

March 19, 2024

Representative Prax, Chair
House Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 106
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

RE: AHHA Supports Mental Health / Substance Assistance Parity

Dear Chair Prax and House HSS Committee Members,

For 70 years, the Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association (AHHA) has served as a non-profit trade association representing Alaska's hospitals, nursing homes, and a growing number of healthcare partners across the continuum of care. AHHA members play an invaluable role, both as community providers and essential employers, in cities, towns, and villages across Alaska.

AHHA is pleased to offer our support for HCR 9 in its goal to align state policy, statutes, regulations and enforcements efforts with the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity act of 2008 (MHPAEA).

We view this change as a first step forward in setting the expectations to align behavioral health with best practice and federal standards. Following these nationally recognized guidelines will ultimately affect change within the system of behavioral health and how it is managed in Alaska. Increased alignment between medical and behavioral health regulations will also increase viability of integrated, whole person care which is recognized as having substantial benefits for improving patient experience, clinical outcomes, and in reducing overall costs.

This bill matters to Alaskans because it will support consistency across regulation development, act as a guide to help remove barriers for individuals seeking mental health and substance use treatment, support sustainability, decrease unnecessary administrative burden, and increase access to care that will improve health outcomes. AHHA urges the passage of HCR 9 to align Alaska with the federal MHPAEA guidelines.

Thank you for your consideration and support in working to solve Alaska's healthcare challenges.

Sincerely,



Jared C. Kosin, JD, MBA
President & CEO