



July 1, 2019

The Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA) stands in solidarity with our partners across the state unified in the truth that the Governor's vetoes jeopardize the health, safety, well-being, and prosperity of all Alaskans.

The \$50 million cut to Medicaid threatens access to quality healthcare. This veto means a total of \$12.24 million (18.675% of the total funds) is cut from behavioral health treatment and recovery grants. These grants provide access to treatment services for Alaskans with serious mental illness, serious substance use disorders, and kids with severe emotional disturbance. We know these cuts will limit access to necessary treatment and result in more public safety issues, more kids being removed from their family homes, more Alaskans headed out of state for the care they need, more homeless individuals on the street, more issues of domestic violence, and more Alaskans in jail.

But we also know that that's only a part of the damage done by these vetoes.

- Children supported by Parents-As-Teachers, Head Start, Best Beginnings, and programs funded by the Early Childhood grants will start life at a disadvantage because of these vetoes.
- Cuts to programs like AHFC's Special Needs Housing and Homeless Assistance Programs aimed at preventing homelessness and helping people re-establish their homes, their families, and their jobs will increase the number of homeless individuals.
- Those that need help and turn to Village Public Safety Officers, Alaska Legal Services, Public Defenders, or Adult Protective Services will struggle even more to get the help they need.
- Alaska's University system will not be able to meet the demand for Alaska's future miners, engineers, teachers, nurses, and social workers and our workforce supply will be even more hampered as students leave the state to begin their careers elsewhere.
- Eliminating funding for the Senior Benefits Program means our most vulnerable elders will be left without the financial support they need to stay in their homes, in their communities, and with their families.

This is only a fraction of the impact from the Governor's proposed vetoes to the budget. These cuts reduce family and community protective factors aimed at building resiliency and promoting health and welfare. They strain treatment systems, and challenge the services and supports that keep Alaskans contributing to this great state.

ABHA calls on our legislative leaders to fight for our values and our people and overturn these devastating cuts.

Tom Chard
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