

Representative Vasquez,

I am writing this letter in strong support of House Bill 234. I want to thank you for tackling this very important and time sensitive issue. I am the medical director of Orion Behavioral Health Network. I am a lifelong Alaskan and have practiced Psychiatry in our state for over 12 years. Our group provides Telementalhealth services for children, adolescents and developmentally delayed adults throughout the state of Alaska. The use of telemedicine has allowed our group to provide services to many individuals that would otherwise not be receiving any care. I support the requirement that commercial insurances pay for services delivered via telemedicine. I also STRONGLY support the language that does not allow the insurances to require a face to face visit before services are covered. If insurances were allowed to have this requirement, it would block many of our patients from being able to access any mental health services. Many of our clients are in small distant rural villages or are home bound. Currently there are multiple private insurances that are rejecting payment on claims simply because they were provided via telemedicine. Our clinic is providing some free care to these patients, however there are many patients currently being denied care because of current insurance practices. It is simply not right to deny these needy and vulnerable people access to services that could be life-changing or even life-saving.

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