

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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REPRESENTATIVE WES KELLER DISTRICT 14

HOUSE BILL 288 SPONSOR STATEMENT

"An Act prohibiting denial or withholding of medical assistance eligibility or coverage for a prisoner."

House Bill 288 addresses a situation within the Department of Health and Social Services that affects the Department of Corrections. Many Alaskans receive medical care through the Medicaid system. It is a program, partially funded by the federal government designed to assist less fortunate people with their health needs.

The intent of HB 288 is to identify why an individual who is incarcerated in a state correctional facility may no longer use Medicaid for health needs. Based on 7 AAC 100.068 inmates are allowed to maintain Medicaid eligibility so they may return to the system after serving their sentence, but it denies the use of Medicaid while in custody. This regulation references several sections of AS 47.05 that does not seem to address the issue either way. As it is the state pays the full amount of an inmate healthcare while in custody.

House Bill 288 will serve to clarify legislative intent after hearing from the department. It will require a billing process to Medicaid to cover a portion of the cost for care of these eligible inmates. While there will more than likely be some costs associated with management of the program, the increased federal receipts should more than off-set any fiscal impact.