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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 392: EXPAND ADV. PRAC. REG. NURSE AUTHORITY

Ver. A

HB 392 updates statute so Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) can provide more support for the seriously ill and their families. APRNs are Registered Nurses (RNs) with a master's degree in nursing and additional specialized education and training.

In 1984, Alaska became one of the very first states to give APRNs full practice authority. Full practice authority means APRNs can use their expanded knowledge and skillset to prescribe, diagnose, or treat patients independently within their specialization. A common example of this is Nurse Practitioners (NP), a type of APRN, working as primary care providers for many of us.

APRNs are authorized to independently oversee end of life care, including assisting with Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders and the Physician's Order for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST), but statute does not allow APRNs to sign and finalize these documents—only physicians can. This can cause administrative delays and unnecessary additional stress for families if a physician is unavailable. HB 392 updates statute and streamlines this process by allowing APRNs to sign off on these forms.

Additionally, current statute allows a registered nurse to declare a death but only if a physician documents the anticipated reason for the death. A registered nurse can also sign a death certificate but it must be certified by a physician within 24 hours. HB 392 expands statute so APRNs have the same authority as physicians in these cases. While the bill is narrow in scope, it helps many and especially those at vulnerable times.

Passage of HB 392 brings Alaska in line with 34 other states and the District of Columbia where APRNs have full practice authority and are allowed to sign DNR and POLST forms. It also aligns us with the 37 other states and the District of Columbia where APRNs have full practice authority and can sign death certificates.