

## Sponsor Statement for HB 219

# Repeal Sunset of Mental Health Assistance

**An Act relating to mental health treatment facilities; repealing the termination date of the mental health treatment assistance program; and providing for an effective date.**

**Last Updated:** April 3, 2001

**Contact:** JoAnn Lesh, Legislative Aide to Representative Hugh "Bud" Fate, at (907) 465-4976

HB 219 would repeal the sunset clause on a bill that passed in 1999 that created the Designated Evaluation Program. This program provides treatment through local hospitals for people who are in mental crisis. These individuals are working poor people who have no insurance or Medicaid coverage, who cannot afford hospitalization and who meet certain eligibility requirements.

If the sunset clause is not repealed, the following will be lost:

- Description of application, application review and appeal procedures
- Authorization of the department to establish eligible services and reimbursement rates
- Description of procedures for payment for the services provided
- Clarification of language and definitions to accurately reflect statutory intent
- Clarification of the responsibilities of the Department
- Language that establishes who is eligible for assistance for inpatient services:
  1. Individuals who meet criteria for commitment under current statutes (*i.e. danger of harming self or others or gravely disabled as a result of mental illness, and is likely to improve with treatment*)
  2. Individuals whose household income is below 185% of federal poverty guidelines for Alaska and who have no other third party payer

HB 219 would remove the sunset clause and extend the program indefinitely. Without this change, individuals in need of treatment would have to be transported to Alaska Psychiatric Institute or held in correctional facilities.

Without this bill, all of this is due to sunset July 1, 2001, sending the program back to it's original vague and problematic state.