



Alaska State Legislature

Senator Matt Claman

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Senate Bill 83 Sponsor Statement – Version O

"An Act relating to health care insurance; relating to insurance reimbursement for health care services provided through telehealth; relating to telehealth; providing for an effective date by repealing the effective date of secs. 9 and 10, ch. 38, SLA 2022; and providing for an effective date."

Senate Bill 83 requires that health care insurers in the State of Alaska reimburse health care services that are provided using telehealth at the same rate as in-person services. This legislation centers on the principle of pay parity, ensuring providers receive equivalent compensation for delivering comparable care regardless of whether it's provided in person or remotely using technology.

Telehealth became widely available during the COVID-19 pandemic and has since become a standard in health care services. Telehealth removes barriers to care and allows patients to receive timely and convenient care from the comfort of their own homes. In Alaska, barriers to care affect individuals in rural areas, those with disabilities, and those with limited transportation options. Telehealth is especially important for chronic disease management, mental health services, and preventative care.

Telehealth significantly improves patient access to medical care. Many physicians who have implemented telehealth in their practices continue to provide care in-person. But providers may be disincentivized to offer telehealth services without pay parity, which could limit patient choice and potentially exacerbate existing health disparities. Pay parity ensures that providers will continue to dedicate the necessary resources to deliver accessible high-quality telehealth services.