




## Comments Regarding Senate Bill 139

These comments are unsolicited support for Senate Bill 139.


My name is David Head, M.D. I have practiced medicine in Nome, Alaska at Norton Sound Health Corporation nearly 21 years, 20 of those years as Chief of Staff. I have also served on the Alaska State Medical Board for the last 7 years, 4 of those years as the Chairman for the Board. In addition I have served on multiple State and National committees and advisory groups regarding Physician Shortage and recruitment and retention strategies.

It is these experiences that cause me to be such a strong supporter for Senate Bill 139.



At this time Alaska is entering a crisis situation when it comes to adequate medical providers. For the first 15 years that I was in Nome, if we had a vacancy open up we were able to pick and choose between several qualified, experienced and well educated physicians to fill that slot. We had no difficulty maintaining a full staff. During the last 5 years this has changed dramatically. The national shortage of primary care physicians, along with the dramatic increase in the cost of living in Bush Alaska has led us into operating in crisis mode. We have slowly gone from a full time staff of 8 physicians to now 3. We scramble to maintain adequate coverage with temporary "traveling doctors", often going through 20-30 different physicians per year to provide basic care. This makes it near impossible to maintain the high quality level of care that the people of this area have become accustomed to, as well as burning out our regular doctors. We have hired recruitment firms that over the last 3 years have only been able to find 2 doctors that would even come for interview. Although I do not see Senate Bill 139 as the "cure all", I do believe it offers immediate aid and will greatly help give us additional chips to play in this game of attracting the professionals that we so greatly need until other more long term answers can be found.

Thank you for your time and dedicated service.



David Head, M.D  
Chief of Staff  
Norton Sound Health Corporation  
Nome, Alaska

## Christina Apathy

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**From:** Coady [coady@alaska.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2010 3:03 PM  
**To:** Sen. Donny Olson  
**Subject:** SB 139

Dear Senator Olson...Donny:

...a voice from the past, in Nome. It's hard to believe that our family moved from Nome back to Fairbanks 18 years ago. We still have the same C-180 as we did in Nome, and I'm doing some flight instruction to keep my hand in the flying business.

Carol and I noted your Bill SB139, and it made us think of a situation with one of our daughters: Erica will complete a 2 year post-doctoral fellowship in neuropsychology at UCLA this summer. Her work has focused on neurocognitive testing of patients with brain tumors, memory issues, aphasias, movement disorders, HIV, brain injuries, as well as other neurological problems associated with both clinical and forensic cases. She would love to return to Alaska (I'm told there is only one board-certified neuropsychologist in Alaska), but with \$100,000 in student loans to pay off she has no choice but to remain in California or other South 48 location where salaries are high enough to make reasonable progress in paying down her education debt. A cash incentive or loan forgiveness program that would include her profession would be a major step in bring her skills and training back home to Alaska.

We trust all is well with you and your family. Please contact us on your next trip to Fairbanks (cell 907-750-5083). It would be great to get together for a visit. Best regards for now.

John Coady



**From:** Barbara Hale [mailto:bfhale1@msn.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, April 05, 2009 3:44 PM

**To:** Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Joe Paskvan; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Joe Thomas; Sen. Fred Dyson


**Cc:** Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Natalie Hale

**Subject:** The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program

**Importance:** High

Dear Senators Davis, Paskvan, Ellis, Thomas and Dyson,

Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. Competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska. The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. This proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. Loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. This proposal is more cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods.



My daughter, Natalie Hale, will be entering her first year of medical school in August at the University of Washington WWAMI program in Anchorage. With more than \$50,000 in student loan debt from her undergraduate studies at Yale already, the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program will offer an incentive and encouragement for her to be able to pursue her first love, public health policy and primary care, here in Alaska. Thank you all for your consideration of this important policy under SB 139 to help alleviate health care shortages that Alaska is experiencing and to help retain providers who begin their studies here.


Best Regards,

Barbara Hale

P.O. Box 240211

Douglas, AK 99824-0211

907-586-6590



## Christina Apathy

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**From:** Julie Lynch McDonald [julie.cpfi@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 03, 2010 8:47 AM  
**To:** Sen. Donny Olson  
**Cc:** Denise Liccioli  
**Subject:** SB 139 Support by Pharmacist Interested in Working in Alaska  
**Attachments:** SB139\_Julie\_McDonald\_3-2-10.pdf

Dear Senator Olson,

I am a pharmacist in south Florida who previously interned in Alaska. I would like to share my story and subsequent support for SB 139 *Incentives for Certain Medical Providers* due to my desire to return and work in Alaska. Please include my attached letter as written testimony for the SB 139 hearing.

After putting myself through college to earn a bachelors degree in environmental science, I decided to move back into my parent's home in order to save for a place of my own and to begin aggressively repaying my nearly twenty thousand in student loans. After a year of working as a field biologist and living on a restricted budget, I was very excited to purchase a garden apartment. However, during this year had been very involved with a children's hospital and nursing home. This volunteer work inspired me to return to college in order to pursue a career that offered the daily opportunity to help alleviate suffering and improve the health of those in my community. I decided the best career would be the profession of pharmacy. As a result, I spent the following year continuing my same employment as a field biologist, completing prerequisite courses in the evening, volunteering on the weekends, living with my parents, and renting my apartment. I was accepted into two private colleges of pharmacy and one out of state college. I knew any choice would result in massive student loans accrued during the four years required for a Doctor of Pharmacy degree (tuition alone exceeded eighty thousand). Therefore, I choose a local college of pharmacy that allowed me to continue living with my parents throughout pharmacy school and rented my apartment that I sold a few years later without having the pleasure of ever living in it.

The summer after my first year in pharmacy school, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to spend a month working at the Prescription Center Pharmacy in Fairbanks and volunteering with the Fairbanks Native Bible Church. I anticipated enjoying the beauty of the Alaskan outdoors, but did not expect to fall in love with the people and culture of Alaska. One small example is the quick bond I developed with those who simply rode the same bus route. One day a co-worker generously offered to pick me up for work. I can still recall on the following morning how those on the bus shared they had been truly concerned since I had not been on the bus the previous day. My time in Alaska made a marked impression. Therefore, I was saddened to leave when the month was over and have hoped to return to Alaska ever since.

After graduation from pharmacy school, I felt a great responsibility to begin immediately paying down my student loans. As a result, I did not choose to defer my loans in order to complete a residency and subsequently enter into a more sought-after field of pharmacy. Rather, I entered the very demanding field of retail pharmacy. I have spent nearly two years working fulltime at an independent retail pharmacy and as a relief pharmacist at another independent pharmacy. I have come to value and respect the vital role a local retail pharmacist has in counseling and advising patients, collaborating with practitioners on patients' medication therapy, seeking innovative ways to meet individual patient's needs (i.e. compounding medications), and often serving as a listening friend. It is a physically demanding and emotionally draining, but richly rewarding by the relationships built with your patients.

Currently my husband, who has a bachelors in business, and I are considering moving to Craig. We would be working at an independent retail pharmacy and are enthused to become a part of the Prince of Wales

community. Additionally, I serve on the board of directors for a pharmacy organization where I oversee seventy-six student chapters nationwide and internationally. Part of my work in Craig would be encouraging pharmacy students from numerous states to come to Alaska for a summer position or complete a rotation during their final year of pharmacy school. My husband and I are confident the culture and spirit of Alaska would be of great benefit for us and we would continually seek to benefit the community through our combined diverse background in medicine, environmental science, business, accounting, and construction. However, my monthly student loan payment is significantly greater than our mortgage payment. My husband and I would like to relocate to Craig, but my more than two hundred thousand in student loans causes us to be very cautious with our choices.

From my perspective, SB139 would be a powerful incentive to draw pharmacists to the great state of Alaska. I have witnessed much legislation that is well intentioned, but often a significant portion ends up benefiting or rewarding those who have not necessarily made the hard choices. In contrast, I personally found SB139 to be distinctive and very encouraging. The reason for this is twofold. First, SB139 will attract medical professionals to Alaska and rural areas in particular, thus benefitting those who live in those areas and are often underserved. Second, SB139 will actually assist those who have made the continuous rigorous sacrifices of time, energy, and finances to enter the medical profession in an effort to give of themselves in the service of others.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Julie McDonald  
[Julie.CPFI@gmail.com](mailto:Julie.CPFI@gmail.com)  
561.222.3330

# Alaska Primary Care Association

*"...uncompromising in the pursuit of access to primary care for all Alaskans."*



The Honorable Senator Olson  
Alaska State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: Support for Incentives for Certain Medical Providers – SB 139

March 18, 2008

Dear Senator Olson,

The Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) represents 26 health care organizations and 141 Community Health Centers (CHCs), as well as other safety net providers throughout Alaska. The APCA knows firsthand that workforce shortages can affect access to health care services in Alaska's Community Health Centers. In 2007, our sites provided primary health care services to over 80,000 patients despite suffering a severe 35% shortage of primary care physicians and a 22% shortage of midlevel providers at Community Health Centers.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Alaska's CHCs have current vacancies for an estimated 22 physicians, 20 physician assistants, 26 nurse practitioners, 6 dentists, and 10 licensed certified social workers – to name a few.

Alaska is suffering from labor shortages in most professional health care occupations<sup>2</sup>, while most of the State of Alaska has been designated either as a Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area<sup>3</sup>. All but six states have addressed similar professional health provider shortages by implementing support-for-service programs which have helped to attract and retain health care providers<sup>4</sup>.

The Alaska Primary Care Association supports SB 139 and the creation of a state-sponsored "Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program" to help fill vacancies and help health care facilities recruit and retain health care professionals.

We appreciate your hard work and service to Alaskans and support your efforts to expand access to health care for all Alaskans.

Respectfully,

Regan Mattingly  
State Affairs Coordinator

Shelley S. Hughes  
Government Affairs Director

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Primary Health Care. "Alaska Section 330 Grantees Uniform Data System (Provider Utilization)."

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Health Workforce Vacancy Study Research Summary. University of Alaska. August 2007.  
[http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index\\_downloads/workforce-summary\\_final.pdf](http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index_downloads/workforce-summary_final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administration. Health Professional Shortage

<sup>4</sup> Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program Concept Proposal. Pat Carr, Chief Health Planning & Systems Development, Alaska

# Alaska Primary Care Association

*"...uncompromising in the pursuit of access to primary care for all Alaskans."*



## Alaska Primary Care Association Board of Directors

### RESOLUTION 2009-02

#### Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program for Alaska

**WHEREAS** the Alaska Primary Care Association strives toward the goal of a healthy population, it recognizes that a robust health care workforce is necessary to provide adequate health care access for all Alaskans and is a key ingredient in improving the public health of all Alaskans; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska is competing with other states and nations for the finite pool of available health care professionals; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska is suffering from labor shortages in most professional health care occupations<sup>1</sup>, and these shortages are hitting primary care "safety net" agencies particularly hard; and

**WHEREAS** most of the State of Alaska has been designated either a Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area;<sup>2</sup> and

**WHEREAS** a common state-level response to these pressures is the use of financial inducements, collectively known as support-for-service programs (SFSPs), and good outcomes have been achieved with these;<sup>3</sup> and

**WHEREAS** national studies have determined loan repayment and incentive programs to be two of the most effective of the several SFSP strategies in terms of both recruitment and retention;<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS** a key problem is that Alaska does not have a robust SFSP while most other states do, many have several, and further, some of those are growing;<sup>5</sup> and

**WHEREAS** most all other states have state-sponsored SFSPs that influence health professionals' geographic and specialty distributions;<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS** it is well-established that many health care professionals carry a heavy debt-burden as they come out of training and are attracted to serving in those locations where a share of that burden can be taken away; and

# Alaska Primary Care Association

"...uncompromising in the pursuit of access to primary care for all Alaskans."



DONE AND DATED THE 21<sup>st</sup> DAY OF January IN THE YEAR 2009

SIGNED BY

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sonia Handforth-Kome".

Sonia Handforth-Kome, APCA Board President

<sup>1</sup> Alaska Health Workforce Vacancy Study Research Summary. University of Alaska. August 2007. [http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index\\_downloads/workforce-summary\\_final.pdf](http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index_downloads/workforce-summary_final.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administration. Health Professional Shortage Area. <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program Concept Proposal. Pat Carr, Chief Health Planning & Systems Development, Alaska DHSS. September 11, 2007. <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/primarycare/assets/loan-proposal.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Health Planning & Systems Development, Alaska Department of Health & Social Services. *Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program Concept Proposal*, September 11, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.





# Alaska State Medical Association

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • (907) 562-0304 • (907) 561-2063 (fax)

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March 17, 2009

Honorable Donald Olson  
Alaska State Senate  
Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, Alaska

RE: SB 139 – Recruitment Increments for Certain Health Care Professionals

Dear Senator Olson:

As you know, Dr. Olson, the Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA) represents physicians statewide and is primarily concerned with the health of all Alaskans.



On behalf of all ASMA members, I thank-you for introducing SB 139. ASMA participated as one of the stake holders who came together to develop the concept for the loan repayment and direct incentive program embodied in SB 139. ASMA strongly supports SB 139 as an effective recruitment tool for physicians as well as the other health care professionals covered by the program.


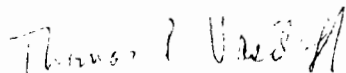
Alaska competes with all other states in the recruitment of an ever shrinking pool of physicians practicing general internal medicine or family medicine. Currently only 2% of medical school graduates are choosing general internal medicine or family medicine residencies. 44 of those states already have a loan repayment or direct incentive program.

SB 139 will help to provide an important part in solving Alaska's chronic and acute (in certain practice specialties) physician workforce shortages. All of the health care system reforms aimed at providing some form of universal insurance coverage provides an empty promise so long as sufficient numbers of appropriately trained physicians (and other health care professionals) do not exist.

ASMA supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation.

Again, ASMA, thanks you in your leadership and efforts to introduce and secure passage of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program.

Sincerely,



By: Thomas Vasileff, MD, President  
For: The Alaska State Medical Association

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March, 19, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:


Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, I strongly support SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

In my roll as clinical site director for the U.W. DENTEX Training Center, I have had the opportunity to hear about the difficulties health care facilities in Alaska have in recruiting and retaining providers.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

There is already a crisis of dental care access in rural Alaska. We have large numbers of our Alaska Native population who cannot access even the basic services needed, such as a yearly exam or treatment for urgent dental needs. The caries rate is 2 1/2 times the national rate in our rural communities. Headstart programs struggle to find local providers to perform the mandatory evaluations for their students, many programs resort to bringing in outside providers at great expense. Teeth are left untreated until it is too late to restore them, because there are not appointments available for routine care. Our communities should not have to suffer with the pain and cost of untreated disease.



The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

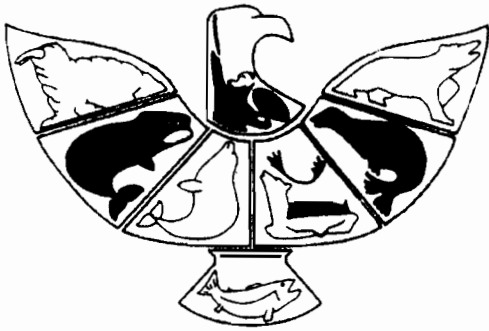


I support SB 139 and urge passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Mary E. Williard, DDS  
Clinical Site Director  
ANTHC Division of Community Health Services  
U.W. DENTEX Training Center  
4200 Lake Otis Parkway, Suite 204  
Anchorage, AK 99508





# Alaska Native Health Board

1840 Bragaw Street, Suite 220  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Phone: (907) 562-6006  
Fax: (907) 563-2001

January 25, 2010

Senator Donny Olson  
State Capital Building, Room 514  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Olson,

**We write to express the Alaska Native Health Board's support for SB 139**, establishing a health professions loan repayment and employment incentive program. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored health professions support-for-service program.

Overall, Alaska health workforce vacancy rates are now over 10% and growing, particularly for hard-to-fill positions in rural locations where most providers are "safety net" providers who deliver care to primarily to Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries and the uninsured.

Among tribal providers, who are the only provider of health services in many areas of the state, health professional vacancy rates exceed the statewide rates across the board by 150-200%.

The challenges are daunting: The average time it takes for a tribal provider to fill a physician vacancy is over a year, while the average time to fill a mid-level vacancy is six months. **As of November 2009, within the Alaska tribal health system alone, there were over 80 physician vacancies.** These severe workforce shortages compound the challenge of providing good access to quality healthcare for all Alaskans, particularly in the rural areas.

SB 139, The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program, is an important part of the solution to Alaska's health workforce shortage. It was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska.

More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively alleviate shortage problems in other states, and we are certain that SB 139 will work because it has been thoroughly reviewed and customized for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Evangelyn "Angel" Dotomain  
President/CEO



P.O. Box 240247 " Anchorage, AK 99524 " www.asdha.com

Re: Support for SB 139--Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 23, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

The Alaska State Dental Hygienists' Association (ASDHA) supports Senate Bill 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program. This legislation addresses the shortage of certain health care professionals in the state by increasing the number and improving the distribution of health care professionals that provide direct patient care.

Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. This legislation would allow Alaska to compete with other states in the recruitment of numerous providers and help fill the alarming number of vacancies that exist.

Senate Bill 139 provides incentives for dental professionals, including dentists and dental hygienists. While current practice act limitations exist for direct patient care by dental hygienists, we are hopeful SB 139 will attract more dentists and dental hygienists to our state and to rural communities. With up to eighteen dental hygiene students graduating from Alaska universities yearly, we believe SB 139 would provide an additional incentive for them to stay.

The ASDHA supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Gail Walden, RDH  
Alaska State Dental Hygienists' Association





# Alaska Osteopathic Medical Association

142 East Ontario Street | Chicago, IL 60611  
Phone 800.821.1773, ext. 8128 | Fax 312.202.8428 | Email: [AKOMA@osteopathic.org](mailto:AKOMA@osteopathic.org)

December 3, 2008

Dear Governor and Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the Alaska Osteopathic Medical Association (AKOMA) strongly supports the concept of a state-sponsored loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

The mission of the AKOMA is to promote public health through providing quality, relevant and professional CME that enhances the body of knowledge and skills of those in attendance. Emphasis will be placed upon Osteopathic Practice and Principles to enable attending physicians to better serve the needs of their patients.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

The Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program proposal brings to the table an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. The proposed program designed for Alaska will provide much needed relief for our state.

AKOMA recommends the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program and requests that you actively take steps to create and fund the program.

Respectfully,

Todd Capistrant, DO  
President



# Alaska Pharmacists Association

RE: Support for SB 139  
Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program

March 24, 2009

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, putting Alaskans in jeopardy, the Alaska Pharmacists Association strongly supports the concept of a state-sponsored loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a limited and shrinking national pool.

*"The Mission of the Alaska Pharmacists Association is to preserve, promote and lead the profession of pharmacy in Alaska."*

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, LCSWs (licensed, clinical social workers), and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

**Based on statistics provided by Laura Miller, PhD, Senior Economist with the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, the national average of community pharmacists per 10,000 people is 5.36. For Alaska, the figure is 3.35. To get to the national average, Alaska would need an additional 137 pharmacists. The average number of people per community retail pharmacy is about 5,300 nationally, and in Alaska it is 8,900. Even if you add in the 15 Indian Health Service (IHS) pharmacies, Alaska's pharmacies average about 7,500 people, much higher than the national average.**

The Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program proposal brings to the table an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. The proposed program designed for Alaska will provide much needed relief for our state.

Respectfully,

Nancy O. Davis  
Executive Director

E-mail: [akphrmev@alaska.net](mailto:akphrmev@alaska.net)

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203 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 100 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • (907) 563-8880 • (907) 563-7880

# **Alaska Pharmacists Association**

**Alaska Pharmacists Association  
Board of Directors**

## **RESOLUTION 2009-01**

### **Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program for Alaska**

**WHEREAS** Alaska is competing with other states and nations for the finite pool of available healthcare professionals; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska is suffering labor shortages in most professional healthcare occupations, and that these shortages are hitting primary care "safety net" agencies particularly hard; and

**WHEREAS** the harsh conditions of Alaska and the fiscal limitations of safety net clinics makes it difficult for Alaska to compete in the hiring market; and

**WHEREAS** the entire State of Alaska has been designated either a Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS** a common state-level response to these pressures is the use of financial inducements, collectively known as support-for-service programs (SFSP's), and that good outcomes have been achieved with these; and

**WHEREAS** national studies have determined loan repayment programs to be one of the most effective of the several SFSP strategies in terms of both recruitment and retention; and

**WHEREAS** a key problem is that Alaska does not have a robust support-for-service program while most other states do, many have several, and further, some of those are growing; and

**WHEREAS** most all other states have state-sponsored SFSP programs that influence health professionals' geographic and specialty distributions; and

**WHEREAS** it is well-established that many healthcare professionals carry a heavy debt-burden as they come out of training and are attracted to serving in those locations where a share of that burden can be taken away; and

**WHEREAS** considerable precedent exists for state-level offices to sponsor and manage financial support and inducement programs to thus encourage the within-state service of healthcare personnel; and

**E-mail: [akphrmcv@alaska.net](mailto:akphrmcv@alaska.net)**

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**203 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 100 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • (907) 563-8880 • (907) 563-7880**



**WHEREAS** in 2006, the Alaska Physician Supply Task Force recommended a number of specific strategies and action steps to assuring an adequate supply of physicians to meet Alaska's need, including creation of a loan repayment program; and

**WHEREAS** AkPhA serves as a voice on behalf of Pharmacists to preserve, promote and lead the profession of pharmacy in Alaska;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska Pharmacists Association (AkPhA) supports the creation of a state-sponsored "Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Incentive Program" and will advocate for the necessary authorizing and fiduciary legislation.

SUBMITTED BY:

Melanie Gibson, AkPhA President

Nancy Davis, Executive Director

DONE AND DATED THE 25<sup>th</sup> DAY OF AUGUST IN THE YEAR 2008

SIGNED BY

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Melanie Gibson, AkPhA Board President

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska Center for Rural Health. *2007 Alaska Health Workforce Vacancy Study*. July 2007, [http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index\\_downloads/workforce\\_7-24-07\\_body\\_final.pdf](http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index_downloads/workforce_7-24-07_body_final.pdf).

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E-mail: [akphrmcv@alaska.net](mailto:akphrmcv@alaska.net)

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## ALASKA PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

A CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION  
PO BOX 140351 ANCHORAGE, AK 99514-0351  
PHONE (907) 566-3749

**Re: Support for Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program**

November, 26, 2008

Dear Governor and Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the Alaska Physical Therapy Association strongly supports the concept of a state-sponsored loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

The Alaska Physical Therapy Associations mission is that it's a member driven organization (290 members) is to represent and advocate for the profession of physical therapy and promote excellent, ethical, and autonomous practice, which serves the culturally diverse population of Alaska.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

At any given time you can contact most remote hospitals and clinics and find at least 1-2 vacancies, or openings for physical therapists. Even urban clinics are constantly recruiting for providers due to turnover, retirement, or keeping up with population growth in their respective communities. There are companies that provide temporary travelling Physical Therapists for 13-16 week assignments which can be extremely expensive for coverage, and again the turn over rate creates changes for patients and can also cause breaks in care or shortage of man power coverage.

The Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program proposal brings to the table an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. The proposed program designed for Alaska will provide much needed relief for our state.

The Alaska Physical Therapy Association highly recommends and advocates for the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program and requests that you actively take steps to create and fund the program for health related assistance to our states residents.

Respectfully,

*Sundi M Hondl, PT, OCS*

Sundi M Hondl, PT, OCS  
Alaska Physical Therapy Association President



March 20, 2009

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the Alaska Behavioral Health Association strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

One of our primary goals deals with Workforce Development and this bill fits well within the goal to assure that a well trained adequate workforce is available to behavioral health providers.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants, behavioral health clinicians, addiction professionals, and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

The Alaska Behavioral Health Association supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

In Health,

Steve Horn  
Executive Director

## 2009 abha Membership

Organization	Community
Akeela	Anchorage
Alaska Children's Services	Anchorage
Alaska Family Services	Palmer
Alaska Island Community Services	Wrangell
Alaska Youth & Family Network	Anchorage
Anchorage Community Mental Health Services (Southcentral Counseling)	Anchorage
Arc of Anchorage	Anchorage
Assets, Inc.	Anchorage
Mat-Su Health Services	Wasilla
Bristol Bay Counseling Center (BBAHC)	Dillingham
Boys and Girls Home of Alaska	Fairbanks
Catholic Community Service	Juneau
The Center	Homer
Community Connections, Inc.	Ketchikan
Denali Family Services	Anchorage
Edgar Nolmer Health Center	Galena
Fairbanks Community Behavioral Health Center, Inc.	Fairbanks
Fairbanks Native Association	Fairbanks
Family Centered Services of Alaska	Fairbanks

Organization	Community
Frontier Community Services	Soldotna
Gateway Center for Human Services	Ketchikan
Impact Counseling	Haines
Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, Inc.	Juneau
Juneau Youth Services	Juneau
Kenai Peninsula Care Center	Kenai
Lynn Canal Counseling	Haines
Manilaq Association	Kotzebue
North Star Behavioral Health System	Anchorage
Peninsula Community Health Services	Soldotna
Petersburg Mental Health Services, Inc.	Petersburg
Railbelt MH and Addictions	Nenana
SEARHC - Behavioral Health Service Division	Sitka
SeaView Community Services	Seward
Sitka Counseling and Prevention Services	Sitka
Southcentral Foundation Behavioral Health Services	Anchorage
Volunteers of America of AK	Anchorage
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation	Bethel

**Advisory Board on Alcoholism  
and Drug Abuse**



**Alaska Mental Health Board**

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD**  
**ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE**  
431 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 200  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
(907) 465-8920

March 25, 2009

Senator Donald Olson  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB139 – Loan Repayment and Employment Incentive Program

Dear Senator Olson,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board appreciate your support for Alaska's health care workforce. The Boards support the intent of SB 139, and look forward to continued dialogue about how best to support our health care professionals and encourage more Alaskans to enter the field.

As you know, the health care industry has been one of our fastest growing employment sectors. Despite that, health care providers — including mental health and substance abuse providers — report an inability to maintain a workforce that meets the demand for services. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development reported that growth in health care jobs has slowed since 2006 (reporting growth of only 1% in Anchorage in 2008) and forecasts only modest growth in 2009. In this environment, we need measures to sustain the workforce we have and to encourage more Alaskans to enter the health care fields.

Loan repayment programs prove to be very effective ways to encourage health care professionals to serve rural and underserved populations, and often result in longer terms of service in these communities. Offering this much needed support to our current health care workforce will help promote stability for our providers and encourage more people to pursue health care careers.

We recognize the immense amount of effort that has gone into SB 139, and applaud the fact that it involved a cooperative effort by a coalition of stakeholders. We also recognize the concerns about the potential cost of the program and the infrastructure necessary to implement the program. We are hopeful that as SB 139 progresses through committee, there will be greater understanding about these issues.

Thank you for your work this session, and always, on behalf of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Walters, Chair  
ABADA

Debi Keith, Chair  
AMHB

# The TRUST

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

November 10, 2008

Re: Support for Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program

Dear Governor and Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (The Trust) strongly supports the concept of a state-sponsored health professional loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a limited and shrinking national pool.

The Trust has invested in workforce development around providers serving our beneficiaries for many years, often partnering with both state and non-state entities. The Trust will be investing over \$3,300,000 in FY 10 in our Workforce Development Focus Area and partners such as the University of Alaska will invest much more in this important area. Currently The Trust's Workforce Development Focus Area is investing \$200,000 in a loan repayment strategy for behavioral health professionals in underserved areas and another \$200,000 in cash incentives because research indicated this is an effective strategy for recruitment and retention. The Trust believes that in order to continue to address health professional recruitment and retention we will have to be innovative and aggressive, and with many other states and the federal government using loan repayment as a key strategy, we must also have a program that is available to our health professional organizations serving Alaska's residents.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development's labor data tell us that health and social services jobs are and will be some of the top growth job opportunities in Alaska for the next 10 years. Strategies such as loan repayment are critical to meeting the demand in this high job growth area and Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists, psychiatrists, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, LCSWs (licensed, certified social workers), and physical therapists are all in short demand in Alaska.

The Trust invests in a semi-annual vacancy rate study conducted by the Alaska Center for Rural Health which shows that behavioral health vacancy rates are some of the highest of all health professionals. Psychiatrists in all of our public mental health systems have become a critical problem with a mean vacancy length of 34.5 months.



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# The TRUST

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

The Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program proposal brings to the table an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. The proposed program designed for Alaska will provide much needed relief for our state.

The Trust recommends the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program and requests that you actively take steps to create and fund the program.

Respectfully,



Delisa Culpepper  
Chief Operating Officer





**ALPHA**

# **ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

**Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978**

March 20, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

ALPHA supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

*Jayne Andreen*

President  
ALPHA Board of Directors

P.O. Box 9-1825 Anchorage, AK 99509 907/332-1030 e-mail: [publichealth@alaska.net](mailto:publichealth@alaska.net)  
[www.alaskapublichealth.org](http://www.alaskapublichealth.org)



**ИЛИУЛИУК**

**Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc.**

P.O. Box 144  
Unalaska, Alaska 99685

Phone: (907) 581-1202  
Fax: (907) 581-2331

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 17, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc. (IFHS) strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

Our organization, IFHS, is the only comprehensive service provider for medical, dental and behavioral health services within 800 air miles of Unalaska. We are remote, and we frequently find that we are unable to compete with "lower 48" medical practices for providers, since we also cannot compete effectively with salaries. State loan repayment options for our providers would help us offer a competitive package.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

It takes IFHS over a year to recruit a single doctor; six months to recruit a behavioral health specialist, and the last time we recruited a dentist, it took us four years to do so. We cannot recruit RNs – we have had two open RN positions for over two years. A state-sponsored support-for-service program would help make our recruitment package more appealing and more competitive.

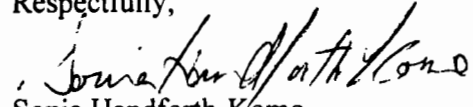
The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB

*"Serving Unalaska, the Aleutian Islands and the Bering Sea"*

139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

IFHS supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonia Handforth-Kome". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Sonia Handforth-Kome  
Executive Director



# Maniilaq Association

## Maniilaq Health Center

### Administration

Phyllis Boskofsky RN  
Hospital Administrator  
P.O. Box 43, 436 5<sup>th</sup> & Stevens Way  
Kotzebue, AK 99752  
Phone (907) 442-7319  
FAX (907) 442-7250

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 20, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, especially in remote regions such as ours, the Maniilaq Health Center (MHC) strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

In order for the Maniilaq Health Center to meet its Mission Statement:

***"The Maniilaq Health Center provides comprehensive health care to all the people in our service area while promoting prevention, fitness, wellness, holistic strategies, and incorporating local traditional core values and beliefs"***, its Vision Statement: ***"All customers of Maniilaq health services, including its employees, are empowered, and involved partners in its high quality services and healing atmosphere"***, and its Purpose statement: ***"We are a family of care, helping every person live a healthier life"***, we must have a trained healthcare workforce.

With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program and is losing ground. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult, and becomes even more difficult as you leave urban area facilities for remote facilities such as MHC. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

Maniilaq Health Centers Professional Vacancy Rates

MD/DO Vacancies	3 vacancies out of 9 positions = 30% vacancy rate
Dentist Vacancies	3 vacancies out of 5 positions= 60% vacancy rate
Pharmacist Vacancies	3 vacancies out of 4 positions= 75% vacancy rate
Registered Nurse Vacancies	12 vacancies out of 24 positions = 50% vacancy rate
Physical Therapist	1 vacancy for > 2 years= 100% vacancy rate

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

The Maniilaq Health Center supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Phyllis A. Boskofsky  
Hospital Administrator

### Member Villages

Ivissaappaat, Nunatchiaq, Ipnatchiaq, Katyaak, Kivalinia, Laugviik, Qikiqtagruk, Naitaaq, Nuurvik, Tikigaq, Akuligaq, Isinnaq, Ambler, Buckland, Deering, Kiana, Kivalina, Kobuk, Kotzebue, Noatak, Noorvik, Point Hope, Selawik, Shungnak

## **Mat-Su Health Foundation Resolution to Support Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program for Alaska**

**WHEREAS** the Mat-Su Health Foundation's mission is to enhance the health of Alaskans living in Mat-Su, where health is in part determined by access to primary, behavioral, and dental care and preventive services;

**WHEREAS** an adequate healthcare workforce is necessary to provide this access, and according to the *2005-2015 Mat-Su Borough Health Plan*, Mat-Su has an "inadequate number of providers to meet the demands of a growing population" in both the core area and the outlying rural areas of the borough;<sup>i</sup>

**WHEREAS** Mat-Su is designated a Medically-Underserved Area/Population by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration and has sub-regions designated Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Area, Mental Health Professional Shortage Area, and Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Area;<sup>ii</sup>

**WHEREAS** the Mat-Su Borough is the fastest growing area of Alaska, growing from 5,188 in 1960 to 82,515 in 2008 due to both positive birth and in-migration rates; and the AK Department of Labor projects that all Mat-Su age groups will continue to grow through 2020;<sup>iii</sup>

**WHEREAS** the Mat-Su Borough is experiencing one of the highest rates of population growth in the state among senior citizens, who use the healthcare system disproportionately more than any other age group; and the Alaska Commission on Aging reports Mat-Su's senior growth rate at 11.6%, which includes a net gain from a senior in-migration rate that is almost double its senior out-migration rate;<sup>iv</sup>

**WHEREAS** the Alaska Health Care Commission has designated Medicare-access as one of its six focus areas; and the University of Alaska Anchorage Institute of Social and Economic Research has reported that access to primary care for Medicare beneficiaries is problematic in Mat-Su, where data reveals that only 57.7% of Mat-Su primary care physicians will see new Medicare patients;<sup>v</sup>

**WHEREAS** the Mat-Su Health Foundation believes that an investment in the education of Mat-Su residents will help to build the healthcare workforce of the future and an engaged citizenship with a higher capacity to address the health-related challenges impacting Mat-Su and Alaska; and to this end has offered scholarships to help defray the cost of higher education and encourage Mat-Su residents to complete a degree or certificate program that emphasizes health and/or wellness; but also recognizes that more needs to be done to bolster the healthcare workforce in Mat-Su and Alaska;

**WHEREAS** Mat-Su Regional Medical Center has spent \$6,238,438 on contract labor over the last five years on temporary health professionals from outside the state to fill current needs;

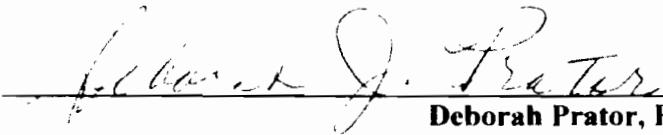
**WHEREAS** Alaska is competing with other states for the finite pool of available health care professionals; and over 40 states currently offer Support-for-Service Programs (SFSPs) that have influenced health professionals' geographic and specialty distributions;

**WHEREAS** national studies have determined loan repayment and incentive programs to be two of the most effective strategies in terms of both recruitment and retention;<sup>vi</sup>

WHEREAS without this incentive, it will be challenging for Alaska to compete for medical and health professionals, especially to work in rural areas:

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Mat-Su Health Foundation promotes and advocates for the establishment of the Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Employment Incentive Program to bring more qualified medical professionals to Alaska and will advocate for the necessary authorizing and fiduciary legislation.**

*Approved by the Mat-Su Health Foundation Board of Directors on January 18, 2010.*

  
**Deborah Prator, President**

<sup>1</sup> 2005-2015 Mat-Su Borough Health Plan. Information Insights. January 2006.

[http://www.mat.gov.us/planning/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=690-yours-blue-ribbon-ask-for-conforming-a-health-and-social-service-board&catid=29-health-and-human-services-board&Itemid=204](http://www.mat.gov.us/planning/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=690-yours-blue-ribbon-ask-for-conforming-a-health-and-social-service-board&catid=29-health-and-human-services-board&Itemid=204)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administration, Health Professional Shortage Area. <http://bit.warehouse.hrsa.gov/GeoAdvisor/show/geodesignate/advvisor.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Alaska Department of Labor, Division of Research & Analysis.

<http://dor.labor.alaska.gov/eg/Database.asp?local=AL&QSPY=1&pop=Area%20040001%20&population=2000&chart=1>

<sup>4</sup> Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2008-FY2011. Alaska Commission on Aging. June 2007.

<http://www.hsa.state.ak.us/oc/Events/staff/plan110807/plan110807.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> How Hard Is It for Alaska's Medicare Patients to Find Family Doctors? University of Alaska Anchorage Institute of Social and Economic Research. UA Research Summary No. 14. March 2009.

[http://www.hsa.state.ak.us/healthcommission/201209user\\_dontors.pdf](http://www.hsa.state.ak.us/healthcommission/201209user_dontors.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program Concept Proposal. Pat Carr, Chief Health Planning & Systems Development, Alaska DHSS. September 11, 2007. <http://www.hsa.state.ak.us/oc/Events/staff/plan110807/plan110807.pdf>

## Christina Apathy

---

**From:** RIPLEY, ELIZABETH [E.Ripley@MSrnc.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 25, 2010 11:40 AM  
**To:** Sen. Donny Olson  
**Subject:** Mat-Su Health Foundation Resolution to Support Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program for Alaska  
**Attachments:** MSHF Resolution in Support of Loan Repayment & Incentive Program 10.pdf

Sen. Olson, In reference to your sponsorship of SB 139, please consider the attached **Mat-Su Health Foundation Resolution to Support Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program for Alaska** in support of your efforts. Many thanks!

Elizabeth Ripley

**Elizabeth Ripley | Executive Director | Mat-Su Health Foundation | 950 E. Bogard Road | Wasilla, AK 99654 | Direct: 907-352-2896 | Main Office: 907-352-2863 | Fax: 907-352-2865 | [e.ripley@msrnc.com](mailto:e.ripley@msrnc.com) | <http://www.matsuhealthfoundation.org>**

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## Christina Apathy

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**From:** Nancy St. John-Smith [nsjsmith@pchsak.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 09, 2010 5:01 PM  
**To:** Sen. Donny Olson  
**Subject:** Capitol Hill Visit

Dear Senator Olson and staff,

Thank you for your hospitality during our capitol hill visit on February 2 and 3, 2010. It was my first visit to Juneau and you all made us feel right at home. We know that we can count you as a friend to community health centers across the state and we appreciate the time and attention you were able to give to our cause.

An amazing fact that you can share with others who need to know about the importance of community health centers in our great state is that Peninsula Community Health Services provided either medical, dental, or behavioral health care to about 25% of the central peninsula's population last year. The demands on community health centers continue to grow as there are more and more uninsured and underinsured consumers in our state. As always, we treat all comers and do not turn consumers away based on their ability to pay. Due to the high quality of care received at our facilities, people from all walks of life access their health care through us. Unfortunately, we are not able to keep up with the rising costs of providing care and recruiting providers.

As members of the Alaska Primary Care Association, we are in support of SB 139, which provides loan repayment and incentives for health care providers to work and live in the state of Alaska. We have asked for \$ 400,282.00 in funding for senior access. Alaska's community health centers are asking for \$2 million for operating funds to cover the rising costs of doing business, such as insurance premiums. We support increasing the Denali Kid Care eligibility limit to 200% of the federal poverty level.

We look to you and our other legislators to provide the leadership and support to accessing funding from the state of Alaska for community health centers in Alaska. We are one of only 5 states which do not routinely fund their community health centers.

Sincerely,  
Nancy

*Nancy St. John-Smith*  
**Manager of Dental Support Services**  
**Aspen Dental Center, a clinic of**  
**Peninsula Community Health Services**  
**395 Main Street Loop**  
**Kenai, Alaska 99611**  
**907.283.7759**





# SEARHC

SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium

3245 Hospital Drive, Juneau, AK 99801  
907 463-4000 • www.searhc.org

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 20, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the SEARHC Ethel Lund Medical Center strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

The SEARHC Ethel Lund Medical Center provides comprehensive outpatient care to Alaska Native/Native American patients in the Juneau area (over 7,000 active patients). We have found recruitment of health providers to be extremely challenging, including physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, physical therapists, optometrists, and other health care professionals. Almost all potential applicants request loan repayment. Juneau does not qualify for any loan-repayment program, and this puts us at a significant disadvantage in recruiting health care providers.

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage that we here at SEARHC Juneau, and that the rest of Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

The SEARHC Ethel Lund Medical Center supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your active steps to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,



Janice Sheufelt, MD  
Medical Director  
SEARHC Ethel Lund Medical Center  
Juneau, Alaska



P.O. Box 787 (Mile 4.4 Talkeetna Spur Road) Talkeetna, AK 99676 (Ph) (907) 733-2273 (Fax) (907) 733-1735 [schc@sunshineclinic.org](mailto:schc@sunshineclinic.org)

RE: Support for SB 139 Incentives Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program

March 25, 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, Sunshine Community Health Center (SCHC) strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

SCHC's mission is to assist people in the upper Susitna Valley to meet their health care responsibilities by providing affordable, accessible, quality health care, including preventive aspects, to all people regardless of their ability to pay for services. We are a safety-net provider, with our primary focus on patients who are uninsured and unable to pay for basic medical care. We operate two clinics, one in Talkeetna that is open 6 days a week and one in Willow that is open 5 days a week.

The biggest obstacle to accomplishing our mission is our inability to fully staff the organization with the number of medical, dental, and mental health providers we need. As of this writing, SCHC has been recruiting unsuccessfully for a medical provider to staff our Willow clinic for 3 years. We have been recruiting for a full-time mental health professional for 2 years, a nurse for 1 year, and a dentist for 6 months. Two years ago, unsuccessful recruiting and unexpected vacancies shrank our staff of five medical providers (not including dental and mental health) to just two medical providers covering both clinics, and since then we have never been fully staffed.

Our efforts at recruitment during this period have attracted a high level of interest from providers interested in relocating to our community because of the attractive quality of life we offer. Unfortunately, once excitement gives way to realism, the following factors dissuade them from actually accepting a position and moving here:

- the high cost of student loans; medical and dental graduates average over \$100,000 of student debt;
- moving expenses;
- high cost of living in Alaska;
- the escalating cost of health insurance.

SCHC's experience is not unusual. With alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is poised for a crisis unless there is some new intervention. Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored incentive program such as a loan repayment program. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit; nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. More cost-efficient and results-producing than other methods, loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

Sunshine Community Health Center supports SB 139 and urges passage of this important legislation. Your support and action on this matter are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Mary Loeb, MD  
Medical Director of Sunshine Community Health Center



March 9, 2010

To Senator Olson

Re: SB 139

The Alaska Nurses Association supports SB 139 Education Reinvestment Act that will provide loan repayment and incentives to health professionals who commit to continued professional practice in Alaska. The elements of SB 139 that provide incentives to health professionals who have completed their education and are ready to provide critical health services are excellent recruitment and retention strategies for those professionals in short supply.

SB 139 provides a fast start to making a difference in our health professional shortages. Incentives and loan repayment are key concerns for recruitment and the mechanism for staging the incentive payments on a quarterly basis increase the likelihood that it will also serve as an excellent retention tool.

Alaska faces an uphill struggle to attract qualified health professionals to work here. A number of other states have enacted incentives and loan repayment programs that stiffen the competition for our state. Although our state has many unparalleled opportunities, the economic burdens for health professionals to move to Alaska, get set up in a practice, and repay enormous loans for education, make it impossible for many to even consider working in our state. SB 139 not only helps level that economic field, but it speaks volumes to Alaska's commitment to solving our health professional shortages

The Alaska Nurses Association with a membership of over 1100 Registered Nurses in Alaska appreciates your sponsoring SB 139 and looks forward to working with you in support of this important legislation. Alaskans deserve our best efforts to protect and promote their health. A qualified workforce of health professionals is essential to that goal.

Sincerely,

Nancy C. Davis, RN, MS  
AaNA President  
907-274-0827 Office

Debbie Thompson, BSN, RN, CNOR  
AaNA Executive/Labor Program Director  
907-274-0827 Office



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March 25, 2009

The Honorable Bettye Davis, Chair  
Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 30  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 139 (Olson)--Support

Dear Chair Davis:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate Health and Social Services Committee to support SB 139, authored by Senator Donald Olson and co-sponsored by Senators Bill Wielechowski, Kevin Meyer and you.

As you know, Alaska has a chronic shortage of health professionals. We compete with the other states who all have their own shortages. SB 139 follows a proven tradition of recruitment incentives by providing loan forgiveness and economic incentives to encourage health professionals to practice in our state. We understand that there is a cost to recruitment and retention. We also understand that there is a greater cost when our citizens are unable to secure the services of health professionals.

AARP requests an "AYE" vote on SB 139.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marie Darlin, Coordinator  
AARP Capital City Task Force  
415 Willoughby Avenue, Apt. 506  
Juneau, AK 99801  
586-3637 (voice)  
463-3580 (fax)

CC: Vice-Chair Joe Paskvan  
Senator Johnny Ellis  
Senator Joe Thomas  
Senator Fred Dyson  
Senator Donald Olson



**COMMONWEALTH  
NORTH**

**Resolution 2009-2  
In support of Incentives for Certain Medical  
Providers as proposed in Senate Bill 139  
April 14, 2009**

This resolution is based on the 2005 Commonwealth North study entitled "Alaska Primary Health Care: Opportunities and Challenges."

**Commonwealth North:**

Encourages and promotes the establishment of incentives to bring more qualified Medical professionals to Alaska.

Requests all state legislators to approve authorizing legislation in Senate Bill 139; and

Forwards this resolution to all members of the Alaska State Legislature, Governor Sarah Palin, and Alaska's congressional delegation.

**Resolved for the following reasons:**

1. There are critical health manpower shortages in both our urban and rural areas
2. The State of Alaska is in competition with over forty states who already offer similar programs
3. Without this incentive, it will be difficult for Alaska to compete for medical and health professionals
4. Multiple millions of dollars are being spent annually in Alaska to have temporary health professionals from Outside fill our current needs
5. Current and potential future shortages can be identified in specific specialties including family practice physicians, internists, nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, nurses and clinical support health manpower areas such as physical therapist, x-ray and laboratory technicians

Approved by the Commonwealth North Board of Directors  
April 14, 2009

David Wight, President

**Nome Eskimo Community**

Box 1090  
Nome, Alaska 99762  
Phone (907) 443-2246  
Fax (907) 443-3539



March 23, 2009

**RE: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Health Care Professions**

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

The Nome Eskimo Community strongly supports SB 139 that would establish a loan repayment and incentive program for health care professions in Alaska. The on-going healthcare workforce shortage in Alaska significantly impacts access to and continuity of health care for our residents and the creation of such a program could be a solution to address a critical shortage in our state.

Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult and the establishment of this program would allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 for the recruitment of much needed medical providers. Alaska is experiencing a crisis: we have more than 90 pharmacist vacancies in Alaska; many communities have inadequate, if any, access to dentists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit, and nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply statewide.

Loan repayment and incentive programs have been proven to effectively alleviate workforce shortage problems in other states and the Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program could be part of the solution to address this issue in Alaska. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention, and with input from stakeholders statewide that includes consideration of factors that are unique to Alaska; SB 139 will establish a program customized for Alaska.

The Nome Eskimo Community fully supports and encourages the passage of SB 139. Your support to assure the establishment of the Alaska Health Care Professions and Loan Repayment & Incentive program is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

**NOME ESKIMO COMMUNITY**

Denise Barengo, Executive Director



## Christina Apathy

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**From:** Pamela J Embler [afpje@uaa.alaska.edu]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 03, 2010 7:23 AM  
**To:** Sen. Donny Olson  
**Subject:** SB139

Senator Olsen -

Thank you for sponsoring such an important piece of legislation which has the potential to positively impact the residents of our great state. I would like to ask that you consider adding nurse educators to the list of qualified applicants. I am a faculty member at the University of Alaska Anchorage, School of Nursing. I recently received my masters in nurse education, that is my specialty area of nursing practice. Nurse educator certification has been recognized by the National League of Nursing as an advance practice specialty. I have been accepted to the University of Tennessee's nurse PhD program, an online/onsight program. The PhD is the expected terminal degree for nurse educators.

Alaska, the University of Alaska needs nurse educators to prepare the nurses of tomorrow, nurses for tomorrow that can meet the needs of the residents of Alaska. Many students are traveling outside to obtain a their nurse education, many who leave may not return. If we want the students to stay in Alaska after obtaining their education we need to be able to educate them here, to that end we need more nurse educators.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully,  
Pam Embler

Pam Embler, MSN, RN  
Assistant Professor  
University of Alaska Anchorage  
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**UAA** UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE  
Dental Clinic

Re: Support for SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

March 15 2009

Dear Senate and House Members of the Alaska State Legislature:  
Senator Bettye Davis, Chair, and Members of the Senate HSS Committee

The University of Alaska Anchorage Dental Hygiene Program has produced successful candidates for over thirty years, our graduates placing second nationally in two of the last three years. Our goal is to prepare professionals who are familiar with the most advanced technology and evidenced-based practice and proficient in providing a wide range of dental services to diverse populations in a caring manner. It is a well known fact that we face an increasing demand for dental care with the burgeoning senior population, in addition to the many citizens who lack access to care. Poor dental health directly compromises systemic health, and contributes to a myriad of complications when not addressed. Our rural population suffers the most. Because the health care workforce shortage in Alaska is reducing health care access for our state's residents, the University of Alaska Anchorage Dental Hygiene Program strongly supports SB 139 to establish a loan repayment and incentive program to allow Alaska to compete with the lower 48 in recruitment of providers from a shrinking national pool.

Alaska is one of only six states without a state-sponsored support-for-service program such as a loan repayment and incentive program. The competition for recruitment of providers is very difficult. Due to alarming and rising vacancy rates, Alaska is posed for a crisis without intervention. Currently only 2% of medical students nationally are choosing the primary care field; more than 90 pharmacist vacancies exist in Alaska; many communities have inadequate access to dentists or hygienists; physician assistants and nurse practitioners are increasingly difficult to recruit. Dental hygienists, psychologists, licensed certified social workers, and physical therapists are all in short supply in Alaska.

The Alaska Health Care Professions Loan Repayment & Incentive Program provides an important part of the solution to the workforce shortage Alaska faces by providing more support to those willing to serve at risk populations. The proposal was developed after careful review of national studies of best practices for workforce recruitment and retention and input from stakeholders statewide, including consideration of factors unique to Alaska. Loan repayment and incentives have been shown to effectively help alleviate shortage problems in other states, proving less costly and more effective than other methods. SB 139 establishes a loan repayment and incentive program customized for Alaska and will provide much needed relief for our state.

The University of Alaska Anchorage Dental Hygiene Program supports SB 139 and strongly recommends passage of this important legislation.

Respectfully,



*Elizabeth Barnett*

Elizabeth Barnett, Clinic Director  
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