

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 21

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduced: 4/30/97

Referred: Health, Education and Social Services

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** mental health disorders cost the American economy \$147,800,000,000 in
4 1990 in lost productivity, absenteeism, disability, and early death; and

5 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Mental Health Board estimates there are over 31,000 children,
6 youth, and adults in the state who experience serious mental illnesses and emotional disorders;
7 many of these Alaskans require and seek mental health services through private insurance that
8 is inadequate in scope and coverage of services required; and

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

13 **WHEREAS**, currently, 11 other states have established laws addressing mental health
14 parity in insurance practices, and 35 other states are now considering legislation;

15 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Task Force on
16 Parity for Mental Health is established for the purpose of studying

17 (1) discrimination in health insurance policies against persons with mental

1 disorders;

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

5 (3) unmet mental health needs in the state and the feasibility of implementing
6 any recommendations of the task force through legislation; and be it

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

9 (1) two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, one
10 member shall be a member of the majority and one member shall be a member of the
11 minority;

12 (2) two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker
13 of the House, one member shall be a member of the majority and one member shall be a
14 member of the minority;

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

16 (4) one member representing the Alaska Mental Health Board appointed by the
17 Alaska Mental Health Board;

18 (5) two members representing the insurance industry appointed by the
19 Governor;

20 (6) three members representing mental health consumers, community based
21 mental health programs or agencies, or health care providers, appointed by the Governor; and
22 be it

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

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

28 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force may conduct its work during the
29 legislative session and the interim between sessions and may conduct public hearings to
30 receive testimony about issues relative to parity for mental health; and be it

31 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force shall provide to the Governor, the

1 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate a report of its
2 findings and recommendations on these matters not later than January 1, 1998; and be it
3 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force is terminated at 11:59 p.m. on
4 February 28, 1998.