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***Sponsor Statement***

***HCR 9: Mental Health/Substance Assistance Parity***

House Concurrent Resolution 9 urges the State of Alaska to pass parity standard regulations, which would ensure that Alaskans have easy and fast access to behavioral health care.

Under parity standard regulations, private insurers would have to cover behavioral health services so that insurers, including Medicaid, can't make it harder to get behavioral health care than physical health care. Implementation of parity standard regulations would remove barriers that are slowing down the behavioral health treatment process such as extensive paperwork, health care stigmas, outdated insurance regulations, and restrictions to the amount of care patients receive. This will ensure patients are able to transition between physical and behavioral health services smoothly and more time will be spent treating patients rather than completing administrative tasks.

The outcomes of parity legislation would be efficient and cost-effective care, reduced reliance on emergency rooms and correctional facilities, more Medicaid providers in the system, streamlined care coordination between health services, and programs based on outcomes and evidence. This would ensure Alaskans receive behavioral health care that is subject to the same terms and conditions as medical and surgical care. I urge you to support HCR 9.