



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

Clayton Holland, Superintendent

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March 16, 2022

Representative Matt Claman
State Capitol Room 118
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for HB 60-Public Schools: Mental Health Education

Dear Representative Claman:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 60 relating to standardized mental health curriculum in schools. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District recognizes that Alaskan youth have been struggling with mental health challenges at increasing rates over the last decade. In the last couple of years, the pandemic has exacerbated the struggles with mental health for Alaska students. In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General declared the state of youth mental health in crisis—a crisis he attributed in large part to the pandemic.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District supports HB 60 which includes the implementation of mental health education in existing health curriculum. Increasing student awareness of mental health challenges, teaching them to recognize the warning signs in themselves and others and providing them with the voice and resources to ask for help when it is needed is essential to student overall health, safety, and social and emotional well-being.

HB 60 allows school districts and local communities to adopt a more complete, state standardized health curriculum that includes developmentally appropriate instruction in mental health education for districts to model if they choose.

Thank you for bringing HB 60 forward. It is a positive step for school districts in Alaska who choose to implement a standardized, safe, and developmentally appropriate mental health curriculum for their students.

Sincerely,

Clayton Holland
Superintendent