

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY
FULL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
August 28, 2024
10:30 a.m.**

**Hybrid/Webex Meeting
Originating at:
Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200
Anchorage, Alaska 99508**

Trustees Present:

Anita Halterman, Chair
Kevin Fimon
Corri Feige
John Morris
Rhonda Boyles
Brent Fisher

Trust Staff Present:

Allison Biastock
Katie Baldwin-Johnson
Miri Smith-Coolidge
Valette Keller
Julee Farley
Luke Lind
Carrie Predeger
Michael Baldwin
Eric Boyer
Kat Roch
Kelda Barstad
Debbie DeLong
Tina Voelker-Ross
Eliza Muse
Janie Caq'ar Ferguson

Trust Land Office staff present:

Jusdi Warner
Jeff Green
Sarah Morrison
Blain Alfonso
Cole Hendrickson
Mariana Sanchez

Also participating:

Gene Hickey; Jeff Jessee; Kathy Craft; Patrick Reinhart; Jena Grafton; Stephanie Hopkins; Stephanie Wheeler; Carmen Wenger; John Walker; Phillip Toney; Robert Heide; a. Fouts; Jen Harrington; Karly Dickinson; Tracy Dempeling; Laura Russell; Aaron Surma; Joanne Singleton; Paloma Harbour; Susan Kessler; Sena Gilbert; Marsha Oss; Clinton Lasley; Erik Peterson; Carla

Burns; Kim Kovol; Lance Johnson; Linda Clapp-Demerol; Marsha Tandeske; Adam Grove; Rachel Hannah; Karen Grove; Miranda McCarty; Valerie Cable; Sam Garcia; Charity Lee; Anthony Cravalho; Marty Lang; Karen Heath; Tom Grafton; Kim Champney; Don Haberber; Faith Myers; Jess Angel; Mary Jane Michael; Michelle Girault; Doreen Schenkenberger; Ann Ringstad; Christina Shadura; Kendra Sticka; Eric Gurley; Jim Gottstein; Amanda Faulkner; Cindy Yeager; Brenda Moore; Barbara Monger; Bill Herman.

PROCEEDINGS

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the meeting to order and began with a roll call. She stated that Trustee Moran had an excused absence; Trustee Feige would be leaving 15 minutes early; and Trustee Morris had to be finished by 4:30. She stated that there is a quorum for business. She asked for any other announcements. There being none, she moved to the approval of the agenda.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR HALTERMAN entertained a motion for the approval of the agenda.

MOTION: A motion to propose an amendment to the agenda under the audit update going into Executive Session, if necessary, adding CEO recruitment to that discussion. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FISHER; seconded by TRUSTEE MORRIS.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

REVIEW OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that the Guiding Principles were in the packets for reference. She encouraged trustees to look at them, and welcomed the public to do so, as well.

ETHICS DISCLOSURE

CHAIR HALTERMAN asked for any ethics disclosures. Hearing and seeing none, she moved to approval of minutes and stated that there were four sets of minutes that had to be motioned independently.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes from the Special Full Board of Trustees meeting held on April 24, 2024. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE MORRIS.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, abstained; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes from the Full Board of Trustees meeting held on May 22-23, 2024. The motion was made by TRUSTEE MORRIS; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, abstained; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes from the Special Full Board of Trustees meeting held on June 14, 2024. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FIMON; seconded by TRUSTEE MORRIS.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, abstained; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

MOTION: A motion to approve the minutes from the Special Full Board of Trustees meeting held on June 20, 2024. The motion was made by TRUSTEE MORRIS; seconded by TRUSTEE FIMON.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, abstained; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

CURRENT BYLAWS

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that the current bylaws were in the packet for reference for trustees and the public. They are helpful as we move through the meetings because Board elections were upcoming. She moved to the CEO update.

CEO UPDATE

ACTING CEO BIASTOCK began her update by acknowledging the tremendous job staff has been doing carrying forward with the work of the Trust and reporting on the different activities. She talked about the second Improving Lives Conference which will be held at the Dena'ina Center next month, and she went through the agenda of the event. She moved to the State opioid response framework which is an initiative led by the Department of Health to develop a framework with a holistic picture of all of the things the various state agencies are doing as they engage in work addressing Alaska's opioid crisis. It is essential in improving beneficiary health outcomes, and the Trust looks forward to collaborating with the Department and other agencies on this effort that is just getting underway. She updated the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan, noting that the FY25 to '29 plan is nearing completion. She moved to the beneficiary listening session that was happening on September 12th, also virtually, designed specifically for beneficiaries, caregivers, and their families to share firsthand experiences in engaging in Alaska's system of care. Lastly, she shared the logo commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Trust Authority which was created following the landmark legal settlement Weiss versus State of Alaska.

TRUSTEE BOYLES asked if this was the first beneficiary listening session.

MS. BALDWIN-JOHNSON replied that they regularly do outreach in the stakeholder engagement process directed towards beneficiaries and caregivers, and it is a unique approach this time.

TRUSTEE TRAINING GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICES

CHAIR HALTERMAN moved to trustee training over governance best practices and turned the meeting over to Gene Hickey with the Department of Law.

MR. HICKEY talked about good governance and how the Trust gets to the point of achieving maximum good governance. He stated that the Trust purpose is to ensure an integrated Comprehensive Mental Health Program for the State which is required via the Weiss settlement. The other important theme with respect to good governance is the fiduciary obligation that the Board of Trustees has with respect to the Trust, which is paramount for the Board to make decisions and to keep the best interests of the beneficiaries in their minds. Also understood is that fiduciary obligation does not exist just for the beneficiaries that need assistance today, but the Trust is perpetual, and that fiduciary obligation requires the Board of Trustees to look to the future and make sure that the Trust remains intact for future generations of beneficiaries, as well. He emphasized that that is a statutory obligation. In thinking about good governance for the Board of Trustees and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, it is important to remember the fiduciary obligation, the Integrated Mental Health Program for the State to understand how those items impact what the Board was designed to do and how it was designed to perform. He continued through the framework of what is considered to be good governance, and moved to active participation, and then the facilitation of meetings to bring out those issues. He continued through his presentation, explaining and answering questions as he went along. He emphasized that the strategic plan is a function that the Board needs to take up upon itself, specifically designed for the Board of Trustees to identify its vision, its map of how it is going to get and achieve the goals that are set out, and that requires a lot of time and effort. He added that the Board should focus upon moving forward, putting the strategic plan in place as one of its primary goals. He moved to the role of the Board, which is responsible for recruiting, supervising, retaining, evaluating, and setting the compensation for the CEO. He stated that this board is based on a policy-based governance system because the staff actually carries out the day-to-day functions of the organization, and that policy is what guides the staff to carry out that work. The Board has the obligation to govern the organization through the relationship with the CEO. He added that because the TLO executive director reports directly to the Board, that should be part of that component, as well. He continued that the Board of Trustees oversees monitoring the control functions of auditing, monitoring, approving budgets, and spending, which are things that the Board interacts with on almost a regular meeting basis. He moved to the types of decisions the Board makes, including adoption of bylaws, election of board officers, as well as adoption of policies. He went through the statutory provisions and duties that applied to the Trust in great detail.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Hickey and recommended the trustees to read it on their own time. She moved to trustee travel and honorariums.

TRUSTEE TRAVEL/HONORARIUM

MR. HICKEY stated that these were two relatively simple issues and the result of questions that the Department of Law were asked to review. They looked at the issue of honorariums and when a trustee would be entitled to an honorarium, as well as the issue of travel and who approved those when done. He explained that, on the honorariums, the statute very specifically provides for the \$200 honorarium for the Mental Health Trust Authority. It requires that the honorarium be provided for a meeting, for a partial meeting that a trustee actually attended. The other provision in the statute talks about if a trustee is representing the Board. If a board member was

requested to go to a ribbon-cutting or a meeting with a particular beneficiary group, an honorarium would be appropriate as a representative of the Board. He continued that there is a need for some education to be done as to what is actually required of a trustee that sits on the board with respect to the amount of time that is required for participation. He added that it places an immense responsibility and time strain on the trustees. He stated that the Chair of the Board approves the honorariums as set out in the charter. He recommended that the obligation should fall to the Vice Chair if it was the Chair that was attending. He moved on to the second component, travel. He stated that there is no board travel policy, so they looked at the State travel policy. The State travel policy talks about travel outside the state; not about travel from outside the state to go to a board meeting. This issue applied to several of the trustees that have places in state and places outside of the state. If a trustee was spending time outside of Alaska for an extended period, would the trustee be entitled to get reimbursed for the airfare to fly to the board meeting. He continued that the answer was probably yes. But because there was no policy in place, he would do two things: First, seek counsel from the Department of Administration to get that approval. More importantly, he stated that the travel policy should be updated and made more specific to the Trust. Just as important, it would help with Board recruitment and retention.

A brief discussion ensued on travel compensation.

AUDIT UPDATE

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Hickey and moved to the Audit Update. She asked for a motion to go into an Executive Session.

MOTION: A motion that the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees enter into Executive Session pursuant to the Alaska Open Meetings Act, AS 44.62.310(c)3, to discuss the Legislative Budget Audit Committee's audit as the audit is confidential by law until release of the audit report to the LB&A Committee, and to discuss the CEO search pursuant to AS 44.62.310(c)2 as the discussion may tend to prejudice the reputation and character of the applicants. The motion was made by TRUSTEE FISHER; seconded by TRUSTEE FEIGE.

After the roll-call vote, the MOTION was APPROVED. (Trustee Feige, yes; Trustee Boyles, yes; Trustee Morris, yes; Trustee Fimon, yes; Trustee Fisher, yes; Chair Halterman, yes.)

(Executive Session from 12:03 p.m. until 1:15 p.m.)

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the meeting back to order and asked for one of the trustees to read a statement into the record.

FOR THE RECORD: TRUSTEE FISHER stated the he, his fellow trustees, members of the Trust Authority, returned to the Full Board of Trustees meeting from the Executive Session. During the Executive Session, the Board of Trustees only discussed the items identified in the motion to move into Executive Session. The Board of Trustees did not take any action while in Executive Session other than to give direction to its counsel.

MISSION MOMENT

CHAIR HALTERMAN moved to the Mission Moment, and was pleased to see the Brain Bus

folks here. She recognized Adam Grove.

DR. GROVE stated that he had two of their board members present: Rachel Hannah, professor at the University; and Karen Grove, his wife, a school psychologist and a music teacher. He thanked all for having them there. He began with a brief overview, and stated that the bus was parked outside. He invited all to visit it. He continued that their mission statement was simple: Driving change for all Alaskans with brain injury. That was being done because of two grants from the Trust: \$50,000 grant in 2022, and a recent \$76,000 grant, for which he thanked them. He explained that the reason they were there was because Alaska has a big brain injury problem. It leads the nation in the number of brain injuries, primarily happening in rural Alaska. He shared pictures of the bus and their travels to the Kenai Peninsula as they build resources in the communities. In the past two years, they traveled over 2,000 miles; did 11 community visits; and served people from all age groups. They had presented at seven statewide conferences and conducted trainings in various ways for up to 71 clinicians. They had meeting interviews, been on the news, been in the newspaper, and at the Independent Living Center in Homer, which is building state-of-the-art treatment facilities for people with brain injuries using the same technology used in his clinic in Anchorage. He asked Ms. Grove to share the story of the 12-year-old boy in Fairbanks.

MS. GROVE stated that when they were in Fairbanks a young man walked up to her and asked about brain injury. She gave him all the facts about brain injury and the fact that wearing a helmet did not prevent a brain injury, and they talked for two hours. She continued that at the end of the chat she made sure that he made it to his mom, and he was telling her the things we talked about. It stuck.

MS. HANNAH talked about being in Soldotna, and they were wiring stories about what traumatic brain injury meant to us and putting them up on the bus with some magnets. It was neat to see the collage of everyone sharing their experiences or how they felt their brain injury was. That was a lot of fun.

MS. GROVE added that the QEEG brain stuff being set up in Seward was the same cutting-edge technology being used with the astronauts planning to go to Mars.

DR. GROVE stated that it was brain training. A broken brain, as well as an astronaut's brain, can be smart. He talked about a 32-year-old who fell off a speed board and hit the front of his head on the sidewalk. He had been in a coma; medevacked to Providence; spent several weeks there; and was discharged to a nursing home where he languished. They finally just brought him back home to the farm in Delta Junction. Because of the frontal lobe injury, he has no self-perception about his deficits, which makes him a dangerous TBI patient. He had to learn to walk and talk, and he still cannot read; but he says he is just fine. He says that there is nothing wrong with him, and the people were jealous and out to get him. He is on Medicaid and found one place in Omaha that would take it. He needs residential treatment, and he did not meet the standard of care for what they needed for him. He has a therapist in Fairbanks and the Department of Voc Rehab was trying to work with him, but he is not ready to go back to work. He has fallen into this hole, and they do not know what to do about him. It is not always pretty. He talked about his experience as a clinician for 22 years, and he still learns something new every time he goes to a community. He found that people in small communities do not want to go to support groups. There is a stigma attached to brain injury, and people do not want to be outed. Finding the community's champion is important, which is what makes everything work.

They had been successful in all the communities except Fairbanks, but are getting close. He continued that it usually did not happen on the first trip, and returning trips are really important. They spend three days in the community, and the bus allows that. They have solar panels, big batteries, and their own water. All they need is a place to park. He stated that the communities need more training. There is a woeful lack of training on the medical side of things. He stated that they have had some success in treating new people at Talkeetna and Willow clinics on this, but it needs to go a lot further. He stated that it is difficult to build their schedule because he could only spend so much time out of his private practice, and he tries getting volunteers to go. He also talked about establishing training for medical professionals and building a robust education program in working with the Center for Human Development. He added that they had lots of ideas on how to make that happen. That is essential for them to move forward because they can go to communities and tell them that we hear them. He thanked trustees, and stated that this is a fascinating project and they could be where people need them and to be there often enough that they know we are coming back. He invited all to come out and look at the bus.

(Applause.)

A question-and-answer session ensued.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked them for what they do and appreciated everything they were doing out there. She gave the trustees a few minutes to go view the bus.

(Break.)

STATUTORY ADVISOR UPDATE

CHAIR HALTERMAN moved to the Statutory Advisor updates, and asked Acting CEO Biastock to do the introductions.

ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE/ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

ACTING CEO BIASTOCK was excited to have the partner advisory boards there and introduced Stephanie Hopkins and Miranda McCarty with the Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board.

MS. HOPKINS stated that she was no longer the Acting ED and was confirmed as ED this morning.

(Applause.)

MS. HOPKINS thanked all and shared some of the programmatic work staff did within the State. She stated that every staffer was in each of the categories in some capacity. She shared some of the planning projects worked on the past year, and stated that they were about to submit their comments on the SAMHSA Block Grant, which is their Federal statutory obligation with a very tight turnaround. The application comes out in July, reviewed in August, and is submitted by September 3 this year. She continued talking about the planning section. The advocacy and education had not had a full-time advocacy coordinator for some time, and now we get to post the position. They are also going to start the trainings for beneficiaries on how to interact with the legislative process once that position is up and running. She talked about the amount of effort that goes into the public engagement work, and reclassified one of the support positions

into more outreach-based for tracking when people give public comment. She stated that the other huge area of growth is the data and research programming. She talked about how the new planner, Charity, who is pushing it to new heights, resulting in documentation of the evaluation component. Her first ask was for any specific data research products they would like to see from AMHB and ABADA. She shared e-mail addresses, or information can be submitted through the QR code for the public comments survey. She reflected on the budget as a whole and pointed out where beneficiaries interact with it. She added that, overwhelmingly, the public testimony received from beneficiaries is on the budget. When fully staffed, they go into the community to these trainings and there was a practice session for beneficiaries to share their stories. A big part of the trainings is that beneficiaries are not just sharing their story, but also preparing it for public consumption. Sharing their stories compel their ask a lot further, so there is a specific funding amount tied to their experiences so that legislators could hear that and then apply it to the budget decisions. This testimony is provided with a lot of uphill battles. They are people with lived experience. She shared her lived experience with the Board. She noted that programs like interpersonal violence prevention for Trust beneficiaries work to make sure that others do not go through what she went through. Those programs train beneficiaries on warning signs and equip them with tools needed to leave safely. They get information about how to leave before it gets that hard or before they break in a way that they cannot necessarily heal from ten years later. When General Fund recommendations were made on programs like she just mentioned, stories like hers are given something other than trauma. It gives decision-makers an ask that they can act on decisively, and the recommendation in itself is very beneficial to Trust beneficiaries. Her ask, as a statutory adviser, is when proposing a budget with adequate services for mental health and substance use in the state, to please continue to include General Fund recommendations that reflect the operational needs of the programs, even if they are not anticipated to make it into the final budget. She asked this, combined with her story, because one of the General Fund recommendations that was removed after Program & Planning was for that interpersonal violence program for Trust beneficiaries. Whether the recommendations are accepted or rejected, they make a big difference for the beneficiaries testifying, and she asked that they continue to do so. She stated that the next in-person meeting is in Ketchikan, October 1st through 3rd, fully available online, and invited the trustees to join in person, if possible.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Hopkins for sharing her story and for the presentation. She asked for any questions or comments from the trustees. There being none, she asked Acting CEO Biastock to introduce the next one.

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

ACTING CEO BIASTOCK stated that the next guest was the Alaska Commission on Aging. Marty Lang, the program coordinator for ACoA was online, as well as Yasmin Radbod, the rural outreach coordinator.

MS. RADBOD stated they were the Alaska Commission on Aging and had a lot happening. They have two new commissioners recently appointed, Vivian Schriver and Artur Diloon, both located in Fairbanks. She talked about the teleconference on senior transportation services in partnership with the Department of Transportation; the human services grant intent to apply is open for communities, for providers interested in securing grant funds to support senior transportation services, and for people living with disabilities. She shared some interesting points and data from that teleconference. She added that there is a lot happening in the transportation. She shared that they had Facebook and an e-Blast, and would be sending out information later this week on several updates on programs and opportunities across the state.

She briefly went through their aging and disability resource centers, some upcoming events, and their upcoming Commission meeting. She reported that the State is in the process of hiring a coordinator specifically for summer nutrition programs, including WIC and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and she talked about the program. She mentioned that they published an article in the August issue of the Senior Voice. Agnes Sweetsir retired from YKEALF, the assisted living facility in Galena, which she ran for 15 years. She is available as a resource for any community interested in starting their own assisted living home. Her contact information was included in the article. She continued through her presentation and moved to the upcoming quarterly Commission meeting. She explained the Title VI Grant application for funds specifically for tribal, elders' services, and they are working on identifying underserved communities and making sure they are well prepared for the upcoming grant cycle. She stated that Marty Lang would talk about the podcast.

MR. LANG announced that part of the mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging was to educate the public about aging issues in Alaska, and they have a podcast. He talked about how the idea of the podcast came about. Radio is a very important means of communicating information in rural and remote communities of Alaska. A lot of Alaskans prefer oral communication over written communication. The program is named "Alaska Wisdom and Wellness" with the goal of sharing information that benefits seniors both mentally and physically. The target audience is Alaska elders and seniors who live in rural and remote Alaska, and we welcome listeners from anywhere. He played a section of the podcast.

(Podcast played.)

MR. LANG stated that the content is senior-related topics. They interview subject-matter experts and give them the opportunity to share what they offer to Alaska's seniors and elders. Each episode is between 35 to 50 minutes long and hosted by he and Pat Branson, who served as the director of the Kodiak Senior Center for 35 years. If anyone would like to hear the other finished programs, please send an email; and if there is interest in helping to promote the programs, send your ideas and please tell all your friends.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked them for the update, and asked Acting CEO Biastock for the next introduction.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

ACTING CEO BIASTOCK stated that the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education was next and introduced Patrick Reinhart, executive director, and Jena Grafton, the board chair.

MR. REINHART stated that Ms. Grafton lives in Eagle River, and he is in Anchor Point. He continued that this was their opportunity to talk about what they thought of the proposed budget. He began with a quick sketch of their duties and responsibilities, and then moved into some of the budget things. He stated that there was no opportunity as an Advisory Board to present their budget recommendations at Program & Planning. He hoped that it was not too late for some changes and to listen to some of their recommendations, which is what they feel, as an Advisory Board, is one of the primary duties, particularly as it relates to the distribution of resources of funds for the beneficiary groups. Under the non-focus area allocations, the partnership grants are set aside to be distributed for a lot of different reasons. He asked if this was enough money given to what was currently happening in the service provider system. He stated that some of

the issues that would be coming up would be pretty significant, and the service sector in the developmental disabilities world is hurting and struggling. There may be more requests that are significant for large and small providers to survive a rough couple of years until the new rates and structures get in place. The other thing is that trust dealing with the beneficiary groups on kind of an equal scale and that it may not always need to be equal. He added that it was just a recommendation at looking on going forward to equalize that opportunity for all the beneficiaries to get some of the resources that the Trust has. He also mentioned the mini-grants, which are incredibly important and well utilized. They had 48 applications totaling a request of \$90,476 with only \$33,526 available to distribute. He highly recommended looking at increasing the mini-grant pots for all beneficiaries, but it is clear that they are getting way more applications than could be funded. He added that the mini-grant committees are not always clear on how to prioritize, which is another issue to work with staff on. He mentioned the technical assistance for beneficiary groups, which was \$500,000. He stated that this issue is not so much an FY26 budget issue, but an issue now. It is technical assistance to look at the fiscal health of our system, because it is not healthy and needs to be figured out now; not a year from now. He then talked about coordinated transportation and then disability justice. The friendship and dating, training-the-trainer curriculum at UA CHD has been in the budget for many years, and is not there now. The value of the program and helping people with developmental disabilities understand appropriate communications and interactions with the opposite sex is incredibly important and does belong in the disability justice area when training people. The beneficiary employment engagement got switched over to the workforce area and we are willing to take some leadership on that again, but it requires some funding to do so. The recommendation is to put that back in the budget. He then highlighted a couple things under home- and community-based services, and asked if Ms. Grafton had anything to say.

MS. GRAFTON recommended paying attention to the issues.

MR. REINHART stated that the other part is the issue of the advisory boards having an opportunity to speak at meetings, and that 20-30 minutes is not enough. There was a time when the executive directors of the boards or the leadership was invited to sit at the table and talk about an issue that affected their beneficiary group. We would be asked about the impact, share an opinion. That has not occurred in a while, and it is important right now.

TRUSTEE BOYLES asked if the care coordinator liaison works over all beneficiary sections segments.

MR. REINHART replied that there was a writeup in the packet which says SDS, and he referred to that. He added that Aging and Disability Resource Centers are supposed to be places to get all the information on what resources are out there, and there are not enough of them funded well enough to do everything. He stated that there was a link on his presentation about the new recommendation to expand eligibility and funding for the Infant Learning Program.

STATUTORY ADVISOR UPDATE

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Grafton and Mr. Reinhart and moved to the statutory advisor updates with the Commissioners of both the Department of Health and Department of Family and Community Services. She asked Acting CEO Biastock to introduce the panelists.

ACTING CEO BIASTOCK stated appreciation for the leadership from both the Department of Health and Department of Family and Community Services for joining them today. She

introduced Commissioner Heidi Hedberg from the Department of Health, who was joined by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Robert Lawrence. Online was Commissioner Kim Kovol from the Department of Family and Community Services.

COMMISSIONER HEDBERG stated appreciation for the consideration in the budget and talked about a shift happening within the departments and spoke for the Department of Health. She continued that they were looking for support for a short-term temporary as they build up their systems for sustainable funding and appreciated the opportunity for the evaluation of the requests before them. She talked about the four major arcs of effort within the Department. One was strengthening the behavioral health road map, and she talked about the booklet and added that she would make sure that each would have a copy of it. They were also transitioning the behavioral health claims from Optum into the Medicaid Management Information System for a smooth transition in January. Guidehouse was selected to do their Medicaid rate methodology, and they were meeting with all of the different provider groups in a phased approach to develop the survey. The goal was to evaluate the existing methodologies and look to see if there were alternative payment methodologies or alterations. She then talked about foundational work, and they had an RFP out for a behavioral health provider organization to provide technical assistance to providers in how to enroll in Medicaid and operate with billing to help with that service delivery. The other key area is around regulations, and we have identified a lot of behavioral health regulations that need to be updated. She highlighted two of them and then talked about strengthening the behavioral health system and the work between both departments. She talked about childcare and the recommendations for subsidies for childcare for those individuals related that have special needs. She moved to the effort around preventing suicides and overdoses, looking at prevention and early intervention, increasing access for harm reduction and treatment, recovery, and then the workforce. They did have legislation passed creating the medical review organizations which would be looking at suicide and opioids and how to use that data to inform the recommendations moving forward. She acknowledged the House Bill 202 bill signing and that there will be access to Naloxone in the schools. House Bill 344 becomes law on August 31st, which allows the Department of Health to apply for a waiver on health-related needs. That is nutrition, food as medicine, housing, and case coordination. She added that there were a lot of foundational changes that the Department of Health is engaging in in partnership with the Trust, the Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Corrections, Department of Public Safety, working together to promote the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of all Alaskans.

COMMISSIONER KOVOL stated that the Department of Family and Community Services appreciated the Trust's support of their division and program, and she gave a quick overview. They have three areas of focus that they were moving forward with. One of the focuses has always been on the individual patients and clients, that they are person-centered and recognized, and promoted the uniqueness of all the individuals they work with. Second, their focus was always on their staff, work culture, recruitment and retention. They have had a very creative talent acquisition team and have cut down recruitment time by nearly 30 to 40 days. What used to take up to two months to hire someone can now be done in ten days. The third focus was to insure that they were lifting up in collaboration with their partners that this work could not be done in a silo and that, without the assistance of leadership, cooperation and collaboration with the partners, this work would not be able to get done. She continued that the Department encompasses four divisions and two units: Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Children's Services, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Alaska Pioneer Homes, the complex care unit. She went through the status of each and mentioned the omnibus crime bill, HB 66, the public touch point

with the Department. She added that the rehabilitation study for the Family Justice Center, which was done in partnership with Public Safety, has wrapped up.

TRUSTEE MORRIS asked Commissioner Hedberg about The Arc. He noted that the Trust hired a consultant to help them with the processes, and he asked how they were doing.

COMMISSIONER HEDBERG replied that they are in a much better position and were able to receive their employee retention credit. They were able to secure a line of credit from a bank. The board was expanded, and they have been filling their vacant seats and are working at the administrative level to fill their vacant position. They are not yet out of the woods, but are in a much better position. The Department of Health continues to support them and continues to track their progress.

TRUSTEE MORRIS thanked her for the good news.

TRUSTEE FIMON congratulated and welcomed Dr. Lawrence aboard. He stated concern on the structure changes and updates on The Arc, and asked Commissioner Hedberg what the board could do to make that process faster.

COMMISSIONER HEDBERG replied that the Medicaid rate methodology was key to answering a lot of those questions. The contract that Guidehouse has is looking at if the methodology being used is accurate.

TRUSTEE FIMON appreciated the reply and asked for continued updates.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked both Commissioners for their engaging conversations, especially about the budget, and appreciated working with them both. She called a quick break.

(Break.)

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR HALTERMAN called the trustees back to order and began with some introductory words on the public comment period. She talked through the process and stated that the Chair maintained the right to stop public comment that contained inappropriate or inflammatory language or behavior. She recognized Jeff Jessee.

MR. JESSEE stated that he was the former CEO of the Trust, happily retired. He talked about The Arc and the Trust putting their interests ahead of the beneficiaries. Whatever was intended, nothing happened. No formal offer was made, no ongoing discussions were had, and he stated appreciation for Trustee Morris asking about what happened over the four months. He continued that The Arc was able to get a line of credit from a private institution and got their IRS money, but are not yet out of the woods. There is more that the Trust can do to help them. He suggested inviting The Arc back in, communicating with them that you want to help them. They need help. Their management structures, their board structure may still need help for them to become sustainable. Get the process of getting that discussion going again and getting the community to believe that the Trust is out there to support the beneficiaries. He added that there are great concerns about how long the review process would take and whether the existing agencies can make it to the end. He encouraged Trustee Fimon to not be patient; bring in the contractor, the Commissioner; try to get a timeline of how long each of the pieces will take; and find out what

might have to be done in order to help them get through it. Explain the deliberative process after an Executive Session so people understand what you were trying to do. The CEO search, losing Steve is a huge void, and this is totally out of the realm of possibility. He suggested finding Steve and to try talking him into trying this again, because it is darn hard to find someone that is qualified to do this job, particularly in this environment. He applauded the staff for putting forward the listening sessions, and the expectation should be having all the trustees in the room to hear all the stories. He encouraged staff not cutting them off at the end of the amount of time, not the five minutes, but the amount of time for all that public testimony. Do not leave beneficiaries and their families hanging after they come to try to tell their stories. He stated that he was very impressed with how a few trustees launched into trying to look again at how you are conducting business, and he appreciated it. The Trust has some of the best staff possible; listen to them. Listen to the boards. Listen to the beneficiaries. This can be turned around.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Jesse, and recognized Karen Heath.

MS. HEATH stated that she is the director of the UAA Center for Human Development and thanked the Trust for the support of beneficiaries throughout the years. She addressed two projects currently funded by the Trust at the center: the Interpersonal Violence Prevention for Beneficiaries, and the Supported Employment Workforce Program. Initially, the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Program was slated to be recommended for Mental Health/GF, but was eliminated entirely in the most recent budget. This program can serve as part of the menu of services at Intercept Zero, the Sequential Intercept Model being proposed for the Disability Justice Focus Area as it focuses on prevention of violence. She asked for a transition in FY26 so that this project could transition to either sustainable funding or, at least, have the opportunity to sunset this evidence-based project with the least amount of disruption to the Trust beneficiaries. It was currently funded at \$80,000, and she requested it be funded in FY26 for \$50,000, or to be moved back into consideration for GF/Mental Health funds in FY25. She continued to the Supported Employment Workforce project which was being reduced from \$100,000 to \$75,000 in FY26, and then \$25,000 in FY27. She stated that new regulations came out last Thursday for public comment on employment services for the State, and she requested the consideration of maintaining the budget at \$85,000 for FY26, and reducing it to \$75,000 for the FY27 year so they had the opportunity to respond to the employment service needs of Trust beneficiaries. Without this funding, they would not be able to provide the proposed required national certification training to the employment service program administrators and job developers as in the regulations and proposed regulations, and would not be able to develop a curriculum to provide the appropriate training to job coaches. The center would like the opportunity to be responsive to the regulations, and stable funding would provide that. She thanked them for their service on the board, and was available to answer any questions.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Heath and called on Tom Grafton and Kim Champney, and checked online for anyone interested in giving public comment.

MR. HABEGER stated that is a wellness coordinator for the Juneau Reentry Coalition, a position he held since the inception of the Trust funding for communities. He appreciated that, and the opportunity to speak to the Trust. Part of his reason for his comments was because there was consideration of defunding of community coalitions. He provided some comments on some of the great things the Trust had done in that funding, and asked that they reconsider that position. He encouraged them to find a way to keep community involvement at the grassroots level, and to continue that downward march in their recidivism rates.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Habeger, and recognized Tom Grafton.

MR. GRAFTON stated that he is better known as Jena's dad, and is a proud Alaskan. He continued that he got to travel with Jena many times to conferences Outside to Washington, D.C., to the White House, and it has always been a really proud pleasure of his to talk about the Mental Health Trust Authority. He talked about the mini-grants, which are actually effective and helpful, unlike many of the systems that do not work for many. He had to step out of the workforce; Jena comes first in his life; and he is lucky that his wife works hard to support them. He added that they get by and were okay. The mini-grants have helped. He cannot afford a membership for Jena or himself to the Alaska Club, and the Trust helped her for a couple of years. That is really important for Jena's health and her social determinants of health. The other thing he did not understand was the trust in the staff losing Steve. He and Jena both think the world of Steve. He encouraged them to get back to what it was that made them so proud talking about the Trust, how you help the recipients, and doing that work and spending some of that accrued billion dollars on the recipients in the State. He thanked trustees for what you do.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Grafton, and recognized Kim Champney.

MS. CHAMPNEY stated that she is the director of the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities, a statewide nonprofit. They have approximately 104 members who are organizations that serve people with intellectual developmental disabilities. She has been the director for two years, and in the DD field for 26 in Alaska. She was there to validate that the system is fragile. She also recognized how important the Trust is to beneficiaries and families. She continued that the State of Alaska had just started a Medicaid rate project, and added that the long-term services and supports to AADD had been prepared to engage in that process for over two years. We were more than organized and were waiting for the call. The other step forward was the NRI, the new assessment tool. The hope is that it will build a system for tomorrow, but the changes will not be fully implemented for three to five years, and it is very complex. As an association, they are working very hard to support organizational leaders and have projects strengthening workforce, providing technical assistance, building partnerships both on the road system and in remote areas so that providers can support each other. This could not be done without the Trust support. She stated that today services are 98 percent Medicaid, and that is not flexible. If people do not fit in a certain category, they really cannot be served. There are hundreds of small providers that really changed the business of doing services. Yet the large nonprofits are needed. They are the ones that serve the complex people. She talked about the history of the Trust and having children and adults outside of Alaska in institutions waiting to come back. She realized the uncertainty of the Trust role in providing operational assistance to organizations. It is with this uncertainty that AADD recommends that the Trust consider doing a system assessment.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Champney, and moved to Marsha Oss online.

MS. OSS stated that she is the Fairbanks Reentry Coalition Coordinator and is concerned about the Trust deciding not to fund this position after FY26. She talked about what had happened with this position since she had been in it since November of '22. They were allocated funds for FY24, and she was able to serve over 105 with those Trust funds and funds from the Governor's budget. This year she received another grant from the Trust and had 37 people come through the program and the funds dropped. She has housed ten of those people since August 1st. They

come through the coalition, through the coordinator. These folks were not reaching out to any other services in Fairbanks and were not in a relationship with housing and coordinating services. If her position was eliminated, where were these people going to go to get services, and who were they going to be referred to? She stated that she has worked in reentry since 2017, and recidivism rates are dropping, and people were getting stabilized. She added that recidivism was increasing since the allocation with the budget has dropped.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Oss, and recognized Faith Myers.

MS. MYERS stated that each board member was given a copy of the seven-page document called “Improving Lives for Trust Beneficiaries.” She continued that there were approximately 10,000 Trust beneficiaries that rotate in and out of locked psychiatric facilities or units each year for a forced evaluation or a treatment. She estimated the number because the State does not keep these important statistics. She testified that, in 2003, when she was released from the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, she underwent expensive trauma therapy, not because of her mental illness, but because of the mistreatment she endured while locked up. The Legislature passes laws to protect Trust beneficiaries, but there is often no enforcement mechanism. In 1992, psychiatric patients were given the right by State Law AS 47.30.847 to bring a grievance to an impartial body. It has been 32 years, and no psychiatric facility has been required to set up a fair, impartial body for patients to bring their grievances. In 2008, they were given a right by State law to have gender choice of staff for intimate care as a way to cut down on a patient’s trauma. In 2023, of the 12 facilities visited, only one had written a policy to comply with the gender choice law. Psychiatric hospitals do not write policies that require them to comply with patient protection laws they do not like. And there is no State enforcement mechanism. Trust beneficiaries are being mistreated. Please use the statutory influence of the Trust to improve rights for Trust beneficiaries.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Myers for her testimony, and for being a wonderful advocate. She recognized Jess Angel.

MR. ANGEL stated that he is a certified trauma support specialist, and works with the justice-impacted population, not just in Alaska but across the nation. He thanked the Trust for being a critical supporter of reentry coalitions across the state. Their funding has allowed the coalitions to provide much needed services to those reentering communities after incarceration. He is aware that the Trust announced discontinuing Trust funding for reentry coalitions come FY26. This transition presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in the fact that the coalitions must now seek out alternative funding sources to insure the sustainability of their programs. This is no small task, but it is necessary. This shift also presents an opportunity for the reentry coalitions to diversify their funding streams. There is a chance to build a more resilient financial base for the coalitions. He saw this firsthand with the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition, and others can and should be seeking resources that are out there. It was equally important to recognize the ongoing role the Alaska Mental Health Trust can and should play in this work. It remains a vital source for mental health and substance use initiatives, areas that are deeply intertwined within reentry efforts. He asked for the Trust’s continued support in funding specific projects within the coalitions, particularly those that align with the mission of improving the lives of the beneficiaries. While the Trust decision marks a significant change, it is not an end; it is a call to action for all to innovate, collaborate, and insure that this critical work continues. Together, this transition can be navigated and continue to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those served. Thank you for the Trust contributions during almost ten years, and

he looks forward to continue working together.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Angel, and stated that Doreen Schenkenberger was online.

MS. SCHENKENBERGER stated that she is the CEO for Partners for Progress in Anchorage, Alaska since 2014. Prior to that, she was on the board of directors for Partners for Progress since 2006. She continued that Partners for Progress runs a large reentry program, and she was calling in to testify in support of the statewide reentry coalition program that the Trust has been funding for the last eight years, and she thanked them for that. She added that there has been a 13 percent decrease in recidivism since these efforts started. She stated that that change did not happen overnight, and all of these efforts working all of these years is paying off. They are seeing a decrease, and there were reductions at Partners. There is a reduction in repeat crimes. She continued that there are more parole/probation violations among the participants, but definite reduced new crimes. What they are doing is working. She understood that the funding may be discontinued in FY27 and encouraged the State to help to find a way to continue this important statewide program. When this work first started, there was a lot of stigma and discrimination for people that had been incarcerated. No one wanted to hire a felon. Today, we hear, "How can we help?" There are more employers, landlords and community partners understanding the importance of reentry and how it affects everyone. She thanked the Trust for all the years of support for the Trust beneficiaries. Over 80 percent of their participants in the center are Trust beneficiaries, and they really need support so they do not go back. The reentry coalitions are a huge part of that. She asked that they please continue to help with the funding somehow.

TRUSTEE FIMON thanked Ms. Schenkenberger for her testimony, and for her 18-plus years of service at Partners for Progress.

MS. SCHENKENBERGER thanked Trustee Fimon, and stated appreciation for him.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Schenkenberger, and recognized Mary Jane Michael.

MS. MICHAEL was pleased to announce that she joined The Arc board of directors. She stated that she was the executive director for The Arc for 18 years, from 1981 to 1999, and also served as a Mental Health Trust Authority trustee for ten years; three as Chair. She added that she knows the challenges they share. She went through how The Arc began. It has been 43 years since she started her career at The Arc. She had the honor and pleasure to work under the guidance of the founding parents who in the '50s and '60s chose to raise their children with disabilities at home, despite all odds and with no services existing in our state. In 1960, they saw the need to begin building facilities and provide programs, and successfully negotiated a lease with the State of Alaska to preserve 50 acres of land in the heart of Anchorage. Five acres went to Hope; five acres went to Assets; and The Arc retained the 40 acres. In 1966, they opened the first school for children with disabilities on that site. That was prior to public law when they were required to be served in public schools. They went to work with the Anchorage School District to develop some of the finest special education programs in the country. In 1971, they built the building known as Assets and operated the first sheltered workshop in the state. They also helped set the stage for the rights of individuals to work in the general workforce. In 1981, on the original site, they expanded the old schoolhouse, added a kitchen, a gym, and opened The Arc activity center to provide social opportunities for their adult children and others. In 1985, they built Arc House because they were aging and wanted to insure their children would have a place to call home. That house was built solely with private dollars and donated labor. It also

set the stage for The Arc to expand and provide an array of services throughout the community. When the Mental Health Trust was created in 1995 and it was determined that the land would constitute part of the settlement, it made sense to include the land, as they were already providing services for the beneficiaries. They believed the 1960 land lease would be protected; it would be honored. Those buildings were made with their blood, sweat, and tears. Assets, Hope, The Arc are all part of the history of this landmark property. The Trust should be doing everything in its power to insure these lands continue to provide services to the beneficiaries and not seek to further burden the organizations. The Arc, like similar providers, face financial pressure, but the Trust has the authority, the capacity, the incredible professional and dedicated staff that can lead into the next generation as a strong and vibrant system. Please help them sustain what they have and grow the future.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Michael for her testimony, and she also thanked her for what she was doing and continues to do. She recognized Michelle Girault.

MS. GIRAULT stated that she is the COO of Hope Community Resources, a provider agency based in Anchorage serving Trust beneficiaries with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as those with mental illness, for the last 56 years. Hope services nearly 500 Trust beneficiaries in six regions of the State. She continued that she was also the board president of the Key Coalition of Alaska, a statewide advocacy group made up of people with disabilities, their families and supporters, provider agencies, and the staff providing support. She worked in the disability support sector for 40 years in Alaska and has the perspective of history. She was there to continue to amplify the comments they were hearing. In the '80s and '90s they were actively working to bring Alaskans out of institutions and build community systems that were supportive and sustainable. When Harbor View was closed, they assured reluctant parents who felt the institutional setting provided more security, that living in the communities of choice across Alaska would give more opportunity for growth and joy, and assured them the supports delivered would be secure and sustainable. The Key Coalition was formed in the '80s after a 16 percent cut to community disability support services by Governor Sheffield. For the past 38 years, the Key Coalition continued advocating for sufficient investment in programs and services so that no Alaskan would have to wait for services. Although many steps of progress had been accomplished in nearly four decades, they are still working on the same goals. Trust beneficiaries do not have easy or flexible access to supports and services. The system is complicated. Many are still waiting; others have left Alaska in frustration; and others were being served in out-of-state institutions because Alaskan providers do not have the capacity to serve at the current rates of reimbursement. She added that the pandemic exacerbated an already challenged workforce, and providers struggle to raise wages in order to compete with for-profit companies, as well as each other. There has been an erosion of confidence from parents, providers and beneficiaries that the network of community service providers would be able to sustain into the future. Hope and the Key Coalition, as a group of invested partners, met with both the current and previous Commissioners to alert them that the system is very fragile and that long-term providers are in deficit spending positions that could not be sustained if the status quo does not shift. Advocacy during the past legislative sessions have produced positive steps, one of which was the allocation of funds for a rate restructuring system. She stated that, through the years, the Trust had been a partner to collaborate, innovate, and address gaps in services, and she is grateful for the many steps of progress she witnessed. She asked, in developing budgets and prioritizing projects, that the heart of that planning include actions that help to assure the provider system does not collapse, and we continue to work together to build and sustain a system where beneficiaries and their families can live with confidence for flexible access to the

supports they need now and in the future.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Girault, and recognized Christina Shadura, online.

MS. SHADURA stated that she represented the Anchorage Reentry Coalition and was speaking as a lifelong Alaskan, a member of the Anchorage community, and an advocate to address the issue related to Trust beneficiaries. She explained that the Anchorage Reentry Coalition is a collective formed by various agencies and community members with the goal of supporting individuals transitioning from incarceration back into the community, AKA, reentrants. Over the past decade, the Coalition worked to enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and assist those with criminal justice by addressing challenges faced during reentry back into both Alaska and statewide. The Coalition steering team has a role in collecting resources and building capacity tied by gaps and barriers in the reentry process. It works alongside local, State and Federal partners to develop and improve community-based reentry systems. The reentry coalitions represent an effort to create a supportive environment for criminal-justice-involved folks, contributing to be safer and more inclusive. She stated that she has been the designated case manager, served on the steering team, and now has the honor of serving as the new Coalition coordinator. She thanked the Mental Health Trust for shouldering the funding burden to support reentry coalitions statewide and implored them to take a closer look at the collateral consequences that could incur should these coalitions be defunded. They want to support Anchorage by supporting rehabilitation in the reentry workforce; support the Department of Corrections and their mission; and, most importantly, continue serving their communities and the many reentrants who identify themselves as Mental Health Trust beneficiaries.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Shadura, and recognized Ann Ringstad.

MS. RINGSTAD stated that she is the executive for NAMI Alaska and was there to build awareness. NAMI Alaska, National Alliance on Mental Illness, was started by two moms in Wisconsin. Their kids had schizophrenia and had no place to go. They needed help, and they needed hope. It is now the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Their mission is to end the stigma of mental illness and advocate for access to mental health services, treatments, support and research, and is committed to raising awareness and building hope. NAMI Alaska was founded in 1987 by a number of families that were looking for help and hope in trying to form an organization, and is the statewide organization for NAMI. She continued that their board's top strategic goal is to reach out into rural Alaska in a more robust fashion, and are devising creative ways to do that in the near future. Their state funding was cut in 2008, and they survive on foundation grants, organization grants, individual grants, and they are being asked to do more. She thanked the Trust for the money they gave to them and their affiliates, and for all they do for the Trust beneficiaries. Her last word: You don't know you need NAMI until you do.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Ringstad, and recognized Anthony Cravalho.

MR. CRAVALHO stated that he is from Kotzebue, Alaska, and thanked the Trust for all the support around the Crisis Now model. Maniilaq Association received funding for the planning efforts around the Crisis Now program, which has a chance to be the most significant program around substance abuse, mental health, and helping people stay out of jails or RSRs. He talked about the Trust programs, support grants, and how people with traumatic brain injury do not like

to go to a clinic in a community where everyone knows everyone. He continued that with the State Mental Health Essential Program Equipment Grant funded through the Trust, Maniilaq Association has been able to use those types of funds to get programs and equipment that provide services to Trust beneficiaries. Trust funding for programs like that is vital. He added that he is the father and guardian of a 26-year-old son with severe intellectual disabilities. He is their client, and he resides in their disability group home. He stated his support for everything everyone had been saying about The Arc, and added that helping to get organizations like Arc and Hope the support they need to recruit and retain staff that are passionate about this work is vital, but also insuring the proper access to training, especially for those disabilities that are very severe. There is a need to find better ways to access the training for staff needed so they can do their jobs properly, and to help support the clients that need those vital services.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Cravalho, and recognized Trustee Fimon.

TRUSTEE FIMON stated appreciation to Mr. Cravalho for his comments when he said access to patients and the terminology. Getting access and taking it to them is extremely important.

MR. CRAVALHO added the example that a roundtrip ticket from Kobuk or Amble to Kotzebue, the hub community, is about \$585 and then, if they have to go to Anchorage, it is another \$500. The type of equipment supported through the Trust to help providers get access to clients virtually is vital.

CHAIR HALTERMAN recognized Jim Gottstein.

MR. GOTTSTEIN stated that he was one of the Plaintiff's lawyers in the lawsuit that was over the state dealing with Mental Health Trust lands, and he represents beneficiaries diagnosed with mental illness. He was in API for a month in 1982, which was what got him to become an advocate, and he was lucky to have escaped being made permanently mentally ill by the system. He founded Law Project for Psychiatric Rights, PsychRights, and won five Alaska Supreme Court cases where involuntary commitment and forced drugging proceedings were violating people's rights. Allison said she would send the white paper that Faith Myers and he wrote, along with some top-notch researchers, in response to HB 172, which was designed to provide input into that. It was basically ignored. He continued that it meticulously documented, with citations, that the current system with its virtual ubiquitous reliance on psychiatric drugs was reducing the recovery rate from a possible 80 percent to 5 percent. Those drugs reduce people's opportunity to recover and reduce life spans on average by 20 to 45 years. The white paper identified what should be done instead. He urged the Trust to, frankly, implement this. The programs he thought the most important to start with were peer respite, charity houses, and the open-dialogue approach. He added that one of the other things that would be really beneficial in improving people's outcomes was for the Trust to fund effective representation in involuntary commitment and forced drugging cases. It is too easy for people to be locked up and drugged against their will, which is not good for them.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Gottstein, and recognized Kendra Sticka.

MS. STICKA stated that she is the president of the board of directors for Hope Community Resources and was there to speak on behalf of the individuals served at Hope, as well as the broader disability community. She continued that the Hope board has grappled with the crumbling State infrastructure for disability services. Paramount is a Medicaid rate structure that

has not kept pace with costs, as well as a lack of a mechanism to base rates on the intensity of an individual's needs. It has become apparent that the individuals most likely to be negatively impacted by any changes in operations they have to make to sustain fiscal viability are those with the most significant disabilities and the most intensive needs -- some of the most vulnerable Alaskans. She stated appreciation for the reception to input and the understanding of the critical nature of the need. The Department of Health is committed to a rate restructuring process which should help with supporting the clients with highest needs. The five years expected for those rate restructures to come into play is more than some disability services organizations will be able to hang on for. She now asked for the help of the Mental Health Trust Authority to put the Alaskans with developmental and intellectual disabilities on the priority list. The help could come in the way of research support around disability services which could come in bridge funding while organizations await the rate restructure. It could come in a range of other forms that could help reposition the disability services landscape in Alaska to move towards a sustainable future. She thanked them for their service for the Trust and for the ample time taken for public comment today.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Sticka, and recognized Eric Gurley.

MR. GURLEY stated that he has been the executive director of Access Alaska for the past five years, and before that worked for FRA, Hope Community Resources, and Assets, Inc. He also spent a lot of time in Juneau, the North Slope and Utqiagvik helping build homes, and also facilitated a lot of assisted living homes across the state. He was there to advocate for Access Alaska, which is the Center for Independent Living. One of the five core services is systemic and individual advocacy, and part of that is that they are a team. Being a support to their partners is critical, and support for the work the Trust does is important. He added the need to come back and present in full of what Access Alaska does. He appreciated the opportunity to talk, and hoped to get to know them and be helpful in the future.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Gurley, and also thanked him for what he did. She worked with Access a lot over the years and appreciates the work they do for the beneficiary populations. She recognized Cindy Yeager online.

MS. YEAGER stated that she is the program coordinator for the Mat-Su Reentry Program in Wasilla and was there to comment about her concern regarding the coalition coordinator positions being taken off the Trust budget. She worked with many of the region's coalition coordinators and very closely with the Mat-Su reentry coordinators. These positions are vital in connecting community organizations in an enormous effort pertaining to the reentry population who are mostly Trust beneficiaries. Coalition coordinators work to orchestrate public events such as reentry simulations to community-wide meetings, private presentations, and to community organizations. They are seen as the glue for assisting the reentry programs, community organizations and the Department of Corrections to streamline their efforts the best way they can to efficiently assist the reentrants, Trust beneficiaries, and the community in being successful. She felt that getting these positions funded in other ways could be a struggle, and detrimental if the positions were to vanish. She hoped there would be a compromise solution for funding this in the future. It is a vital role in each region's reentry programs and community planning on reentry success. It is a team effort, with the need to keep pushing the awareness of reentry and working with the community in the hopes the Trust would continue to assist and help fund in some fashion.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Yeager, and recognized Amanda Faulkner.

MS. FAULKNER stated that she is the executive director of a diverse nonprofit provider agency on the Central Kenai Peninsula and the AADD president. She has been with Frontier Community Services for 23 years. It is a large provider agency with 160 employees, and they service over 300 people in a year. That was a significant decrease over the last ten years. They provide services from birth to end of life, with a variety of programs based on the needs of their community. FCS does provide home and community services and rehousing, infant learning programs, and does support employment. They have an FASD diagnostic clinic, provide elder care, adult day, and in-home care for elders. They heard that there was a need and added a recidivism program. In 2011, Medicaid rates were standardized with the promise of re-basing based on information from cost studies completed only by large provider agencies. Since the provider field had diversified and increased significantly by small providers, that rate re-basing based on cost surveys was not done. This rate methodology caused an imbalance in the reimbursement for home- and community-based services. She asked for considerations for a system assessment and help to stabilize the large providers like FCS and The Arc. She stated that Fronter has been running in the red and had to side hustle for extra funding and diversifying. That is not enough to close the gap much longer. She can only advocate and hustle these grants for probably two more years before they have to close, and is not sure where those 300 recipients would go because the other provider agencies cannot absorb that as well.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Faulkner, and recognized Lance Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON stated that he is the COO for the Alaska Behavioral Health Association which represents about 90 behavioral health providers in the state, and we have 97 Medicaid accepted providers. They do a lot of advocacy work and are allowed to do that because of the support from the Trust. He continued that the Trust support has been very instrumental. He talked about the Trust staff that take the time to really look at all the requests that come in and scan through all of those requests for support, providing them to the trustees because they know they are very important programs. He commended them on the staff hires and encouraged them to keep Steve Williams. He has lived in Nome for 19 years and opened up a treatment facility there because of support from the Trust. He added that he is part of the reentry program in Nome, and it is so important. He also encouraged them to support the reentry programs and the reentry coordinators.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Johnson, and recognized Brenda Monger. She stated that she was the last person on the list unless other folks have interest in public comments.

MS. MONGER stated that she serves as the coalition coordinator for the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and expressed her sincere gratitude to the Trust for establishing and funding the reentry coordinator positions in Anchorage, the Mat-Su, Juneau, and Fairbanks. She was calling in regard to the Trust consideration of the funding for these positions around the state in fiscal year '27. In her role the past five years, they significantly advanced the awareness level of the Mat-Su community regarding the necessity of reentry services to reduce recidivism and enhance community safety. The reentry coalition coordinators play a crucial role in organizing and managing the work of the reentry coalition steering team. The coordinators are responsible for raising awareness and fostering community engagement through various initiatives. They also work diligently to build and maintain robust partnerships with community service organizations and the Alaska Department of Corrections to facilitate the coordination of resources and services

for individuals reentering their communities. They also spearhead the research, writing, and position of grants to secure funding for reentry housing and other essential services. She noted that about 42 percent of Alaska inmates are identified as Trust beneficiaries each year, and keeping these positions is essential to providing comprehensive community reentry support and services. They are diligently seeking additional funding opportunities to sustain these critical positions and hope that there could be a compromise on funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to insure continuing operations.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Monger, and recognized Brenda Moore.

MS. MOORE thanked the trustees, the Trust and the staff. She has seen that impact over the years on systems, organization and individuals. It is an amazing legacy of service to the state. She stated that she was a former Mental Health Board member and beneficiary. She served from 2004 to 2023 and was there because she is dismayed at the decision that was made regarding The Arc. She was also disconcerted by the process that was used that seemed to lack transparency, which concerned her. She hoped, in moving forward, they would take some of the concerns into consideration. She thanked them for taking the time and giving attention to the myriad of needs that are brought forward each and every time you meet. She thanked them all for their service.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Ms. Moore, as well, for her service and her public comment. She recognized Bill Herman.

MR. HERMAN stated that he had been in this room many, many times as a staff person. He got hired in '95 and it was a joy to work there because the beneficiaries are No. 1 and always were. It was a very gratifying place to work, and he was thankful for that opportunity. He continued that he was focused on people that worked on the management side, the land and the money side and sees that that seems to be looking good. Then there was a rough spot a few years ago with the money becoming more of the focus and thinking they could work outside of state law. He was really concerned then, and that was the last time he did testimony here at the Trust. He stated that he had a lot of support for the trustees and added that every decision made should be towards how the beneficiaries are getting better, and it should be measured. He heard about the situation with Arc, and felt that it was important to come here and just say to keep the beneficiaries first. Everything else is secondary. That is the whole reason that the Trust was created, and they need to really focus on that mission.

CHAIR HALTERMAN thanked Mr. Herman, and asked if there was anyone else that signed up in the room. There being no one, she asked if there was anyone else online.

MR. JESSEE asked to hear from the trustees.

CHAIR HALTERMAN stated that she had been asked for the response and was going to give a written response and would read it:

“We appreciate all who provided comments today and every public comment opportunity. On behalf of the Board, I’d like to respond to some comments we heard about The Arc. Before I do so, I’d like to make it clear the Trust has a duty to our beneficiaries. That means beneficiaries in all of our beneficiary populations and across Alaska. That also means beneficiaries today and beneficiaries in the future. Decisions related to Trust resources are always made in the best interest of the Trust and our beneficiaries. Trustees need to serve as stewards of the Trust fund and the Trust lands and noncash resources and have a fiduciary

responsibility to insure all are being maximized to improve outcomes for our beneficiaries. The Trust has a longstanding relationship with The Arc, and we value their decades of service to the Trust beneficiaries and our community. It is because of that relationship and because of the residential and community-based services that The Arc provides that our organization has been working closely with The Arc and the Department of Health leadership to help The Arc -- which has experienced years of financial loss -- to get on a path to sustainability. Leaders from ours and each of these organizations have been meeting regularly, almost weekly, since last Spring, to identify important solutions and a path forward for The Arc and those that they serve. In addition, the Trust recently funded a small contract for the organizational analysis of The Arc, sharing the results with The Arc's board, with the goal of sustainable operations for the organization. We appreciate all that The Arc has been doing to help reach financial sustainability, and we know that work they will continue to do. With regard to comments regarding Open Meetings Act and the secrecy of meetings, the trustees have always followed the law and did not violate the Act during the Arc meetings. Contrary to the allegations stated, the Executive Sessions were necessary to discuss the financial difficulties faced by The Arc so as not to inflame or exacerbate the situation adding to the impact of the financial problems if they were discussed in public. There would have been no vote or straw poll during the trustee Executive Sessions; just discussion and information-gathering. Given the nature of the sensitive topics discussed, including partner organization finances, these sessions can include extensive dialogue and analysis, which is exactly what the Executive Sessions are designed for. Again, we appreciate all comments shared. We share an interest of commenters in doing all that our organization can do to improve the lives and the circumstances of Trust beneficiaries.”

I'm just going to add with a final comment of my own. I know that the Department of Health has prioritized the work for this population. I know these rate studies feel like they're going to take forever, but the Department has recognized the need to focus some attention to this particular population. I trust that we will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with our partners, with our advisors, and we will support the organizations that serve our beneficiaries now and into the future. It is critical that we make decisions that are in the best interest of all as we do so. She then thanked everyone for their public comments and appreciated the work they all do and their advocacy for the beneficiaries. We all serve the same purpose, and all have the same missions in mind. She read some commentary to end the public comment period: It is 4:58. We are at the end of the public comment period on the agenda. If you wish to give public comment and you have not yet been heard, written comments are always welcome and may be submitted to the trustees at any time. You can send your public comments via e-mail to public.comment@MHtrust.org or via fax (907)269-7966, or you can mail public comments to 3745 Community Park Loop, Suite 200, Anchorage, Alaska 99508. She instructed trustees to look through the packet. There was a lot of written public comment to read, as well as listening to the feedback received today. Thank you for your time. She asked for any comments or questions. There being none, she recessed the meeting.

(Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.)