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Dear Tribal Health Leaders,

The Department of Health (the department) is thankful of the supportive comments regarding the proposed state plan amendment to extend the suspension of the state plan behavioral health service authorizations from May 11, 2024, until the upcoming SPA and regulations amending requirements is implemented. The following information represents a record of tribal comments (verbatim where included) and includes department responses to comments received from the Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB).

Tribal Comments –

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) supports the Department of Health (DOH) proposal to submit a state plan amendment (SPA) for the extension of the temporary Public Health Emergency (PHE) related Service Authorizations (SA) for state plan behavioral health services, with an effective date of May 12, 2024.

We understand that DOH intends to create continuity between the temporary PHE SA suspensions, which expired on May 11, 2024, and the effective date of the forthcoming SPA and regulations to repeal certain SAs for state plan behavioral health services.

ANHB supports this intent and appreciates the ongoing collaboration with DOH to resolve the regulation's discrepancy, provide continuity for providers, and ultimately reduce the administrative burden of SA requirements for behavioral health services. Due to the time-sensitive nature of the proposed SPA, ANHB also supports DOH's request to conduct Tribal consultation with the approval process.

Department Response – The department appreciates the time and collaboration with the ANHB to reduce the administrative burden of state plan behavioral health service authorization requirements until the upcoming, more permanent SPA and regulations take place. Also, the department is thankful of the support to submit the state plan amendment to CMS for approval during the tribal consultation period.