finance Committee

Public Testimony HB 281 Op Budget

Emails received to
HouseFinance@akleg.gov

By 3:00pm on March 5, 2022

From: Amanda Salmon <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 7:15 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget Testimony

I am a lifelong Alaskan, small business owner, super voter, and active in my community - The Mat-Su Borough - I sell real estate state wide and have been able to witness the effects of budgetary wins and failures with regards to roads, courts, professional services, etc. - over 20 years of business - and 40 years of living.

I am writing to submit testimony to the budget negotiations going on today.

It is my simple request - that the State of Alaska refocus on providing the services I was able to enjoy in my earlier years - and DEFUND whatever has been allocated to ANY special interest beyond the basic infrastructure the state is bound to provide. By this I mean - focus on roads, courts, public recording offices (death/marriage/birth records, real estate interest/etc).

I trust that you all know better than I what I mean by this. As a lifelong Alaskan I am disturbed by the fact that our government cannot prosecute murders, process the most simple documentation in a timely manner, keep the roads clear of avalanches, etc. This is an ongoing issue and we are depending on you to make it better and not WORSE.

These are scary times world wide. We are depending on YOU to insulate us from the worst and INVEST in infrastructure that provides service and protection - not fund virtue signaling and cooperation with unproven methods of governance.

It seems enough simple to me - cut the fat and provide the funding to infrastructure AND the PFD as you are obligated and responsible to do.

Most Respectfully,

Amanda Salmon, GRI
Associate Broker
Re/Max Dynamic of the Valley
[REDACTED]

Wasilla AK 99654

From: chris kopy <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 9:39 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Dividend

Get your grubby little hands out of the dividend fund. I got an idea. Do your job. You guys are scared to implement a tax and cut the budget to balance it because your worried about reelection. But here's the kicker once you brood of vipers get all or most of the dividend you'll turn to taxing us next. Alaskans are waking up and we want you guys out! Back to what ever you state you came from.

Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 7:04 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: School funding

Dear members of Alaska House Finance Committee,

Please support an increase in funding to our public schools.

It has come to my attention that HB281 has funding for education for Alaska's kids, and will receive public testimony today. I am unable to attend but I am a pediatrician and parent who sees first hand how our schools desperately need an increase in funding. Please support this bill and fully fund our schools for the future of Alaska.

And please realize this is not a permanent fix, we need to raise the BSA and forward fund our education budget so we stop losing our best teachers to other states and careers with better stability.

Our kids deserve better. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laurie Montano, MD

From: Megon Coon <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 10:03 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: I support HB 281!

Dear legislators,

I am writing in support of HB 281. Please pass this bill to provide additional funding for K-12 education next year.

Thank you,

Megon Coon
Anchorage, AK

From: Kevin Klott <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 10:03 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: I support HB281

I am writing in support of HB281. Please pass this bill to provide more additional funding for K-12 education next year.

Thank you!

Regards,
Kevin Klott
Goldenvue Middle School

From: Erin Walker-Tolles <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 9:24 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: Mari Mukai <marihokulani@gmail.com>
Subject: Support for DVSA funding
Importance: High

Good evening,

I am writing to ask you to support sustainable and increased revenue for community-based Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault funding statewide, and for Alaska Child Advocacy Centers in particular.

As the Executive Director of a non-profit that administers the regional CAC program for Southeast Alaska, I see firsthand the importance and impact of these programs. As a partner of the Alaska Children's Alliance which supports all Alaska CACs, I am aware that CACs across Alaska are struggling financially.

Child Advocacy Centers are tasked by the State of Alaska to provide core services of forensic interviewing, pediatric sexual assault exams, and coordination with OCS, law enforcement and other mandatory partners in the best interest of the children we serve. We are integral in collecting evidence that allows us to support public safety through the prosecution of pedophiles and those who commit assault against children. And we provide advocacy services to connect child victims and families to counseling and safety planning services to heal from this terrible trauma.

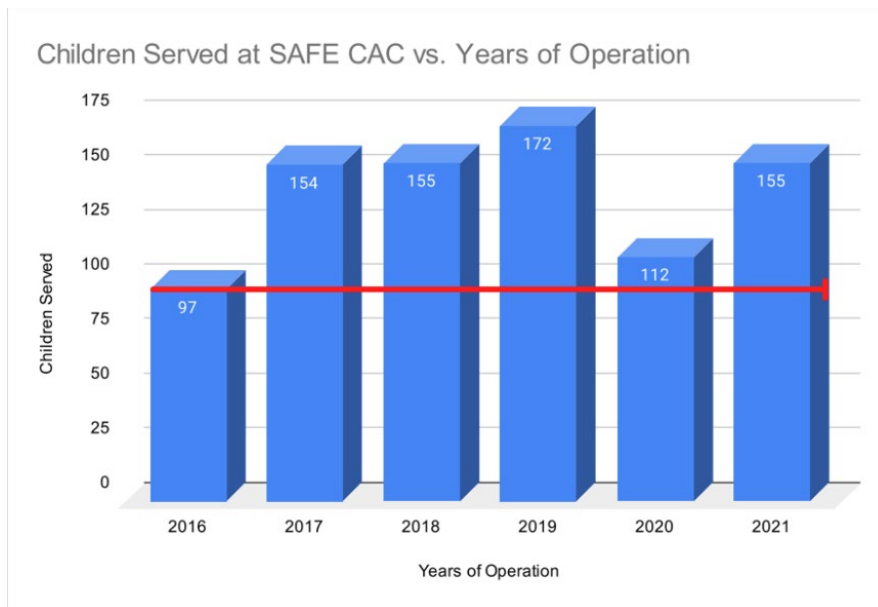
There has been no increase in our "core" OCS grants since FY16. Yet every year, even during the first year of COVID, we still served more children than the funding was intended for. In 2016 the SAFE CAC served 97 children, in 2021 we served 155. *See image below*

Please know that we take this charge to care for child victims of abuse and sexual assault very seriously. And please know that we are dedicated and resourceful.


Most CACs, with no intervention or support by OCS, have searched out supplementary funding from the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. These grants are for "enhancements" and intended to expand the range of help CACs can give. But most of the funding is used to supplement our ability to continue to provide core services that we've been tasked with by OCS. And limitations on that "enhancement" funding leaves critical gaps in our budgets and services, leading us to hold fundraisers to get enough funds to make ends meet.

If you remember one piece of information from my testimony, it is this: **in Alaska, Child Advocacy Centers—the centers tasked by the State to serve children who have been sexually assaulted or identified as likely to have been assaulted – must FUND RAISE in order to have enough funds to provide this critical service to children referred by the State and law enforcement.**

Please support a plan and budget that provides for adequate sustainable funding for all CACs to continue to do this critical public safety work on behalf of the State and for the good of all Alaskans.






Thank you so much for your service and consideration,



Erin Walker-Tolles
Catholic Community Service
Executive Director

Phone: 907-463-6151
www.ccsak.org
1803 Glacier Hwy, Juneau,
AK 99801

Strengthening vulnerable families and individuals in Southeast Alaska with dignity, care, and compassion.

Remember that some days, doing “the best we can” may still fall short of what we would like to be able to do, but life isn’t perfect on any front, and doing what we can with what we have is the most we should expect of ourselves, or anyone else.

--Fred Rogers

From: Jan Carolyn Hardy <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 7:36 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: Kim Hays <kim@akaficio.org>; Jan Carolyn Hardy <jancarolynhardy@yahoo.com>
Subject: 2022 Budget Comment

[REDACTED]

Anchorage, Alaska

March 4, 2022

Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget. The Budget proposed by the Democratic Caucus addresses includes a spending cap to protect the principal of the Permanent Fund as well as an energy relief payment to be made concurrent with the payment of the PFD.

The 2022 Budget also reverses cuts in human services. Public Health services have become more significant and necessary over the last two plus years. Covid 19 has highlighted the need to improve services so that we can address the issues such as long term care for dementia and Alzheimer patients; services for individuals with Developmental Disabilities; Behavioral Health treatment for addiction and mental disorders; training for RNs; and an enhancement of General Relief funding.

The proposed 2022 Budget also includes much needed funding for Education to protect schools from cuts due to the rise in inflation. The State has of late refused to fund School Bond Debt Reimbursement on which Districts relied. This Budget will re-establish Debt Reimbursement. Additionally this Budget will fund Pre-K, fund WWAMI, and refill the Higher Education Fund which has been drained in a reverse sweep.

It is vital that we change course to move away from disabling and destroying public services in the name of austerity. I ask that you support the 2022 Budget as it is heard in the House Finance Committee.

Jan Carolyn Hardy, President

Alaska AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52

Tikkun Olam,

Jan Carolyn Hardy

AFSCME Retiree Chapter 52 Executive Board President

ASEA/AFSCME PAC Director, District 22

Anchorage Area Central Labor Council Member

Social Action Committee, Member, Congregation Beth Shalom

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: david clark <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 6:35 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>; [REDACTED].org>

Subject: Letter of Support for ILC

To whom it may concern:

This letter of support may be late -- I hope not -- I only heard on short notice that there were hearings taking place regarding continued funding for ILC. My wife's sister has lived in Kenai for nearly 20 years. She moved there with her husband who unfortunately died shortly after their move. She loves the Kenai area and it's clear that it will always be her home. The sister in Kenai has a history of chronic mental health issues that are very difficult to help her manage from afar. The ILC team in Kenai has been incredibly helpful to her in terms of navigating public assistance and helping us, her concerned relatives with those very same issues. The Kenai ILC is always open to assist with her emergent needs, but also welcoming as a on-going source source of community, coaching and social connection. We feel incredibly lucky that the Kenai ILC is there to serve as a vital safety net for our sister and that they do so with both expertise and compassion. And responsiveness! We have only just recently connected directly with the Kenai ILC team and it gives us tremendous comfort to know that our sister has an ally and advocate on issues that can be difficult for her to handle on her own, and to help her develop her own independent means of living a safe, healthy and productive life in a place that she loves and calls Home. We have supported the ILC with donations and will continue to do so.

Please contact me if there is anything else we can share that would be supportive of continued funding for ILC.

Regards,

--

David Clark
New York City
[REDACTED]

From: kathleen shoop <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 6:31 PM

To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>

Subject: Re: State and Capital Budget comments

Dear House Finance Committee;

I would also like to add that I do not support any part of this over bloated budget.
You are not supporting the people.
There is no trust in what you are doing, twisting the rules.
How do you live with yourself? Knowing how much harm you are causing.

Here comes a Constitutional Convention!
All because you are incapable of solving problems.

Kathleen Shoop

From: Elizabeth Ripley <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 6:24 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: Robin Minard <rminard@healthymatsu.org>
Subject: Support for BH prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery

Dear House Finance Committee,

We appreciate the work done by the House Health & Social Services subcommittee for their work and support of behavioral health.

In all our Mat-Su Community Health Needs Assessments, Mat-Su stakeholders and constituents tell us that the top health issues affecting our community are all related to Behavioral Health. We need more resources invested upstream in treatment and prevention rather than downstream in hospitalizations and corrections.

As a step in this direction, we urge this committee to

- Adopt the subcommittee recommendation to **reject the Governor's original cut to behavioral health treatment and recovery grants.**
- **Support the modest increases to behavioral health treatment and recovery grants.** (*The subcommittee added \$959,520*).
- **Support the modest increase to the prevention and early intervention grants.** (*The subcommittee added \$346,660*).
- **Maintain the increase to the General Relief rate** paid to Assisted Living Homes and Facilities.
- Adopt the subcommittee recommendation to **reject the Governor's original cut to behavioral health treatment and recovery grants.** (*The subcommittee rejected the Gov's original proposal to cut \$790K from the T&R line. DHSS justified the cut by stating that the 1115 made up for the cut and there would be no disruption to service*).

Thank you for your ongoing work and continued support of behavioral health.

Elizabeth A. Ripley
President & CEO
Mat-Su Health Foundation
907-352-2896 direct

907-352-2865 fax

She/her

I live and work on the traditional lands of the Ahtna and Dena'ina peoples.

From: mary griswold <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 6:21 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: budget

I support a 5POMV withdrawal limit from the permanent fund. I support a 75/25 or 80/20 split for government services and the PFD. I support a PFD in the \$1200 range plus the energy relief check of \$1300 if revenue is high. It is critically important to restock the CBR which has been sorely depleted in recent years of deficit spending before funding other programs. I support the committee's increases for public schools, University of Alaska and Public Radio as funding allows.

Mary Griswold
Homer

From: Deanna Fossler <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 12:21 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: support for HB 281

Hi,

I'm writing from Anchorage where I have taught first grade with ASD for 25 years. The past several years of flat funding to education have hurt our ability to do the best for our students. The lack of funding has caused me to purchase more supplies and teaching tools than I normally do. I will do anything to help my students learn even dipping into my pocket but I shouldn't have to.

My class size increased from flat funding and that hurts kids when they get less of the teacher's time. My job teaching 6-year-olds to read is vital to their future success. I should not have a class so big I can't get to them all. Better yet fund schools well enough so every first-grade teacher doing the important job of teaching reading has a teacher assistant who can assist in this important skill. I could give my students what they need so much more effectively with a trained assistant.

My elementary school has never had a counselor since opening 22 years ago. We desperately need one. My principals have begged for one for years. The need is so much greater now with the damage Covid has caused. I have 3 first graders who lost their grandfathers to covid this school year. We need support.

I fully support adding \$50 million to K-12 public education and I hope you will too.

But that's not enough. Please increase the student BSA to help school districts become the most effective they can, being fully funded. Investing in our children's education will improve so many other areas of our states struggles.

Thank you for taking my testimony,
Deanna Fossler
Anchorage School District

From: Heather DeLoach <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 1:17 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: FY2023 Operating Budget HB69 Public Testimony

Hello,

I would like to thank the House Finance Committee for their support of the proposed FY23 operating budget which includes early childhood resources and services such as child care benefits, infant learning and early learning coordination, Pre K, and other family supports. These critical resources play a vital role in our children's future. I would also like to thank the House Finance Committee for the legislature's designation of federal funds last year for early childhood education. These funds are helping to stabilize the child care sector but more investment is needed as the sector is still in crisis. I would like to remind the committee that now is not the time to make any cuts to early childhood education. Cuts mean less access to high-quality care across the state. Now is the time to increase investment in Pre-K and child care to ensure these businesses fully recover and survive, and ensure access to high-quality care throughout Alaska. Now is the time to help families afford child care and return to work.

As a childcare provider, our costs have increased approximately 25% in the last 2 years. This is due to a combination of factors including COVID mitigation measures, increased payroll expenses, and general inflation. We cannot forward all of these costs to families, as they cannot afford to have their childcare costs increase by such a substantial amount of money. We are very grateful for the CARES and ARPA funds, along with PPP and SBA loans, but these are emergency sources of funding and will not sustain the childcare industry much longer.

Please continue to support investment in Alaska's future by passing the proposed funding in support of early childhood education.

Thanks,



Heather DeLoach
Corporate Finance & IT Manager

Bright Beginnings Early Learning Center
1000 Sundown Ct.
Anchorage, AK 99515
Direct Line: 907-341-1214
Main Line: 907-344-9435, opt. 9
Fax: 907-344-9437
heather@bbelctr.com
<https://www.brightbeginningselc.com/>

Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 11:38 AM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget, PFD

Dear Representative,

I ask that you support
Protecting the PFD using its historical calculation. I could support a 50/50 share under the right
situation. PFD paid first. It has been shown over and over a full yearly PFD is the single
biggest economic influx that the state can have.

All statewide tax increases must go before the people for a vote.

Revising the spending limit to more closely reflect current revenues and population
changes. With strong, trackable, and published performance metrics. Not meeting metrics no
increase, some a decrease.

Thanks for allowing me to comment.

Steve Carhart

From: Tommy Sheridan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 1:03 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Subject: Letter in support of UA \$7M blue economy budget amendment

To Whom it May Concern:

Attached to this email, please find (1) a letter in support of Representative LeBon's \$7 million University of Alaska Operating Budget Amendment Proposal, (2) Representative LeBon's associated 2022 Session Operating Budget Amendment Proposal, and (3) a flyer provided by University of Alaska Government Relations in support of this proposal. There should be three (3) attachments with this email altogether.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tommy Sheridan (he/him)
Sheridan Consulting
[REDACTED]



Invest in the new blue economy



UA is actively working on expanding opportunities in mariculture.

Mariculture, North Pacific Fisheries, Arctic and Pacific North Ocean Sciences \$7.0M

Alaska's coastline is longer than all other 49 states combined, and roughly two-thirds of the nation's fishery is harvested from Alaskan waters. Within the state, the combined seafood and fishery industries are the largest private employer. At the same time, environmental factors threaten continued success of wild harvest. A new industry is emerging, seaweed and shellfish farming, called mariculture. UA is actively working on expanding opportunities in mariculture. Mariculture can become the economic driver for the state as the field is only in its infancy. There are applications for pharmaceuticals, food additives, and food stability. The Governor's Mariculture Task Force set a goal to grow a \$100 million industry in 20 years, with university training and research and development being critical to reaching this goal. UAF and UAS coordinate with state and federal agencies in fisheries, mariculture, and ocean sciences making UA a leader in these arenas. Investment will increase Alaska's market share in a global economy.

Investment Priorities

- Funding (\$5.0M) would support efforts to build capacity in Decision Support for Production Scale Development (including graduate workforce research and partnerships) to:
 - build workforce capacity in Fisheries/Mariculture for reducing harmful algal blooms pervasive in Alaska;
 - develop a decision support tool for stakeholders to assess economic feasibility of production-scale hatchery supported mariculture in Alaska;
 - establish foundational genetic infrastructure for seaweed farming in South Central Alaska;
 - develop applications for kelp mariculture;
 - evaluate climate and local environmental factors on economic impacts to fishery dependent communities; and
 - engage and strengthen connections with coastal and Indigenous communities to answer relevant research questions and train the workforce.
- Funding (\$1.75M) would be used for maricultural and undergraduate fisheries in southeast Alaska.
- Funding (\$0.25M) will support the Institute of Social & Economic Research (ISER) research studying the Economic Shock and Workforce Development in Commercial Fisheries. Project will provide a better understanding of how shocks in commercial fisheries impact community employment and youth educational outcomes.



SHERIDAN CONSULTING, LLC

Email: tommysheridan@gmail.com

Cell: (907) 429-8999

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/tommy-sheridan-9b369115b](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tommy-sheridan-9b369115b)

March 5, 2022

To: House Finance Committee
Sent via email to House.Finance@akleg.gov
Cc to lhscfin@akleg.gov

RE: Comments in support of Rep. LeBon's University of Alaska Operating Budget Amendment Proposal

I am writing in support of Representative LeBon's [language appropriation](#) to add \$7 million in general funds to support the University of Alaska's mariculture, North Pacific fisheries, and Arctic ocean sciences. For the record, I am a 12-year resident of Cordova, Alaska, and I am representing myself as an independent consultant. I have been employed in a variety of capacities throughout Alaska's seafood industry for 20 years, including project and organizational leadership with Alaskan salmon hatchery operators, Alaska's Department of Fish and Game, a major seafood processing company, and more recently have transitioned into consulting and academic roles in support of fisheries development in Alaska. I currently serve the State of Alaska on the Governor's Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force, and as a commissioner on the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission.

The State of Alaska is at the forefront of at least two major industrial transitions, including those impacting the energy and seafood sectors. Retrospective analyses (Peluso et al. 2020) of previous industrial transitions in the Upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest result in recommendations that policymakers leverage the role that research universities can and should play in supporting private actors and impacted communities to reimagine their industries. Conducted as part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research's [Roosevelt Project](#), Peluso et al. (2020) provide an analytical basis for charting a path to a low carbon economy in a way that promotes high quality job growth, minimizes worker and community dislocation, and harnesses the benefits of energy technologies for regional economic development. I believe that Representative LeBon's and the University of Alaska's focus on mariculture development is consistent with this advice and acknowledges the unique opportunities and challenges facing Alaska's seafood industry, due in large part to current and predicted impacts of climate change.

In closing, I believe that broad investment in mariculture provides much value to the State of Alaska. This specifically proposed investment would allow for the leveraging of longstanding institutional expertise such as those at the [University of Alaska Southeast Fisheries Technology Program](#), the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) [College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences](#), and [Alaska Sea Grant](#). Further, this investment will allow for the necessary development of newer entities such as the UAF [Alaska Blue Economy Center](#), to the benefit of the Alaskan seafood industry and the coastal rural communities dependent upon its success.

My thanks to Representative LeBon and the House Finance Committee for recognizing the potential of these and other mariculture-related opportunities, and for your time and consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Tommy Sheridan
Owner, Sheridan Consulting, LLC

Peluso, N, Kearney M, and Lester R. 2020. Assessing the role of public policy in industrial transitions: how distinct regional contexts inform comprehensive planning. MIT Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research Working Paper. The Roosevelt Project Special Series. 40 pp. Accessed at <https://ceepr.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/The-Roosevelt-Project-WP-1.pdf>

2022 SESSION OPERATING BUDGET AMENDMENT PROPOSAL

OFFERED IN: The University House Finance Subcommittee

TO: HB 281 / HB 282

OFFERED BY: Rep. LeBon

DEPARTMENT: University of Alaska

APPROPRIATION: University of Alaska

ALLOCATION:

ADD:

EXPLANATION:

Other Subcommittee action:

Language appropriation

Add \$7,000.0, General Funds UGF (1004)

To support the University of Alaska's Mariculture, North Pacific Fisheries, Arctic and Pacific North Ocean Sciences: \$5,000.0 to support efforts to build capacity in Decision Support for Production Scale Development; \$1,750.0 for maricultural and undergraduate fisheries in Southeast Alaska; and \$250.0 to support the Institute of Social & Economic Research (ISER) studying the Economic Shock and Workforce Development in Commercial Fisheries.

House Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street Rm 3
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

We are writing to submit public comment in support of additional funding for long-term care in Alaska. As caregivers, recipients of care, and community members, we know the outsized impact that caregivers have in our state.

Alaska's home care workers keep people out of crowded hospitals and help our most vulnerable populations live with dignity. We are always on the frontlines of healthcare, yet many of us still earn poverty wages. We are often asked to decide between a client not receiving care or doing that work for free. And over the last ten years, pay for caregivers in Alaska has only gone down due to underfunding and budget cuts.

This is an issue that impacts people across the state, especially in villages and rural communities. Please support funding for home-and-community- based services in Alaska so we can continue to keep families in their homes and communities.

Thank you,

Cindy Speaker	Anchor point	Ericka Nebert	Juneau
Robin C Lydecker	Anchor Point	Jay Menze	Juneau
Mia Solomon	Anchor Point	Jennifer Nebert	Juneau
Aleshia Lockhart	Anchorage	Linda Kruger	Juneau
Lisa Regimbal	Anchorage	Richard Berg	Juneau
Marie Gomez	Anchorage	Leonilei Johnson	Juneau
Marika Matthews	Anchorage	Rensheil Bickford	Ketchikan
Natasha Gamache	Anchorage	Kathyboo killion	Kodiak
Ndeye Diop	Anchorage	Natasha Panamarioff	Kodiak
Priscilla Hunter	Anchorage	Aleta Geer	Nenana
Sarah Krug	Anchorage	Katherine Bacon	Palmer
Amanda Collins	Anchorage	Nancy Hashmi	Wasilla
Debbie Mulholland	Anchorage	Yolanda Ramirez-Thomas	Anchorage
Lesa Hollen	Anchorage		
Stephanie Michel	Anchorage		
Judy Jessen	Anchorage		
Kat Lieb	Atqasuk		
Manusiu Tai Talaiasi	Barrow		
Telesia Kepu Muti	Barrow		
Janet Johnson	Cordova		
Cheryl Stafford	Fairbanks		
Brandy Peters	Haines		
Meghan Deaver	Homer		
Allison Ply	Juneau		

March 5, 2022

Honorable House Finance Committee members,

Please **increase CBHTR grants by \$959,500 (20% increase)** and **increase grants for behavioral health prevention and early intervention by 20%** (\$346,7000), as the budget subcommittee recommends.

The 1115 Medicaid waiver doesn't cover every service for behavioral health.

The rates for most Medicaid behavioral health services still do not cover the true cost of treatment. Some rates actually went DOWN in the last re-basing and the "new" rates were initiated almost 10 years ago, and have not kept up with inflation.

As a clinician working in several Anchorage school-based clinics, I can tell you that our students are experiencing anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and emotional trauma at levels I didn't see before the COVID pandemic. Four out of five students that I care for verbalize these struggles.

For these services to be available, fair reimbursement to clinicians can only be accomplished through the CBHTR grants supplementing the 1115 Medicaid waiver funding.

Thank you for understanding the critical need for Behavioral Health services in Alaska.

Respectfully,

Cathy Giessel, MS, RN, APRN, Fellow-American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
12701 Ridgewood Rd
Anchorage, Alaska 99516
907.242.5450

TO: House Finance Committee

DATE: March 4, 2022



Alaska School Nurses Association

Dear Co-Chairs Foster and Johnson and Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before the House Finance Committee as you consider HB 281, the Governor's Operating Budget.

The Alaska School Nurses Association (ASNA) represents hundreds of school nurses statewide. ASNA provides education and advocacy on behalf of our profession. School nurses have been busy this year, helping provide COVID-19 education, surveillance, and testing for students and staff, and, in addition, continuing our usual duties of screening, immunization, daily care, case management, and preparation of students for a healthy life. School nurses provide cost-effective healthcare for all Alaskan children, regardless of their particular circumstances.

In many Alaskan school districts, school nurse positions are financed through the Base Student Allocation (BSA), along with teacher and related service positions. We consider it vital for the legislature to support robust funding and inflation proofing for the BSA. In addition, we support efforts to recruit and retain Public Health Nurses, who provide many school nurse functions in rural areas where there are not school nurses in each school.

Please pass the suggested incremental increase of 50 million dollars in BSA funding recommended by the Department of Education and Early Development Finance Subcommittee. In addition, please pass the \$520,000 to be used for recruitment and retention of Public Health Nurses recommended by the Health and Social Services Finance Subcommittee. These inputs will help to ensure continuation of health services for all Alaskan children, wherever they live. We ask that you do all you can to ensure that every Alaska student has daily access to a professional nurse.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Easley BSN, RN, NCSN

President Alaska School Nurses Association

alaskaschoolnurses@gmail.com

907-748-6076



March 4, 2022

House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 281/HB 282 – FY23 Operating Budget

Dear House Finance Committee members,

NAMI Alaska (*National Alliance on Mental Illness*) advocates for access to mental health services, treatment, support and research, and is steadfast in our commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope for all of those in need throughout Alaska. We work to promote our Alaskan NAMI affiliates across the state and connect individuals with NAMI resources in their communities.

As part of our 2022 NAMI Alaska Legislative Priorities, we support:

- **Fully support the Alaska Mental Health Budget.** This budget is crafted to provide the necessary services, supports and infrastructure that are needed to support Alaskan beneficiaries as per their mission and mandate.
- **Improve Community Mental Health Support Services – preserve and enhance behavioral health community support services.** Effective treatment and support services are essential for individuals with mental health conditions to recover and live productive lives. When services are available in the community, individuals are less likely to rely on expensive institutional care. Community support services should be easy to locate, affordable, and readily available.
- **Ensure rural Alaskans have access to care** through peer services, tele-health services and in-person providers, including a focus on connectivity and accessibility in rural communities. This also includes measures for safe communities throughout Alaska.
- **Support fully funding the Medicaid program.** Reductions to the Medicaid program threaten the entire health care system and will decrease access to quality and affordable healthcare for Alaskans, including children and adults with mental health conditions.
- **Expand prevention and early intervention programs** to ensure children and youth experiencing the onset of mental health conditions have timely access to effective services and support that continue into adulthood.

Specifically, we also ask for your favorable support of the following operating budget items in the FY23 Operating and Mental Health budget bills (HB 281/HB282) that impact Trust beneficiaries - Alaskans with mental illness, substance use disorders, intellectual-developmental disorders, Alzheimer's disease-dementia, and traumatic brain injury.

Behavioral Health Grant Programs (DOH):

The pandemic has increased the need for behavioral health treatment and prevention services across Alaska. Alaskans are experiencing higher rates of substance misuse, depression, anxiety, job and housing insecurity, resulting in more people needing services, in more communities across the state. Funding for these grants supports ongoing operations for community services providers serving the most vulnerable of Alaska's population.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee recommendations to include funding to *Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants*, to include \$959,500 GF/MH (20% increase/GF) for that grant program to providers. Additionally, support the subcommittee's recommendation to add +\$346,700 (20% increase/GF) above the Governor's recommendation to the *Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention Grants* program.

These grant programs pay providers for community-based mental health and addiction services, residential and outpatient treatment, prevention and early intervention services, FASD awareness, suicide prevention, and drug and alcohol prevention for Alaskan youth, and other Alaskans with behavioral health disorders.

Address the Intellectual-Developmental Disability (IDD) Waiver Waitlist (DOH): Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are critical for every aspect of their lives and are also important for families and caregivers. Home and community-based services (HCBS) grants pay for home care, assisted living, transportation, social support, medical care, and more. These services help ensure that Alaskans who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities have access to services they need to lead full and self-directed lives across their lifespan.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee addition of +\$1.7 million (\$870,900 GF) above the Governor's recommendation to increase the number of people who come off the waitlist and receive services, as well as the Legislative Intent language for the department to develop a five-year plan for eliminating the waitlist over the long term for Home and Community-Based Services.

General Relief for Temporary Assisted Living (DOH): General Relief Assistance provides for the most basic needs of vulnerable Alaskans, including Trust beneficiaries, who are ineligible for assistance from other programs and who do not have the personal resources to meet an emergent need. It is designed to meet the immediate, basic needs of Alaskans facing extreme financial crisis, and is a temporary funding source for assisted living home placement.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee recommendation to add +\$3.4 million GF with intent language that directs the Department to increase the daily rate for General

Relief/Temporary Assisted Living assistance. The daily rate of \$70 **has not increased** since the rate was last set on July 1, **2002!**

Centers for Independent Living (DOH): Community grant recipients are experiencing an urgent need to address financial challenges facing independent living service providers across the state.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee recommendation through intent language to require the department to distribute \$586,000 GF to Senior and Disabilities Services, and \$916,200 GF to Community-Based Grant recipients who serve seniors and people with disabilities across the lifespan.

Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) (DOA): The Office of Public Advocacy manage the finances, benefits, medical decisions, housing, and more for Alaskans who can no longer independently manage their own affairs without support.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee recommendations of \$250,000 GF matching funds for legal and advocacy services in OPA for Medicaid billing.

Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) Program (DPS): NAMI Alaska is a big proponent of the *Crisis Now* initiative. This funding ties in with the necessary support needed to address safety issues, including training in crisis intervention, de-escalation, mental health first aid, and more in Alaska's villages and smaller communities.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee addition of +\$2.3 million GF for 10 new VPSO officers to serve in rural Alaska. They also added +\$125,000 GF for a statewide VPSO tribal liaison. Intent language directs the Department of Public Safety "to identify regional training opportunities."

Domestic Violence Sexual Assault (DVSA) (DPS): Grants support 24-hour emergency shelters, advocacy services, child advocacy centers, legal services for victims, and mental health care for young victims of DVSA, and witnesses. These programs provide wrap-around services that promote safety and access to appropriate services-housing, treatment, counseling, family support, healthcare, and more.

Please support the House HSS budget subcommittee recommendation to include +\$3.5 million GF to replace temporary federal funds for grants that support community based DVSA programs statewide, specifically for children and families experiencing violence and/or sexual assault.

Thank you for your support of these budget items to assist all Mental Health Trust beneficiaries throughout Alaska to receive the support they need to address their many challenges and live productive lives.

Respectfully,



Ann Ringstad
Executive Director
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From: JERRY JENKINS <jerry-jenkins@prodigy.net>
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 3:02 PM
To: House Finance <House.Finance@akleg.gov>
Cc: Tom Chard <tom@alaskabha.org>
Subject: FY23 Operating Budget Support

Members of the Alaska House Finance Committee, let me start by recognizing and appreciating the work of the House Health and Social Services subcommittee and their support of behavioral Health. I also want to express my support for the following items related to behavioral health.

First, I urge you to adopt the subcommittee recommendation to **reject the Governor's original cut to behavioral health treatment and recovery grants.**

Second, I urge you to adopt **the modest increases to behavioral health treatment and recovery grants.**

Third, I urge you to adopt the **the increase to the prevention and early intervention grants.**

Last, the increase for the **General Relief rate** paid to Assisted Living Homes and Facilities is far overdue. We need to support this vital level of care for Alaskans needing it.

In closing, thank you for your ongoing work and continued support of behavioral health.

Sincerely,

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Connectivity – Collaboration – Integration – Resource Sharing