



March 15, 2016

The Honorable Paul Seaton
Chairman
House Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 102
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chairman Seaton:

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the Alaska Osteopathic Medical Association (AKOMA) are writing in support of HB 234. This bill will promote greater access to mental health care by encouraging the appropriate use of telemedicine and ensuring payment for services provided to patients in need. The AOA and AKOMA support the delivery of appropriate health care services utilizing online technology, online consultations and technology-based health programs, as well as coverage for such services by government and other third-party payers.

The AOA represents more than 123,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students, promotes public health, encourages scientific research, serves as the primary certifying body for DOs, is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools, and has federal authority to accredit hospitals and other health care facilities. More information on DOs/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org. AKOMA is a professional organization that represents over 200 DOs providing patient care in Alaska.

The practice of medicine via electronic and technological means has been occurring for decades. As technology advances and the breadth of medical practice in this area expands, there is an increasing need to support the delivery of health care through technological resources. Telemedicine provides improved access to medical care and services to patients in rural or distant areas, and allows for easier access to care for immobile patients and those with limited mobility. Cost-effectiveness, through reduced travel times, is an additional benefit of delivering health care services through telemedicine.

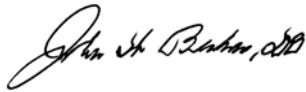
Easing administrative and financial burdens on the practice of telemedicine in Alaska will allow patients in rural and remote areas, and those with limited mobility, to receive the care they need. **We support HB 234 and ask you to support this important piece of legislation in Committee.** Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Nick Schilligo, MS, Associate Vice President, State Government Affairs at nschilligo@osteopathic.org or (800) 621-1773, ext. 8185.

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Sincerely,



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President, AOA



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