

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



Commissioner Adam Crum
Department of Health and Social Services
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, AK 99503-5923

September 16, 2019

Dear Commissioner Crum:

Many Alaskans, including our constituents, have expressed great consternation about Governor Dunleavy's vetoes of the Adult Enhanced Dental Services program, the effect of those vetoes, and how the Administration informed Alaskans about them. We have heard frustration that the Governor cut the program despite the Legislature fully funding it during first the regular session and again during the second special session.

Concern has focused on the Administration's failure to communicate accurately and timely when benefits would end. The Administration first indicated that benefits would end July 1, then later indicated that benefits did *not* end at the end of FY19, and would continue through September 30.

We request your response to the following questions:

- 1) A significant symptom of mental illness and cognitive disorders (such as Alzheimer's and dementia) is the deterioration of healthy gums and teeth. Did the Administration consider the link between other cuts it has made (Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grants) and the impact of those cuts on dental health generally?
- 2) Through Adult Preventive Dental Medicaid Services, the federal government has historically paid for 70% of Alaska's Adult Dental program. How will the federal government allocate the \$18,730,900 in foregone federal funding? Will those dollars remain unspent, will they be used by other states, or will they be allocated to Alaska for other purposes?
- 3) Dental care delivered in an emergency room setting is four to five times more expensive than care delivered in a dental office. While emergency room care is palliative and can relieve pain, it is not curative. Did the Administration consider this prior to issuing a veto of the program?
- 4) How and when did the Administration determine that the Adult Preventive Dental program could not be eliminated by July 1, 2019?

- 5) When did the Administration first seek permission from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to suspend Alaska's participation in the Adult Preventive Dental program?
- 6) Is it true or false that the federal government prohibited the State of Alaska from ending the Adult Preventive Dental program on July 1, 2019, as the current Administration had intended to do?
- 7) A July 1, 2019 memorandum from Conduent states that the Adult Enhanced Dental Program is unfunded as of that date. Was this an accurate statement of fact? If not, what efforts did the Administration take to correct this inaccuracy and advise dental providers and dental care recipients?
- 8) Dr. David Logan, the Executive Director of the Alaska Dental Society, told the Anchorage Daily News on or about August 25, 2019, that he was unaware that the Preventive Dental Medicaid program remained active. He indicated that Administration officials told him the program was cancelled effective July 1, 2019. Is Dr. Logan's statement credible and plausible?
- 9) Pursuant to federal law, recipients of Medicaid benefits are entitled to notice of the cessation of a state's participation in a federally-approved program. How did your department comply with federal law regarding notification to program recipients? When did the Administration inform Medicaid recipients about changes to their dental services? Did such notice go out to recipients on or about September 10, 2019, and not until that time?
- 10) When did the Administration let providers know that the program was not terminated on June 30th, the close of the fiscal year?
- 11) Our Legislative Finance Division indicates that up to \$15 million in unspent Adult Preventive Dental dollars could be transferred to pay for other DHSS programs. Do you agree with this position? Does the Administration intend to use monies that historically would have paid for Adult Preventive Dental to fund other programs?
- 12) Tammy Green, CEO of Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, reports that, without cleanings and other preventive care, people who "...have not been having preventative health [care] and have cavities or things like that, they can get inflammation, and that inflammation can exacerbate other chronic conditions." (Anchorage Daily News, July 18, 2019). Dr. David Logan noted that the effects might include harm to kidneys and the heart. The ADN also reported that another provider, Royann Royer, opined that a bacterial infection triggering pneumonia could be another result of a lack of preventive care. Does the Administration agree with Ms. Green, Dr. Logan, and Ms. Royer?

Thank you for your answers to these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Josephson". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andy" being more prominent than the last name "Josephson".

Representative Andy Josephson

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elvi Gray-Jackson". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first name "Elvi" and the last name "Jackson" being clearly legible.

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson