



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

**Department of Commerce, Community,
and Economic Development**

STATE MEDICAL BOARD

550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1500
Anchorage, AK 99501-3567
Main: 907.269.8163
Toll free fax: 907.269.8156

February 15, 2019

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Senate
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Senator Giessel:

The Alaska State Medical Board has reviewed Senate Bill (SB) 44, which proposes to add Physician Assistants (PAs) as authorized practitioners of telemedicine.

The Board noted that the telemedicine bill, passed during a previous Legislature, was specific to physicians. This bill would expand that authority to PAs.

The Board determined to support the bill.

Sincerely,

Catherine Hyndman, M.D.
Board President
Alaska State Medical Board

From: Louisa M. Albright <lmalbright@NSHCORP.ORG>
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2019 10:23 AM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: PA telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing at Norton Sound Health Corporation, currently living in Unalakleet. I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Living in Unalakleet with telemedicine I would be able to offer visits to my patients in Koyuk, Shaktoolik, St Michaels and Stebbins, initially over the video teleconference, then following up in person as appropriate. For many chronic health conditions, the patient needs frequent monitoring. Patients appreciate being able to be seen from their village. I can reinforce health lifestyle, adjust medicines, and address concerns with greater frequency without worrying about weather affecting travel.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,
Louisa Albright PA-C
Anikkan Clinic, Unalakleet, AK 624-3535
Norton Sound Health Corporation

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801

2-27-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as Pediatric Psychiatric PA with Orion Behavioral Health and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine.

This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I grew up in an Alaskan village and many of my friends and family suffer from lack of access to care. I pursued a career in pediatric psychiatry in order to help with this tremendous shortage.

Telemedicine offers a lifeline to rural Alaskan pediatric patients in need of psychiatric care, and access to care in general.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Shigone Beighle, Pediatric Psychiatric PA-C
Adolescent & Child Psychiatry
Orion Behavioral Health Network

From: Riley Bennett <riley_bennet@hotmail.com>

Date: February 20, 2019 at 8:24:21 PM AKST

To: "Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: Telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in rural Alaska. I request and strongly support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This is already happening throughout rural Alaska. For 6 years I practiced as a PA in Nome and various villages all throughout the region. I frequently used telemedicine to provide care to patients in very remote villages all over the Norton Sound Region. The requirement to see a patient in person limits patient access to care. This is unnecessary when licensed and qualified PAs are just as capable as physicians of providing services via telemedicine. This web-based communication platform allows people living in the most remote locations to access medical care they would not otherwise be able to.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

*Riley E Bennett-Vockner PA-C
907-841-0736*

Sent from my iPhone

2-28-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as Certified Medical Assistant in a psychiatric clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We often have patients that have to wait months to be seen in person, delaying their care, and ultimately causing further damage to the patient. If this law is revised we can accommodate and treat patients quickly and effectively through tele-medicine for our rural patients.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Lillie, CCMA
Orion Behavioral Health Network
17025 Snowmobile Lane
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

From: Thomas Dale <tmd3@me.com>
Date: March 9, 2019 at 5:04:04 AM AKST
To: Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov
Subject: Telemedicine & PAs

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in Fairbanks and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

*Sincerely,
Tom Dale, PA-C
Emergency Medicine, Fairbanks*

Sent from my iPhone

From: ALP Medical <alpmed@conocophillips.com>
Date: February 20, 2019 at 5:43:56 AM AKST
To: "Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Telemedicine & Physician Assistants

Senior Giessel,

Thank you for taking the time to read this note. I work in Alaska in a near isolated setting as a Physician Assistant. Formally, I worked in the California State Prisons where we utilized telemedicine effectively. The ability to "see" a patient and provide quality care is multiplied and enhanced with the use of telemedicine.

With fewer providers willing to deliver care in the remote and rural areas of Alaska it would seem logical to promote the use of telemedicine. With the improvements in technology it allows PAs to "see" patients in their homes (with privacy assured), as it no longer requires bulky and sophisticated equipment, simply a cell phone.

As a provider in remote Alaska for the last 11 years I have a feel for the remoteness and distance from care many physicians would not. The ability to used telemedicine to reach even more secluded areas or regions of oil and mining exploration would increase the quality of care for Alaskans

David M. Decker PA-C, MICP
Ak Lic 780

2011 Huffman Rd #24547
Anchorage Alaska 99515

February 15, 2018

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

My name is Christopher Dietrich. I am currently a practicing PA providing medical care throughout Alaska. This letter is to support reducing barriers to care for patients involving advanced health practitioners. I am offering my support for Senate Bill 44 addressing the ability to Physician Assistants to establish care for patients via telemedicine. With recent legislation passage of Senate Bill 74 in 2016, advanced level practitioners gained allowable practice to treat patients and establish care via telemedicine. Care requirements did not change under this practice and standard of care still applies to ensure that improving access does not lessen quality. The bill appears to have left out direct language to be applicable for Physician Assistants to establish care via telemedicine. Physician Assistants have played a significant role in Alaska in expanding care to the underserved and acting as medical extenders to patient care teams.

As a psychiatric provider treating pediatric patients, at risk youth, and some of our most underserved populations; the barrier of care establishment is vast and unnecessary. I provide care to remote patients across rural Alaska. Currently the guidelines of telemedicine make our ability to provide care difficult with undue burdens on our patients. In psychiatry, this can delay care and create a barrier to services. As many of residents know all too well, traveling to a clinic to receive services is not something always easily done. Requiring a face to face exam in person creates an additional requirement for our patients that has no evidence based benefit in changing outcomes. This can require them additional costs for travel and decrease the patient outcomes for recovery due to delays in treatment.

I have had many pediatric patients that may have significant trauma be seen via telemedicine and subsequently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. These patients may reside in a rural location and an alternative psychiatric provider may not be easily available for weeks to months. Delaying the ability to establish care drastically increases the morbidity to these patients and is harmful to their recovery. SB44 has the potential to continue promote what SB74 was intended by increasing access options for our state.

PA's such as myself are pleased to support your efforts on behalf of Senate Bill 44. For further information, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact me at: chris@obhn.org.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris D. Dietrich', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher D. Dietrich, PA-C, PSY-CAQ
Assistant Medical Director
Orion Behavioral Health Services

President, Board of Directors
Alaska Collaborative of Telehealth & Telemedicine.

Health Practitioner
Department of Corrections, State of Alaska

2-28-19

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as an Administrative Assistant at a Psychiatric Clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We see patients all over Alaska and these current laws hinder our care for our patients that are out in the rural areas of the state. This is especially difficult for patients that are unable to travel.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jenni

Orion Behavioral Health Network
17025 Snowmobile Lane
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

<http://www.obhn.org>
tel: 907-696-7466
fax: 907-726-0332

2-28-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as a clinic coordinator and billing liaison and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. As a billing liaison I do notice that for any patients that are not in driving distance that the amount of money either spent on travel by the patient/family/insurance far outweighs the cost of a telemedicine visit. It can also be a very big burden on care for patients/families if telemedicine is the best choice, but not covered, that can impact a patient from even getting the care that they need due to not being able to afford the care.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jessi Eby

Orion Behavioral Health Network

Eagle River, AK 99577

From: Jessica Harper <jessicaharperlll@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 10:35 AM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Revise Alaska Law for PAs to use telemedicine!

Dear Senator Giessel:

*I am a PA student in Anchorage Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement **limits patient access** to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.*

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

*Sincerely,
Jessica Harper PA-S
Medex Northwest, UW*

From: "Angela S. Lucien" <Angela.Lucien@tananachiefs.org>
Date: February 20, 2019 at 5:16:02 AM AKST
To: "Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: **SB44 - Telemedicine for Alaska PAs**

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in the Upper Tanana and Fairbanks regions of Interior Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

A large portion our rural patients are served by telemedicine visits which provide faster access to diagnoses and initiation of treatment plans, as well as follow up visits. Many of our village patients have limited resources (financial, childcare, transportation) to get to town for appointments and rely heavily on telemedicine for their healthcare needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,
Angela Lucien, PA-C

Angela Lucien, MPAS, PA-C

Coordinator / Instructor - Upper Tanana Subregion

Community Health Aide Program

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Upper Tanana Health Center - North

PO Box 289 | Tok, AK 99780

Office: 907-883-5185 ext. 5230

Cell: 907-301-8892

Fax: 907-459-3978

From: Karen Millstein <Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org>

Sent: Friday, March 08, 2019 12:17 PM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in Kodiak Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I have been practicing in Kodiak for almost 20 years and have traveled frequently to the 6 villages on Kodiak Island to provide medical care. I also work closely the Community Health aides who live in the villages. I speak to them daily by phone and work with them monthly in the clinic. I am very comfortable with their skills and limitations. There have been many times that I am unable to get to the village or patients with medical issues are unable to get to town due to weather. We can provide good medicine using telehealth and being able to see and talk to patients with the health aide there to do the exam. Often I am familiar with the patients but frequently we have new patients that move back and forth between Anchorage and the villages or people who are just there in the summers for fishing. I see new patients all the time in the clinic and don't see any reason not to see them via Telemedicine. We use Telemedicine quite frequently here for Behavioral health, physical therapy and specialist appointments in the villages and psychiatry and specialist clinics here in Kodiak. Please contact me if I can answer any questions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Karen Millstein

Physician Assistant

D: (907) 486-9864 | Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org

Kodiak Area Native Association | 3449 Rezanof Drive East | Kodiak, Alaska 99615

www.kodiakhealthcare.org  

From: Katie Rulapaugh <katierulapaugh@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 12:06 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: In support of increased PA use of telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA who has worked in a variety of locations in the Aleutian Islands, Bristol Bay and other parts of rural Alaska. I have also worked in family medicine clinics in Kenai and Wasilla and an emergency department in Anchorage. I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Here is a hypothetical (but realistic) situation where improving access and use of telemedicine could improve care for rural Alaskans: A person in a remote village sustains an ankle fracture/dislocation. The dislocated bone is putting pressure on a blood vessel, which is limiting blood flow to the foot, and the foot is starting to turn blue and cold. The weather is too bad to fly the patient out of the village for several hours. The dislocation needs to be reduced (put back into place) properly so the foot can have normal blood supply. If the foot does not receive normal blood supply soon, the patient's foot will need to be amputated. The local provider has never reduced an ankle dislocation. The orthopedist the local provider contacts is busy in the operating room, but the orthopedist's PA is available. The PA is perfectly capable of talking the local provider through how to reduce the dislocation and properly splint it. It is much more effective to do this via telemedicine than by phone, because in using telemedicine, the PA can see exactly what the limb looks like, and what the local provider is doing. If the PA had access and ability to use telemedicine in this situation, it could save the patient's foot.

I have treated patients with a variety of dislocated body parts while working in bush clinics (including some types of dislocations I had never seen before). I have had to send at least one person with a dislocation I couldn't reduce into Anchorage by plane to have it treated several hours later. If I had had access to the appropriate specialist **or his/her PA via telemedicine**, I might have been able to treat this patient locally, which would have spared the patient the prolonged discomfort and expense of having to fly all the way to Anchorage to have his issue treated.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,
Katherine Van Atta, PA-C
Itinerant PA at Camai Community Health Center in Naknek (and other locations)

2-28-19

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as an LPC at Orion Behavioral Health Network and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I have worked with patients who have low access to care in rural Alaska and have had to wait to receive prescriptions. I have also had patients who have had a lapse in taking medications due to not being able to obtain their prescriptions quickly. I am in support of increasing access of care and I believe SB44 be beneficial.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Aurora Sidney-Ando, LPC

Thank you~

Aurora Sidney-Ando, Ph.D., LPC
Orion Behavioral Health Network- OBHN
Phone (907) 696-7466
Fax (907) 726-0332

Approximate work schedule Thursday - Friday 8am-6pm

This transmittal may contain confidential information intended solely for the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this transmittal in error; any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this transmittal is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify the sender immediately by replying to this e-mail or by telephone and ask to speak with the message sender. In addition, please immediately delete this message and all attachments.

aurora@obhn.org

24 Hour ACMHS/Providence psychiatric or behavioral crisis line (907) 563-3200

2-15-19

From: Wendy Smith <wendys@alaskafamilypractice.com>
Sent: Monday, February 18, 2019 2:36 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Telemedicine bill, letter of support

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in Juneau and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

*Wendy Smith, PA-C
Family Practice Physicians
Akapa President 2019*

Sent from my iPhone

From: giltrout@gmail.com

Date: March 9, 2019 at 6:51:55 PM AKST

To: Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov

Subject: SB 44

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in Anchorage and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Gilbert L Trout III, PA-C

Alaska Urology, 3841 Piper St T300, Anchorage AK 99508.

907-563-3103

Sent from my iPhone

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Wehling <rwehling@afoc.com>

Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 7:11 AM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: SB44

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA now practicing in Orthopedics and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

In the beginning of my career and during my training I had the opportunity to practice with telemedicine for the Alaska Dept of Corrections which provided service for remote facilities as well as remote communities suffering from lack of access due to a lack of providers or a willingness of providers to service remote communities. PAs are a vital asset around the country and even more so in a state like ours. Please support SB44 and give Alaskans the care they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Wehling, PA-C

Anchorage Fracture and Orthopedic Clinic, Total Joint Replacement Team and
Adjunct Professor Department of Biological Sciences University of Alaska
Anchorage

Cell: (907) 854-0839

2—28-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as a Medical Assistant in a psychiatric clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We see patients all over the state of Alaska and these current laws in effect are hindering our care for our remote patients and prescribing the necessary medications.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kim, MA

Orion Behavioral Health Network
17025 Snowmobile Lane
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

<http://www.obhn.org>
tel: 907-696-7466
fax: 907-726-0332

From: Ashley Westbrook <awestbrook@NSHCORP.ORG>

Sent: Monday, March 04, 2019 2:55 PM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: AK PAs and telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am a PA practicing in the Norton Sound villages of Elim, Golovin, and White Mountain and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. Covering multiple remote villages, I cannot be in each location at once and rely on telemedicine frequently.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,
Ashley

Ashley Westbrook, PA-C, MPAS
Norton Sound Health Corporation
PO Box 966
Nome, AK 99762
awestbrook@nshcorp.org

From: John Western <jrwesternnavy@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 08, 2019 12:09 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: SB 44

Good day,

I am writing in support of this important legislation. My primary role is a rural and remote PA. I often work on the north slope and I am usually alone but need all the tools I can get. The distance from one place to the next can be very long as you know. Being able to offer treatment as the sole provider could occur just by speaking with a patient. Transportation is often a hindrance to care, but by allowing less restriction we could enhance the ability to provide quality and necessary care.

Thanks
John Western PA
Fairweather LLC
Southcentral Foundation