

Legislative Testimony

Senate Bill 44

March 2019



Senator Reinbold & Members of Senate Labor & Commerce,

Alaska has some of the highest health care costs in our country. One of the drivers of these costs is almost certainly the fact that we have a number of medically underserved areas in our state, particularly rural areas. Fewer providers who can perform services results in a lack of competition and this in turn can lead to higher health care costs.

In recent years, Alaska has made some progress in our medically underserved areas by expanding telehealth services to these communities. Senate Bill 74 (as passed in 2016) contributed to these improvements but did not include Physician Assistants in the telehealth section.

Expanding Physician Assistants ability to practice using telehealth, with the same authorities and restrictions as currently apply to their practices, is one step the legislature can take in helping reduce the cost of health care for Alaskans.

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