

NEWS RELEASE

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Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority pledges nearly \$10 million to help implement Medicaid reform and redesign

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (March 18, 2016)— At a special board meeting held on March 16, 2016, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority board of trustees approved spending nearly \$10 million for implementation of Medicaid reform and redesign, including \$3.9 million for FY17. Funds will be used to assist the Department of Health and Social Services achieve the goals outlined in SB74.

“Medicaid reform and redesign has the potential to positively impact Trust beneficiaries well into the future and is the foundation for a high-performing and sustainable system of integrated care for beneficiaries,” said Russ Webb, chair of the board of trustees. “Trust staff and trustees have been highly engaged in the planning process and we are fortunate that the Trust is in a financial position to help facilitate its successful implementation.”

The funding from the Trust will help DHSS leverage additional federal funds of approximately \$10 million over the next three fiscal years.

Additionally, the board authorized \$100,000 for the start-up and implementation costs (as noted in the fiscal note) for HB188/SB104, the ABLÉ act, which allows individuals and families to set up tax-free savings accounts to pay for education, housing, transportation or other disability-related expenses. Assets held in an ABLÉ account would not be counted under means tests required for Medicaid or SSI, although SSI cash benefits would be suspended if the ABLÉ balance exceeded \$100,000. This is an important bill that will allow Alaskans with disabilities and their families to build their financial independence.

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About the Trust

The Alaska Mental Health Trust is a perpetual trust founded to improve the lives of Alaskans with mental illness, development disabilities, substance abuse disorders, traumatic brain injuries, and Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia. Through management and development of its resources, the Trust works to ensure that Alaska has a comprehensive integrated mental health program to serve Trust beneficiaries. Focus areas include disability justice, substance abuse treatment and prevention, beneficiary employment, workforce development and housing and long-term services. To learn more, visit mhtrust.org.