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September 6, 2021

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 119
Juneau, Alaska 99811

RE: In support of Senate Bill 3006 HEALTH CARE REQS; COVID-19; TELEHEALTH

Dear Senator Costello:

Providence Alaska has set the standard for modern health care in Alaska for more than 100 years. Today we remain the state's largest health care and behavioral health provider, and the largest private employer, with nearly 5,000 caregivers across Alaska. As CEO of Providence Alaska, I write in support of Senate Bill 3006.

Alaskans can continue to expect high-quality care, but you should know that the state's health care safety net is strained. We are being tested like never before. Patients are coming to the hospital with more serious illnesses, requiring higher acuity care. These cases require skilled medical teams, including skilled nurses. Alaska's hospitals are consistently operating near or at capacity and available staffed beds are at a premium.

As we continue to adapt to the changing environment, we can use the lessons learned along the way as a roadmap toward a more effective and efficient process. The professional licensing and telehealth waivers previously passed by this body in SB 241 provided hospitals with a suite of tools that allowed us to adapt to the changing needs of the community. SB 3006 continues these flexibilities and allows hospitals to implement strategies to help flatten the curve and provide more efficient care.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and share our support for SB 3006; this legislation can make a difference in supporting Alaska's health care workers.

Sincerely,

Preston M. Simmons, DSc., FACHE
Chief Executive, Providence Alaska