

**From:** [Prentiss Pemberton](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Cc:** [Jocelyn Pemberton](#)  
**Subject:** SB 134 Support  
**Date:** Monday, March 16, 2020 5:51:06 AM

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Attention Senate Finance Committee Members:

I am writing in as an owner of Counseling Solutions of Alaska and as a therapist in this community for the past 25 years. During my time working in Alaska, I have worn many hats and held positions that allowed me to work with many youth and families who receive Medicaid. In my experience as a therapeutic foster parent, a case manager at a community mental health center, and as a Medical Social Worker, I saw first hand the extraordinary need many of these families had for ongoing, high quality mental health care. Unfortunately, when people on Medicaid find themselves or their children in need, and try to reach out for help by accessing therapy services, they are met with a very limited selection of providers and have historically have been placed on waiting lists of 6-12 months. They are then placed with a provider they do not get to choose and who is often young and overworked. A 15 year old boy on Medicaid cannot see me or any of the other 20+ well qualified providers who work for me at Counseling Solutions. Why? Simply because I do not have a psychiatrist on staff. On the other hand, My child, or your child, or any other child of parents with Insurance or the means to pay, can call my office and choose a provider they feel comfortable with, or they can call a provider that a friend told them about, someone they can trust. The only difference is the insurance. This practice, of denying people access and choice to needed services, seems unjust at best and discriminatory at its heart. Medicaid is the only insurer that I know of that has the requirement of supervision by a Psychiatrist. The reason this is so, is because LCSWS, LPC's, and LMFT's don't need supervision by a Psychiatrist to do their job. In fact, all of those Licensed Professionals listed above could provide supervision to the Psychiatrist should he or she decide they wanted to to do therapy as a profession. It is imperative that we, as a community, provide the best care possible to our most vulnerable populations. Alaskans who receive Medicaid are disproportionately subjected to the stressors of violence, addiction, and poverty. It seems shortsighted to meet their needs only as crisis responders in the Emergency Rooms and Jails of Alaska. A much more progressive and effective approach would be to let qualified professionals work with youth and their families before crisis happens and families are torn apart. Allowing LPC's (AND LCSW's) bill for Medicaid services under their license would greatly reduce the wait time to be seen and, I believe, would reduce reliance on police and ER visits to solve behavioral and mental health problems.

This is a subject I am very passionate about because it is a huge gap in services to a vulnerable and disempowered population of Alaskans. I have hosted several radio programs focused on this topic and will continue to advocate for choice and dignity.

I am Happy to discuss further at anytime,  
(907) 229-3864

Respectfully,

Prentiss J. Pemberton, LCSW  
Co-Owner at Counseling Solutions of Alaska, LLC  
Host of Line One-Your Health Connection, Alaska Public Media

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Prentiss Pemberton, LCSW

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Thank you.