

From: kristy@totten.com
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: ktotten@hbsd.net
Subject: Continue WWAMI Medical Education Funding
Date: Sunday, March 29, 2015 2:39:11 PM

Dear Honorable Members of the Finance Committee:

Continued funding for the WWAMI Medical Education program is crucial to the health of our great State of Alaska. I urge you to please consider and support options other than the complete cuts now being put forward by the House Finance Committee. To cut the WWAMI Medical Education program entirely from the State Budget (\$3m,) will severely and negatively impact Alaskan students who wish to study medicine or medically related fields.

You will have a chance to review this decision when HB72 comes out of the Senate Finance Committee. Rather than to completely eliminate the WWAMI program, a better solution would be to reduce the number of students admitted each year from 20-15, hence a 25% cost reduction. The per capita cost for public medical education in Alaska is only \$49,000 per student, compared to the national average cost for state support of \$102,000 per student. Alaska is getting a great deal!

As currently under review, HB0072b will terminate the WWAMI agreement with the State of Washington and therefore not admit any new students into the WWAMI program. The House Proposal will:

1. End Alaska's 40 years relationship with the only Medical School in this five state region, the University of Washington (one of the top 10 in the nation.)
2. Withdraw support from 20 Alaskan Medical Students currently accepted for the 2015-16 Academic year.
3. Abandon the most successful recruiting tool we have for assuring quality Primary Care physicians in Alaska.
4. Within three years, severely diminish the supply of physicians available to meet the needs of Alaska's population.
5. Remove other health career training opportunities because the WWAMI program is also integral to UAA College of Health inter-professional education training programs such as nursing, physician assistant, medical laboratory and other allied health professions' students.

In considering where WWAMI Medical Education can fit into the budget, I ask you to consider amending HB72 to reflect a 10-25% cut in funding through a reduction in the number of students admitted to WWAMI, and not wholesale cancellation of the program. This is a more balanced approach and one that maintains crucial infrastructure while we wait for the price of oil to recover.

Sincerely,

Kristy Kissinger-Totten

cc: Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)
cc: Dr. Jodie Totten, UW Chief Emergency Medicine Resident, 2012 WWAMI Graduate

