

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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March 12, 2012

The Honorable Bob Herron, Representative
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Herron:

On March 7, 2012, I received your letter requesting information regarding residency under House Bill 78, as proposed in current version 27-LS0147\O. I have responded to your specific questions below.

1. DHSS' general observations on residency patterns among participants of existing programs administered by the Department

DHSS' existing loan repayment program practitioner application requests information on their personal address and the addresses of the sites in which they will be working. The program does not collect information on or verify residency of professionals participating in our existing program, "Supporting Health Care Access (through loan) Re-Payment" (SHARP).

2. Different ways in which under HB 78, as proposed in current version 27-LS0147\O, DHSS may be able to address residency – whether through regulation promulgated by the Department, through simple information intake and reporting to interested parties, or any other method at your disposal, and

I believe that my department would have the authority to promulgate regulations regarding state residency based on the proposed AS 18.29.035(a)(5). This squarely authorizes the commissioner to establish other eligibility and prioritization criteria for the program, which could include residency. This authority applies to both loan repayment and direct incentives.

3. Any other information you wish to provide.

The intent of HB 78 is to focus on the needs of the residents of the state for access to health care (AS 18.29.010). The goals of loan repayment and incentive programs, such as that proposed through HB 78, are to recruit health care professionals, including from out of state, and to retain them once they are practicing in the state. Evidence from other states' programs and federal

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programs indicate that professionals who have service obligations and work in an area tend to stay in that area once the service obligation is over. Having a strict residency requirement for participation in the program may create a barrier to recruiting professionals, especially to the sites with the greatest needs.

Sincerely,


William J. Streur
Commissioner

cc: Wilda Laughlin, DHSS Legislative Liaison
Jill Lewis, DPH Deputy Director
Patricia Carr, DPH Chief HPI