

CS FOR SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 14(FIN)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Offered: 3/20/98

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

A RESOLUTION

1 **Establishing the Alaska Task Force on Parity for Mental Health.**

2 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 **WHEREAS** persons in Alaska with mental health disorders and their families face
4 disparity in the adequacy, scope, and coverage of private health insurance that they need; and

5 **WHEREAS** it is estimated that mental health disorders cost the Alaska economy
6 \$187,272,000 in 1996 in lost productivity, absenteeism, disability, and early death; and

7 **WHEREAS** other states that have adopted insurance parity laws for mental disorders
8 have demonstrated that costs of parity have been far less than projected and that savings to
9 the public through decreased costs of Medicaid, Medicare, and other programs have far
10 outweighed the additional costs; and

11 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Mental Health Board estimates there are over 44,000 children,
12 youth, and adults in the state who experience serious mental illnesses and emotional disorders;
13 and

14 **WHEREAS** the Congress passed the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 that does
15 address parity for lifetime benefits and annual reimbursement limits for mental health services,
16 but does not address differentiation between mental and physical illnesses with respect to co-
17 payments, deductibles, and benefit design; and

1 **WHEREAS** 15 other states have established laws addressing mental health parity in
2 insurance practices, and 25 other states introduced bills on the subject in 1997;

3 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Task Force on
4 Parity for Mental Health is established for the purpose of studying, after defining the terms
5 "mental disorders," "mental illness," "serious mental illness," and "mental health consumers"
6 for purpose of its work,

7 (1) differential treatment in health insurance coverage between a person with
8 a mental disorder and a person with a physical disorder;

9 (2) costs of mental health coverage in relation to other health care insurance,
10 with special emphasis on parity, and the extent of such coverage, including deductibles and
11 co-payments, disorders and conditions to be covered, and other pertinent issues;

12 (3) ways to define and quantify unmet mental health needs in the state and
13 recommending meaningful ways to measure the efficacy of treatment of mental health needs
14 by analyzing possible outcome data collection measures;

15 (4) the positive and negative effects on mental health consumers if parity for
16 mental health coverage is mandated in Alaska;

17 (5) the feasibility of implementing any recommendations of the task force
18 through legislation; and

19 (6) the effect of the September 30, 2001, sunset date for the Mental Health
20 Parity Act of 1996 on matters set out in (1) - (5) of this clause; and be it

21 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force shall be composed of 11 members, as
22 follows:

23 (1) two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; one
24 member shall be a member of the majority, and one member shall be a member of the
25 minority;

26 (2) two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker
27 of the House of Representatives; one member shall be a member of the majority, and one
28 member shall be a member of the minority;

29 (3) the commissioner of health and social services, or a designee;

30 (4) two members representing the Alaska Mental Health Board appointed by
31 the Alaska Mental Health Board;

1 (5) two members representing the insurance industry appointed by the President
2 of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one member may be the
3 director of insurance; and

4 (6) two members representing mental health consumers and community-based
5 mental health providers appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House
6 of Representatives; one member shall be a consumer, and one member shall be a provider; and
7 be it

8 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that no general fund money shall be expended to support
9 the task force; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that a simple majority of the members of the task force shall
11 constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and all actions of the task force shall
12 require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present; and be it

13 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force may conduct its work during the
14 legislative session and the interim between sessions, may use the teleconference network, and
15 may conduct public hearings to receive testimony about issues relative to parity for mental
16 health; and be it

17 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force shall provide to the Speaker of the House
18 of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Governor a report of its findings and
19 recommendations on these matters not later than January 1, 1999; and be it

20 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force is terminated at 11:59 p.m. on
21 February 28, 1999.