

HB

450

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

JAY S. HAMMOND, GOVERNOR

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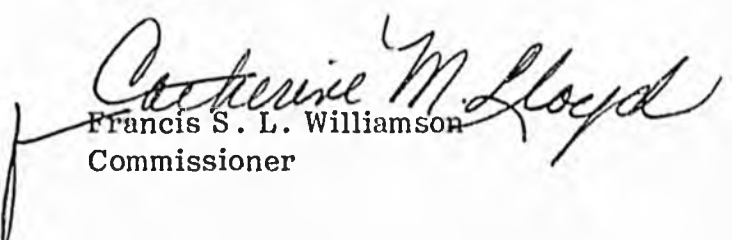
The Honorable Charles H. Parr
Chairman, House HESS Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Pouch V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Mr. Parr:

In response to a request from your Office, I have attached a fiscal note for House Bill 464, "an Act creating a separate Department of Health," and a position paper for House Bill 450, "an Act relating to the regionalization of the Department of Health and Social Services." The Department encountered difficulty in preparing a fiscal note for HB 450 in the absence of definitive language regarding an administrative regional office. The position paper for HB 450 explains this difficulty and the Department's perception of the issue in some detail.

If we can be of further assistance regarding these legislative proposals or other issues of concern to your committee, please contact us.

Sincerely,


Francis S. L. Williamson
Commissioner

HOUSE BILL 450

"An Act relating to the regionalization of the Department of Health and Social Services; and providing for an effective date."

House Bill 450 mandates the Department of Health and Social Services to establish administrative regions in eleven specific elections districts throughout the state. The functions of the Department will be performed by a regional office within each administrative region.

As the Department of Health and Social Services moves toward implementing its goals of service integration and the decentralization of service delivery, the concept of regionalization becomes a reality. Regional offices have been established by the Divisions of Mental Health, Social Services, Public Health and Public Assistance. The Division of Administrative Services has regional support services in Anchorage and Fairbanks and a Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations is headquartered in Anchorage.

The question is the degree to which delegated authority is regionalized and the compatibility of the regionalization design with health and social service planning and service delivery agencies, both state and private, within Alaska. In addition, communication and travel accessibility must be a prime consideration in an area as large and sparsely populated as Alaska. The relative permanency of a districting scheme must also be a factor if organizational and service delivery plans are to be regionalized.

The Alaska State Health Plan and the Community Mental Health Plan divide the state into three planning districts with 22 sub-units contained therein. The areas take into consideration the three Health Service Areas designated in Alaska for regionalized health planning, project review and research by the Health Planning and Resource Development Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-641). Compatibility is also assured between Native Regional Corporations. As the twelve Native Regions are federally recognized and currently conduct both planning and service delivery, it is logical to assume that these regional boundaries will remain constant. In addition, these boundaries do not vary significantly from many other districting arrangements utilized by state agencies. This approach to regionalization permits effective mutual planning with the Alaska Native Health Service and the Alaska Federation of Natives and facilitates coordinated planning with the Health Systems Agencies whose boundaries follow the Native Health Corporation boundaries. The establishment of Department of Health and Social Services administrative regions in the state which may be inconsistent with these considerations is inadvisable, both from a performance and from a cost-effective basis.

Once a districting scheme is designed, the degree to which delegated authority is regionalized must be considered. The objective is to assess the needs of each regional area as comprehensively as possible and to establish services to meet those needs as effectively as possible. In meeting the goal of decentralization, the primary level of direct service delivery is the community agency. Technical and administrative support are provided as close to the community level as economic considerations will permit.

House Bill 450 would establish administrative regional offices in eleven Alaskan communities varying greatly in size and in health and social service needs. Obviously, the Department could not establish the same type of administrative organization in Nome or Sand Point as in Anchorage or Fairbanks. Until such time as a clearer definition of what constitutes an administrative regional office is provided the fiscal impact of this particular piece of legislation is impossible to assess.

In conclusion, the Department supports the concept of regionalization underlying House Bill 450. The Department would recommend amending the methodology supporting the location of specific regional offices to permit a districting scheme in which due consideration was given established planning and service delivery patterns, administrative and population centers, Native Corporation boundaries, election districts, etc. Once the districting scheme is established, a determination of what constitutes a "regional administrative office" must be made. Perhaps a system of sub-regions or units could also be devised in which lesser administrative authority was delegated from the respective regional administrative office. The Department would welcome the opportunity to work with the Legislature to develop a comprehensive design to accomplish such a regionalization plan in the best interests of all Alaskans.

Recommended by:

D. Sharon Osborne
Coordinator, Office of Planning
and Research

25 April 1977
Date

Approved by:

Francis St. Williamson
Commissioner, Department of Health
and Social Services

Date

MINUTES OF HOUSE HESS COMMITTEE

May 4, 1977

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Parr at 3:05 p.m. Members present: Mr. Parr, Mr. Chatterton, Mr. Phillips, Dr. Beirne, Mr. Nakak. Mr. Ose and Mr. Bennett came in later.

Absent: Mr. Cotten & Mrs. Buchholdt.

HB 464

First on the agenda was HB 464. Mr. McKinnon asked if he could have a witness testify first, the witness being from out-of-town. Mr. McKinnon said the bill will separate the Department of Health & Social Services into 2 departments. Said Dr. Tom Georges was from Pennsylvania and in Pennsylvania they have 2 separate cabinet ^{depts} levels and Dr. Georges has served as the head of both of the departments.

Georges

Dr. Tom Georges said he had had the opportunity for the last 10 days to travel around various parts of Alaska and see the health care services that are provided. He said he has had opportunity to talk to some of the health people and they have expressed some of the health problems as they see them. He stated in his opinion the health functions of the state are best carried out by a health officer who has direct responsibility to the governor and has responsibility for the services provided. Dr. Georges answered questions asked by members of the committee and spoke to some of the problems they are having in some of the communities he visited. Questions were asked of Dr. Georges as to the advantages and disadvantages of having the 2 departments, the economics involved, the size of the 2 departments in Pennsylvania, how the Board of Health operates, how many states have the 2 separate departments and how many are 1 department. Dr. Georges said 14 states have moved to some form of combined department. The remaining states have separate departments. He stated in talking to employees in public health, they feel they can do a better job if they are in separate departments.

There was discussion as to which department should have alcoholism, what type of person should head the department of health which Dr. Georges felt a physician had certain advantages others don't have and also should have someone that enjoys administration.

Dr. Georges said 10 or 15 states have a Board and said he would rather work with a Board than without one.

McKinnon

Representative McKinnon then testified on his bill stating he felt there had been a lot of disadvantages the way the department operates now and thought it would be a lot better if the 2 systems were separated. Rep. McKinnon said there are 19 states with some sort of umbrella agency, 27 states with entirely separate departments of Health and 3 where the Dept.

of Health is combined with the Dept. of Environmental Protection. Questions were asked of Mr. McKinnon as to how many people would be needed to operate the new department.

Jund

Next to testify was Lois Jund, Deputy Director of Programs from the Department of Health & Social Services. Ms. Jund said as of 1974 there were 26 state comprehensive service agencies and 12 human services agencies. She said she thought this bill had certain pros you do not get in a human services agency. She said she thought it was more cost effective to have a human services agency. She said the Department was not for this bill and does feel a human service agency can work. After much discussion, Chairman Parr said they would not act on the bill today.

HB 450
Anderson

HB 450 was next and Representative Anderson testified on his bill. Said he did not expect the committee to take any action on the bill this year and he intends to do more study on the matter between now and the next session. He said the bill was in response to many complaints that have been made throughout the state, especially in Rural Alaska. He read a statement from the Citizen's Participation Committee meeting held in Anchorage in December. He said the thrust of the bill was to try to get the Department of Health & Social Services and its activities expanded out into the rural communities. Chairman Parr showed the committee a map that had been made up showing the different regions.

Lampman

Mrs. Marion Lampman from the Alaska Hospital Association spoke from the ^{5/14/74}silences regard HB 464. Said the Hospital Association has been against the separation of the Department. Said the movement in the other states has been towards consolidation. She gave her suggestions as to how she thought the problems could be helped. Said the Association had had a good working relationship with Lois Jund and Kathy Lloyd in the Department.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.