

Written Public Comment

(received January 30, 2025 – January 31, 2025)

FW: Feb 5. Public Comment, Letters of Support Alaska Humanities Forum



From: Eiden Pospisil <epospisil@akhf.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 30, 2025 2:04 PM
To: public.comment@mhtrust.org
Subject: Feb 5. Public Comment, Letters of Support Alaska Humanities Forum

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Good afternoon,

Please find attached two letters of support for *The Alaska Humanities Forum's - Story Works: Strengthening Protective Factors through Classroom Storytelling* proposal to be considered during public comment at the February 5th Board Meeting.

Thank you,
Eiden Pospisil
(907)770-8403

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EIDEN POSPISIL
YOUTH PROGRAM MANAGER

ALASKA HUMANITIES FORUM	421 W. 1st Ave, Suite 200 Anchorage, AK 99501 direct: 907.770.8403 www.akhf.org
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Dena'inaq elnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. (Dena'ina)
I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina. (English)
Translation by Helen Dick, Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart and Joel Isaak

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of the Alaska Humanities Forum's proposal for funding to expand the Story Works program. As a teacher and partner of Story Works, I have seen firsthand the positive impact their program has had on our youth here in my hometown of Unalakleet.

I have been partnering with Story Works for about seven years now, and with each year's in-person or virtual workshops and story circles, my students and I have learned and grown. Storytelling may sound simple, and it is in a way, but it is also transformative. The art - and power - of storytelling is also tradition.

It is through Story Works that I have learned to teach in a more trauma-informed way, and that each of my students has a unique story. Story Works gives students a safe space to share their stories, and by listening, I develop a deeper connection with and understanding of them. I also see how my students find strength in sharing about themselves and their lives.

The Forum plans to expand their programming, and they are hoping to work with more teachers and students in rural Alaska. Doing so would allow more teachers to connect with their students in a culturally sensitive way. More importantly, though, it would allow more students the opportunity to share their stories, which in turn builds confidence and adds to their sense of identity.

Storytelling is powerful, and the Forum needs your help in expanding their program to more rural communities like mine. I highly encourage you to consider funding their proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Giaana Peterson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Giaana Peterson, M.Ed
HS Teacher at Unalakleet Schools
Unalakleet, AK

Laureli V. Ivanoff
Native Peoples Action Executive Director/Writer
Laureli@aknpa.org

November 22, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

I enthusiastically support the Alaska Humanities Forum's proposal to strengthen and expand the Story Works program to schools throughout the Bering Strait School District (BSSD). Knowing the importance of sharing stories from our communities, I initially connected Story Works with Unalakleet Schools staff to bring the program to our school and worked as a partner and volunteer.

I've seen, firsthand, that Story Works provides a unique platform for students to explore their personal stories, develop confidence in their voices through practice, and foster deeper connections with their peers, teachers and the community.

The Forum's plan to adapt and pilot Story Works programming in additional BSSD schools is an opportunity to reach more youth in our communities. Expanding the program to new schools while ensuring it aligns with the cultural context of each community demonstrates the Forum's commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

Equally important is the initiative to develop and pilot a model for training teachers to independently deliver Story Works programming. This strategy ensures the program's sustainability and creates a lasting impact. By equipping teachers with the tools to facilitate workshops and listen to students' personal stories in a nonjudgmental and trauma-informed way, the Alaska Humanities Forum empowers educators to support their students' growth for years to come.

As a former radio journalist and current columnist, who grew up and was educated in Unalakleet, I wholeheartedly support the Alaska Humanities Forum's proposal and urge you to consider funding this vital initiative. This work has the power to inspire, connect, and uplift youth and educators, strengthening supportive networks in our region.

Sincerely,


Laureli V. Ivanoff

Trust Board testimony

From faith.myers@gci.net <faith.myers@gci.net>

Date Fri 1/31/2025 10:53 AM

To public.comment@mhtrust.org <public.comment@mhtrust.org>

 1 attachment (16 KB)

Testimony to the Trust Board January 31 2025.docx;

You don't often get email from faith.myers@gci.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Sharon Cochran,
Attached is my testimony to the Trust Authority Board.
Please see that they get it.
Thank you,

Faith Myers, 907-929-0532

Testimony to the Trust Authority Board,

1/31/25

I am asking the Mental Health Trust Authority Board to advocate for improved rights for Trust beneficiaries by supporting legislation.

There are approximately 10,000 Trust beneficiaries that rotate in and out of locked psychiatric facilities or units each year for a forced psychiatric evaluation or treatment. Trust beneficiaries face unnecessary mistreatment for the following reasons:

Patients are not given all of their rights that were given to them by the legislature.

Patients are not informed of all their rights in locked facilities.

Patients face unnecessary institutional trauma—the state or the Trust has never done research on the issue.

So, let's look at a few facts of psychiatric patient mistreatment:

Patients have a right to bring a grievance to an impartial body by state law AS47.30.847. But Alaska Psychiatric Institute records show in 2005, 2006, 2017, 2022, 2023 and 2024 no psychiatric patient brought a grievance to an impartial body at API. Psychiatric patients face mistreatment without ready access to an impartial body to review their grievance and provide protection.

By the same law, patients at API have a right to have assistance by a trained patient advocate. Patients are told there is an advocate, but they are not told they have a right by state law to have access to a trained patient advocate.

Federal regulations require that psychiatric patient must be held in a psychiatric facility free from any unnecessary trauma. As stated, Alaska has not done any research on institutional trauma and how to reduce it. In 2003, South Carolina did a study in their state; they concluded that 47% of their patients were experiencing trauma that could cause or exacerbate PTSD and then set out to reduce unnecessary trauma. Alaska should do a similar study.

Staff at the previous Department of Health and Social Services testified that psychiatric patients in a locked facility had no right to privacy. That position goes

against numerous state and Federal court decisions stating that people in locked facilities do retain a right to privacy.

In 2008, the gender choice of staff for intimate care was passed and signed into law AS18.20.095. Among other things the law requires that “routine safety checks into a psychiatric patient’s bedroom, bathroom or shower **must** be performed by the same gender staff as the patient.”

Psychiatric hospitals like API have refused to write policies that require them to follow the law.

In closing, the Trust should be leading the way in supporting legislation to improve rights for psychiatric patients.

Thank you,

Faith Myers and Dorrance Collins, 907-929-0532

Author of the book, “Going Crazy in Alaska.”

SPAM: Fw: Testimony for Alaska Impact Alliance

From Ginger Bear <Ginger@familypromisematsu.org>

Date Fri 1/31/2025 2:57 PM

To public.comment@mhtrust.org <public.comment@mhtrust.org>

You don't often get email from ginger@familypromisematsu.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello, my name is Ginger Bear, Executive Director of Family Promise Mat-Su in Wasilla, Alaska.

I am writing in support of the Alaska Impact Alliance funding of Family Resource Centers. I lead a Family Resource Center within the Network providing a Navigation Center, a shelter for families experiencing homelessness, evening meals to encourage budgeting opportunities, a computer lab for job and housing research, a tutoring service, case management, and community resources for all callers, walk-ins, and shelter guests. We do our best to provide as much as possible, with a "no wrong door" approach for connecting clients with services.

We are grateful for the \$16,000 Family Resource Center Start-Up Grant funds provided by the Trust last year. This funding allowed two staff members to provide our services to a larger population than what our agency had previously focused on. Mental Health issues with the homeless population are typically revealed through anxiety, depression, and fatalistic views of their abilities to manage life, family, and the future. And our resources to provide adequate referrals were very limited. Allowing our agency to partner with Alaska Impact Alliance as a Family Resource Center reveals a network with more community resources and offers more community connections to support our families' mental health.

Our work with homeless prevention has revealed to me that preventing homelessness is much more important for a family's mental health than becoming homeless. Paying for an overdue utility bill or paying someone's rent not only prevents homelessness but prevents mental health issues for both adults and children. Children are always affected by homelessness in ways that don't always manifest immediately. Your financial support helps us prevent these issues and helps keep families housed.

Thank you.

Ginger

Ginger Bear, Executive Director
Family Promise Mat-Su
907-357-6160 ext. 4
www.fpm-su.com