



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health

SENIOR AND DISABILITY SERVICES
Governor's Council on Disabilities
and Special Education

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March 26, 2024

Board of Trustees
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Park Loop
Anchorage, AK 99508

Re: Letter of Support, The Arc of Anchorage Bridge Funding

Dear Chair Halterman and Trustees,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE or the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

Our council membership is composed of self-advocates and family members of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities (60%), as well as agency and partner representatives (40%). One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on proposed recommendations that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families. Our Council uses the Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision (DD Vision) to guide all work in supporting Alaskans with disabilities toward integrated living within their community:

"Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future."

Without question, we believe the Arc of Anchorage embodies the spirit of the DD Vision and have done so long before the words were put into statute. The Arc was one of the first entities that stepped up to take on residents of Harborview in the early 90's to provide home and community-based services. The Arc has long been an essential and critical partner in making sure that persons with developmental disabilities, especially those with challenging behaviors and co-occurring mental health diagnosis, can live and often work in the community. The Council has enjoyed working directly with the ARC on many projects over the years. For instance, they have been a reliable partner with our Project SEARCH program at Providence Hospital for nine years running, providing skilled job coaching services to the young men and women learning job skills in a busy hospital setting. Just this past year, all eight interns at Providence Project SEARCH found good steady jobs with The Arc's support.

Therefore, we strongly encourage the Trust to support their request for this bridge loan while other financial sustainability plans are put into place. We will go one step further in suggesting that part of it be converted into a grant should they need it while they go through this organizational transition. The Arc is one of those organizations that we need to continue. The cost to our system of service delivery, and the actual financial cost to the state should they need to close their doors, is too great to even fathom at this point. If \$1 million dollars is what they need to make the bridge to financial stability, it is a worthy investment of Alaska Mental Health Trust funding.

Please approve this request immediately.

Patrick Reinhart

Patrick Reinhart
Executive Director

cc. Steve Williams, CEO, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
Ian Casey, CEO, The Arc of Anchorage