

March 6, 2019

Alaska House Health and Social Services Committee
c/o Co-Chair Ivy Spohnholz & Co-Chair Tiffany Zulkosky
Sent via email

RE: Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) Management Changes

Committee Members,

Improving access to mental health services is a top priority for the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

We appreciate the Department of Health and Social Services' energy and urgency with which they are addressing the challenges at API. We are hopeful that the management change the Department has initiated leads to near term improvements in the capacity, safety, and quality of services for Trust beneficiaries in need of acute psychiatric care.

We understand that the Department is analyzing next steps for API, and we look forward to working with them to improve our understanding of their decision-making process regarding whether external support is necessary beyond June 30, 2019 for this important public facility. It is our hope that the Department's process will include engagement with impacted stakeholders.

We look forward to working with our statutory advisory boards; the Alaska Mental Health Board, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, and the Alaska Commission on Aging, along with mental health advocates and other critical stakeholders, to help the Department improve future operations of API. The Trust would expect to see the state hold any operator of a healthcare facility accountable, and require that they meet high quality and safety standards, and this case is no different.

We remain committed to ensuring beneficiary access to a complete continuum of care, and API is an integral part of that continuum for Alaskans with the most acute needs. Therefore, we will also continue to advocate for strengthening and improving Alaska's system of community-based care to provide services and supports in home communities instead of in institutional settings like API whenever possible.

Respectfully,



Michael K. Abbott
Chief Executive Officer