



Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

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POSITION PAPER

CONTACT: Valerie Davidson, Senior Director
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DATE: March 7, 2011

RE: HB-78 – Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

POSITION: Support

ANTHC is a tribally controlled, non-profit, statewide tribal health organization formed pursuant to federal law to provide medical and community health services for more than 130,000 Alaska Natives. ANTHC is part of the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is owned and managed by the 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska and by their respective regional health organizations.

ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation jointly manage the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), the tertiary hospital of the ATHS located in Anchorage. ANMC hospital and SCF clinic facilities together employ 161 physicians, 37 dentists and 509 nurses, along with many more employees working in health-related professions. We face the same workforce challenges as our partner health organizations, competing with employers in the Lower 48 to recruit and retain a quality workforce.

Current reports prepared by the Indian Health Service on physician positions within the tribal system and by Alaska tribal facilities on nursing positions provide a good snapshot of workforce challenges. These challenges are even greater for rural sites that also experience higher turnover rates. One significant issue not included in the reports is the aging population of our current providers.

Profession	Positions Authorized	Vacancies	Percentage
Physicians – statewide	305	59	19%
Physicians – ANTHC/SCF	168	17	10%
RN – statewide	900	133	15%
LPN – statewide	107	25	23%
APN – statewide	137	38	28%

Ideally we would grow our own health professionals in numbers that would meet our workforce needs, and we have made progress over the years. The tribal health system offers internships and scholarships that bring some of our best and brightest to the medical field. More Alaska Natives are choosing Medical and Dental careers; a University of Alaska Anchorage program, Recruitment and Retention of Alaska Natives into Nursing, is graduating Alaska Native nurses; many of our Community Health Aides have built on their basic training opportunities to prepare for advancing careers; and the Dental Health Aide Program is graduating students who fill a need for dental health services and patient education. We are inching forward, but more work needs to be done. Experienced providers are needed now to meet the needs of our patient/owners while we work to grow our own. They are also needed as preceptors and role models to students.

HB 78 is a strategy to attract skilled health professional to Alaska jobs. It would work in tandem with other efforts as Alaska's health provider community work to provide quality care to our residents. ANTHC urges your favorable consideration and passage of HB 78 to help us turn the corner on Alaska's health care workforce.