

HEALTH
SERVICES

Senator Ferguson

Rt 6, Box 6309
Juneau, Alaska 99803
April 16, 1976

PROGRAMS
R AND
RESEARCH
IN
BHUMAN
BEHAVIOR

SUSAN SULLIVAN, CHAIRMAN
HOUSE H.E.S.S. COMMITTEE

FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS I REQUEST YOU CONSIDER FORMATION OF A
SEPARATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

1 The scope of health services needed in both rural and urban areas of Alaska must be given top priority consideration in an environment of medical expertise. It is apparent that Health services are secondary to welfare services in the combined system now operating in Alaska.

2 Additional impetus must be given to delivery of health services by local communities. The relinquishment of authority to local entities cannot be realized under the established dictums of the Department of Health & Social Services. Contractual & funding procedures are too cumbersome and/or archaic to produce new agreements rapidly and for the benefit of the client.

3 The expanded services offered by the various Health sections, offices and Divisions can be coordinated and practised within the concept of a Department of Health rather than as an adjunct to the welfare agencies.

4 The status of State owned health facilities such as Harborview and Alaska Psychiatric Institute has much improvement in general administration. In a Health oriented Department these facilities and comprehensive Health programs could be blended into a smoothly functioning whole, rather than a fragmented series of services.

5 The formation of one Department whose sole responsibility is to advance medical care and treatment facilities will offer needed services now, not on a crisis basis.

Thank you.

Perry Holm

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Answer to 1 on top page.

1 The Division of Public Health has been without a Director or Deputy Director for an extended period of time. This Division in many areas of service and care is the only Division offering assistance to those Alaskans living in the more remote areas of Alaska. The Bethel area is in a serious condition regarding sanitation and prevention of diseases such as Hepatitis and typhoid. The introduction of virulent strains of flu to the people of Alaska has hospitalized State workers located in the metropolitan sectors of the State. These germs will continue to cause severe illness to bush communities that have not been exposed during the winter season. The authority to cope with these problems and the support for Health employees does not exist in a situation where the Commissioner is unable to hire a Director, after an extremely ^{small} campaign to attract outsiders for the position, and continues to fill the position without providing the total responsibility for Divisional actions to the acting Director. Health problems must have top priority.

Answer to 2 & 3 on top page.

2 The expanded services offered by the various Health sections, offices and Divisions could be coordinated and practised within the concept of a Health Services department rather than as an adjunct to welfare programs. The bureaucratic sprawl associated with present welfare agencies is a deterrent to those professionals in the Health field; nurses qualified to make decisions and to follow-through with treatment on the spot, village aides trained to recognize symptoms and to utilize preventive techniques, doctors in all fields of medicine visit remote areas periodically and treat problems during that visit - these workers cannot and should not be equated with or hampered by the welfare system. It is apparent that Health services are secondary to welfare services in the present system.

3 Additional impetus must be given to local communities to form their own service programs. This relinquishment of power cannot be realized under the established dictums of the Department of Health & Social Services. Had local control been possible many areas would now have viable programs rather than a plan lying in a drawer in the Department's Central Office complex.