

March 28, 2017

To: House Health & Social Services Committee Members

Re: Tanana Chiefs Conference Support of House Bill 25 (HB25)

Dear House Health & Social Services Committee Members,

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) fully supports HB 25. This important piece of legislation mandates 12-month insurance coverage and uninterrupted access to contraceptive medications for women in Alaska.

The unique and extremely rural nature of much of Alaska means that there is not a pharmacy “on the corner” or “down the road” in every community. Most rural villages served by TCC are off the road system and hundreds of air miles away from the nearest pharmacy. The distance to the nearest pharmacy is compounded by high airfare costs to Fairbanks or long waits for mail deliveries by the U.S. Postal Service. By statutorily requiring insurers to cover a 12 month supply of contraceptives, patients in rural and roadless regions of our state will not have the continuous problem of running out of refills of this critically important medication.

This is of particular concern to Tanana Chiefs Conference. Alaska Native women have higher fertility rates than all other races in Alaska (almost twice as high in the 18-19 year old range) with the prevalence of unintended pregnancy following this trend. We know that access and cost are contributing factors to these statistics. HB 25 is an important step in helping all Alaskan women have affordable and dependable access to birth control.

Respectfully,
Tanana Chiefs Conference



Victor Joseph, President/Chief