



Petersburg Mental Health Services, Inc.

**P.O. Box 1309
(907) 772-3332 main
Petersburg, Alaska 99833
(907) 772-2122 fax**

To Petersburg Assembly Members,

As someone who has advocated extremely hard over the past few weeks to get support from the Petersburg Borough and Assembly in helping people experiencing homelessness who are some of our most vulnerable community members during this time, I am in support of this mandate. I think it would have been great if it could have just been a solution or option that we give to people without having to have a mandate in place, as I know new mandates have created a lot of tension from within the community, however, it is my understanding that it has to be a mandate in order for our borough to possibly receive FEMA reimbursement for these non-congregate shelter options as well as because it is already a state mandate and cities/boroughs are supposed to at minimum provide mandates for state mandates being put into place. I think that having our local government take some responsibility for providing some basic needs to a very high risk population of people experiencing homelessness if they have symptoms or have tested positive for Covid-19 is something I really appreciate as a member of our community who spends a huge majority of her work day as well as free time trying to get community members access to basic needs including shelter.

We currently have over 35 people experiencing homelessness right now and I know if they were to fall ill and not have a safe place to shelter in place and take care of themselves that not only could this exacerbate their symptoms, but also put many others at risk that they might have to come in contact with without a safe place to shelter. It is also my understanding that the other people written into this mandate including first responders and healthcare workers would be able to utilize these non-congregate shelter options as supports beyond anything they may be able to set up themselves or through their employer. I did not read the mandate as this will be an opportunity for the borough to try and forcefully remove people from their homes or families but rather as a secondary option for people to have to ensure the health of themselves and their families. Seeing medical professionals in hotspot zones across the country that are sleeping in tents outside of their places of employment or in hallways made me appreciative of the options we have within our community to create safe places for people to shelter in place if they don't feel they can safely do that themselves.

Thank you,

Ashley Kawashima, LMSW, CDCI
Behavioral Health Clinician
Petersburg Mental Health Services
(907)772-3332
