

January 29, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp  
State Capitol Room 118  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility. All patients deserve to have access to care without fear of assault from other patients/visitors.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, our facility has a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At North Star Behavioral Health System we have implemented many strategies to help keep our employees safe, such as training all clinical staff in de-escalating physical and verbal aggression, additional staff as circumstances require, preemptive assessment of risk factors, code training for all staff, etc.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Dr. Andrew Mayo, PhD  
CEO North Star Behavioral Health System

**Mission:**

To enhance the quality of  
life for all we serve

**Vision:**

Honor our heritage and be  
the pride of the community

**Values:**

Integrity  
Compassion and Caring  
Trust  
Transparency  
Loyalty  
Honoring our Heritage  
Quality  
Fiscal Responsibility

January 29, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp  
State Capitol Room 118  
Juneau, AK 99801

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We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312. "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence in recent years, including assaults with injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.

During the 2 year period, January 2016 thru December 2017, Wrangell Medical Center has documented 24 Incident Reports involving aggression or aggressive actions. Of these Incident Reports; 16 of the 24 resulted in completion of "OSHA Form 07-6100 Employee Report of Occupational Injury or Illness to Employer". The majority of these reports were minimal injury and more for informational purposes. However, the sheer number averaging one aggressive episode per month is alarming, given the size of our small facility.

We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Wrangell Medical Center, we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe. Our staff training includes: *Workplace Violence Prevention* and *NCI – Non-Violent Crisis Intervention*. Both of these classes focus on ways to avoid or minimize aggressive episodes. Staff members learn how to identify potential aggression, de-escalation methods, and safe body mechanics to get release from or block aggressive actions from others.

There is the potential for future assaults falling into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.

We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felon offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Robert Rang, CEO

*Caring for  
Southeast*



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &  
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

January 30, 2018

Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp  
State Capitol Room 118 and State Capitol Room 13  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is writing in support of HB 312, which addresses violence against health care workers.

ASHNHA is the membership organization representing Alaska's hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. Our members provide critical health care services in their communities, including inpatient acute care, emergency services, primary care and behavioral health. For over 60 years, ASHNHA members have worked to improve health care in Alaska.

Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They are kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. Violence should not be an acceptable workplace hazard, but unfortunately for many caregivers, this has become the new normal.

This bill supports our physicians, nurses, CNAs and other staff who devote their careers to caring for Alaskans. We strongly support the ability of police officers to arrest without a warrant for fourth degree assault in a health care facility, and the addition of an aggravator in the felony assault statute when that assault is perpetrated against a medical professional in the performance of their duties. Both provisions send the message that as a state, we do not tolerate violence against health care workers. Hospitals should be safe and healing places, free of violence, where all in need can seek care. This bill helps to ensure that they remain those safe and sacred places.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this important legislation moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Becky Hultberg, President/CEO

**Providence Alaska Medical Center**  
3200 Providence Drive  
P.O. Box 196604  
Anchorage, AK 99519-6604  
t: 907 562 2211  
alaska.providence.org



**January 31, 2018**

**Representative Matt Claman and Representative Chuck Kopp  
State Capitol Room 118  
Juneau, AK 99801**

**Dear Representatives Claman and Kopp:**

**We are writing to thank you for sponsoring HB 312, "an act relating to arrest without a warrant for assault in the fourth degree at a health care facility; and relating to an aggravating factor at sentencing for a felon offense against a medical professional at a health care facility."**

**Alaska hospitals have reported an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. Staff report feeling unsafe in the workplace. They experience being kicked, punched, spit on or verbally threatened all too often. This should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.**

**In a three hundred day period of 2017 Providence Alaska Medical Center experienced 181 reported assaults per the Alaska Statute definition of assault. Many medical professionals feel that being assaulted is a part of the profession and do not report the incidents. Other well qualified medical professionals seek employment in areas where there is less risk of being assaulted. This takes away from our community, and the people we are responsible to care for. As part of our mission we will always take care of the poor and vulnerable, but our medical professionals must feel safe in doing so. They must not, and should not feel that being assaulted is just a part of their jobs.**

**Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.**

**We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony offenses against a medical professional at a health care facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.**

**We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address**

this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Providence Alaska Medical Center we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe.

- We have created a De-escalation Committee tasked with creating and revamping policies and procedures to better protect our medical professionals.
- We have more than doubled the amount of surveillance cameras throughout the facility.
- We have added de-escalation K9s to our security team.
- De-escalation classes are offered and are now mandatory for all employees.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this moving forward. Thank you very much for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Mandsager". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" and "M".

Richard Mandsager MD  
Chief Executive, PAMC



**Danny Robinette, MD, FACS  
Testimony, HB 312  
House Judiciary Committee, Feb. 5, 2018**

For the record, my name is Danny Robinette and I am the Chief Medical Officer of Foundation Health Partners. Our organization represents Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Denali Center, and Tanana Valley Clinic and includes over 1600 health care employees.

- I write today to support HB 312, which helps to address the serious concern of workplace violence in health care facilities. Alaska hospitals are experiencing an increase in workplace violence over the past year, including assaults with physical injury against caregivers. In the past 18 months, we have had over 182 incidents with either violence or a threat of violence to health care staff in our hospital alone. On average only about 35% of incidences are actually reported, which makes the potential of over 500 events with either violence or a significant threat of violence to our staff.
- Violence should not be an acceptable workplace hazard. Unfortunately, for many nurses, physicians, and other caregivers, this has become the new normal.
- Many assaults fall into the category of fourth degree assault in which an officer must have a warrant to arrest an individual. We have learned that this process may be part of the reason that police often cite and leave an individual on scene rather than arresting them. We support making it easier for law enforcement to remove perpetrators of assault by eliminating the need for a warrant when an assault has occurred at our health care facility.
- We also support allowing sentences to be imposed above the presumptive range for felony assaults against a medical professional at a healthcare facility. This sends a clear message to our health care providers that they are supported and valued.



- We recognize legislation is only one potential solution to the complex problem. To successfully address this issue, each facility needs to implement a comprehensive strategy using evidence-based practices. At Foundation Health Partners we have implemented the following strategies to keep our employees safe: Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training (de-escalation techniques) for all nursing staff, security staff, and environmental services staff; increased presence of security in high risk areas with additional training for our security staff; processes to identify patients with a high risk of violence so staff can be aware and not interact with the patient alone.
- We urge you to pass this legislation and send a strong message to nurses, physicians and other caregivers that Alaska takes this issue seriously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danny R. Robinette", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Danny Robinette, MD, FACS  
Chief Medical Officer  
Foundation Health Partners