

**Advisory Board on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse**



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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March 19, 2015

Governor Bill Walker
State Capitol, 3rd Floor
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Governor Walker,

The Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse support Medicaid Expansion and Reform so that more low-income Alaskans (earning less than \$9.76/hour) who experience a behavioral health disorder (mental illness and/or substance use disorders) can receive basic health insurance.

The State of Alaska currently spends millions of dollars for uninsured, low-income and disabled citizens using emergency levels of care. Alaskans living without adequate health care are more likely to use these expensive acute care services, like hospital emergency rooms, psychiatric hospitals, and nursing homes. They are also more likely to end up in prison or jail as a result of un-treated behavioral health conditions. State and local governments will always pay — either in the end for more costly acute care, or up front for less costly preventative services.

Alaskans with behavioral health disorders are at higher risk for being uninsured. The services available under Medicaid Expansion will offer more effective and less expensive solutions. A person with a disability is more likely to hold down a job, maintain a stable household, and contribute positively to his or her community when basic health care needs are met.

The Boards also support Reform efforts that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Alaska's current Medicaid health care service system and make it sustainable. We support measures designed to create efficiencies in the Medicaid health care delivery system that will save the state money, reduce fraud and waste, remove ineffective services, and reduce unnecessary spending.

Thank you for your leadership and efforts to support the health of all Alaskans.

Sincerely

J. Kate Burkhardt
Executive Director