

August 21, 2025

RE: Statement in support of Alaska State Licensure

On behalf of the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) we are writing to express our strong support for legislation to establish licensure for respiratory therapists in Alaska.

Respiratory therapists (RTs) are highly trained allied health professionals who provide critical, often life-saving care to patients with chronic lung disease, trauma, and acute respiratory failure. In hospitals, emergency rooms, long-term care, and increasingly in the home, RTs ensure the safe use of advanced technology such as ventilators and life-support equipment.

Licensure is essential for protecting patient safety and ensuring that qualified, competent practitioners deliver respiratory care. All states, with the exception of Alaska, already require licensure for respiratory therapists, reflecting the consensus that respiratory care is too complex and too vital to patient outcomes to remain unregulated. Licensure provides accountability, establishes professional standards, and gives patients and families confidence that their care providers meet recognized qualifications.

By advancing licensure legislation, Alaska has the opportunity to strengthen its healthcare system and safeguard patients with conditions such as asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, and other respiratory illnesses. This step will also align Alaska with national standards, reinforcing the importance of respiratory care as a profession and ensuring that patients receive safe, effective treatment.

We urge you to support this important legislative initiative that will help protect Alaska's most vulnerable patients and promote the highest standards of care in respiratory therapy.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the health of Alaskans.

Sincerely,



Dana Evans
President
American Association for Respiratory Care

Date: January 2026

Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

On behalf of Central Peninsula Hospital, I am writing to express our strong support for the establishment of licensure requirements for Respiratory Therapists in the State of Alaska.

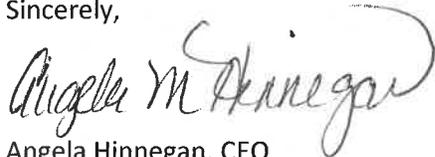
Respiratory Therapists (RTs) are highly trained healthcare professionals who provide essential care to patients suffering from chronic lung disease, acute respiratory failure, and other critical conditions. In settings ranging from hospitals and emergency departments to long-term care and home health environments, RTs play a vital role in ensuring the safe and effective use of advanced life-support technologies.

Alaska currently remains the only state in the nation without licensure requirements for Respiratory Therapists. This lack of regulation not only creates inconsistency in care delivery but also places both patients and providers at risk. Establishing licensure will:

- Ensure consistent standards of care and improve patient safety;
- Align Alaska with national standards and best practices in respiratory therapy;
- Strengthen the healthcare workforce by formally recognizing the expertise and education of Respiratory Therapists; and
- Provide essential accountability and protection for patients and healthcare providers alike.

We believe that advancing licensure for RTs is both a matter of public health and a step toward enhancing the overall quality of care in Alaska. We strongly encourage policymakers help ensure that Alaskans receive the highest standard of respiratory care possible.

Sincerely,



Angela Hinnegan, CEO

Compassionate • Personalized • Healthcare

250 Hospital Place • Soldotna, AK 99669 • phone (907) 714-4404 • www.cpgh.org



12/15/2025

Honorable Members of the Alaska Legislature,

We are writing to express our strong support for the establishment of licensure for respiratory therapists (RTs) in the State of Alaska. As you consider this important issue, we urge you to recognize that Alaska is now the only state in the nation without a licensure requirement for the practice of respiratory care. This gap places patients, healthcare teams, and the broader healthcare system at avoidable risk.

Respiratory therapists are essential, highly trained clinicians who manage complex and often life-sustaining therapies across the continuum of care—critical care units, emergency departments, neonatal and pediatric environments, transport medicine, chronic disease management, and disaster response. These responsibilities require verified competency, ongoing professional education, and regulatory oversight to ensure safe and consistent practice.

Licensure is the public-protection mechanism that ensures these standards. In all 49 other states, licensure has proven to:

- Establish minimum competency standards for education, clinical skills, and continuing development.
- Protect patient safety by ensuring that only qualified professionals may provide respiratory care services.
- Reduce variability in care quality, leading to more consistent patient outcomes.
- Support workforce recruitment and retention, as hospitals can confidently hire and rely on credentialed clinicians.
- Strengthen emergency and disaster readiness, especially critical in geographically expansive and remote regions such as Alaska.
- Clarify clinical accountability by defining the scope of practice and aligning with national healthcare regulatory norms.

In contrast, practicing without licensure creates significant inconsistencies. Healthcare facilities must individually verify training and competency—an approach that is inefficient, unreliable, and prone to gaps. The absence of statewide standards introduces variability in patient safety and creates unnecessary risks during high-acuity or time-sensitive events. Evidence from licensed states shows that clearer regulatory expectations improve clinical reliability, enhance team coordination, and contribute to safer outcomes.

Alaskans deserve the same protections and quality safeguards available in every other state. Establishing licensure for respiratory therapists would align Alaska with national expectations, elevate patient safety, and help stabilize your healthcare workforce—particularly in rural and underserved communities where staffing is already challenging.

We respectfully encourage you to support this legislation and advance a strong licensure framework that ensures respiratory care in Alaska is delivered by trained, certified, and accountable professionals.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to protecting the health and safety of Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Angie Haugen, Registered Respiratory Therapist licensed in the State of South Dakota ahaugen@rap.midco.net

Ashley Frerichs, Registered Respiratory Therapist licensed in the State of South Dakota ashleyfrerichs15@gmail.com

Delegates, South Dakota Society for Respiratory Care



From: Pennsylvania Society for Respiratory Care
President 2026-27
52 Fern Rd, Southampton, PA 18966

December 15, 2025

To: The Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for Respiratory Therapist Licensure in Alaska

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for proposed legislation aimed at establishing state licensure for respiratory therapists (RTs) in Alaska. I have been a licensed Respiratory Therapist since 2008, and I have seen how licensure strengthens public protection by setting clear, enforceable standards for entry-to-practice and ongoing accountability.

The essential role of RT licensure cannot be overstated. It serves as the single most important mechanism for ensuring that practitioners meet a standardized level of competency. Licensure provides a crucial safeguard for the public, verifying that individuals delivering general and critical respiratory care possess the necessary education, skills, and commitment to ongoing professional advancement.

In my state of Pennsylvania, we currently have 7,000+ Respiratory Therapists, and the Medical Practice Act of 1985 and provisions amended July 2, 1993, and January 31, 2014, have significantly strengthened respiratory care practice by:

- Ensuring Competency: Mandating specific educational and examination standards (e.g., passing the NBRC exams) before practice is permitted, and the addition of biannual continuing education requirements.
- Enhancing Patient Safety: Providing a clear regulatory framework that holds practitioners accountable to a state medical or osteopathic board and a defined scope of practice.
- Improving Workforce Standards: Elevating the profession's standing and making it a more attractive, recognized career path within the healthcare continuum.

Practicing without licensure introduces unacceptable risks and inconsistencies. The absence of a universal standard can lead to disparities in care quality, potential legal vulnerabilities for healthcare facilities, and a lack of professional accountability. Data and experience consistently show that states with RT licensure report improved outcomes and fewer practice-related incidents compared to those working without this essential oversight.

Alaska is taking a vital step toward aligning itself with national healthcare standards. Implementing RT licensure is a critical investment in the health and safety of your state's residents. I urge you to support this essential legislation and secure the future of safe, high-quality respiratory care in Alaska. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jerin Juby", is positioned above the typed name. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jerin Juby, DMgt, RRT
President 2026-27, PSRC
Southampton, PA



To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the **Florida Society for Respiratory Care (FSRC)**, we respectfully express our strong support for establishing **state licensure for Respiratory Therapists in Alaska**. As a state with a long history of licensed respiratory care practice, we have seen the direct benefits that licensure brings to patient safety, clinical quality, and workforce stability.

Respiratory Therapists provide essential, high-acuity care, including mechanical ventilation management, advanced cardiopulmonary procedures, emergency support, and chronic disease management. These responsibilities require specialized education, validated competencies, and professional accountability. In every other U.S. state, this level of care is recognized and regulated through licensure to ensure a consistent, enforceable standard of practice. Alaska's patients deserve the same safeguards.

Licensure affirms that Respiratory Therapists meet nationally aligned expectations through accredited educational programs and credentialing by the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC). It strengthens hospital credentialing processes, supports both urban and rural health systems, and ensures that all patients receive care from qualified professionals.

Implementing licensure would also allow Alaska to participate in the **Respiratory Care Interstate Compact (RCIC)**, improving workforce mobility, surge staffing capacity, and emergency preparedness. In a state with significant geographic challenges and workforce shortages, compact participation would be a meaningful advantage.

Florida's experience demonstrates that licensure does not create unnecessary barriers; instead, it enhances professional integration, supports advanced protocols, and reinforces public trust. A well-designed licensure model can easily be tailored to Alaska's unique healthcare environment while providing a shared foundation of safety and accountability.

For these reasons, the FSRC strongly encourages Alaska's policymakers and professional leaders to adopt licensure for Respiratory Therapists. This step will align Alaska with national standards, strengthen public protection, and support long-term workforce readiness across the state.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing safe and effective respiratory care for the people of Alaska. The Florida Society for Respiratory Care stands ready to support this important effort.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors for the

Florida Society for Respiratory Care (FSRC)



The Virginia Society for Respiratory Care, Inc.
977 Seminole Trail PO Box 327
Charlottesville, VA
www.vsrc.org

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

The Virginia Society for Respiratory Care (VSRC) is writing to express our strong support for legislation that would enable the licensing of respiratory therapists to practice in Alaska. Respiratory therapists play a critical role in the healthcare system, providing essential care for patients with chronic respiratory diseases, acute illnesses, and those recovering from surgeries or injuries. It is essential that we ensure our healthcare workforce is robust and properly supported.

Licensing respiratory therapists at the state level will help ensure that all practicing professionals are properly trained, certified, and adhere to the highest standards of care. Additionally, it will provide greater oversight, which is crucial for maintaining the safety and quality of care for Alaskans. It will also facilitate more efficient licensing and mobility for professionals across states, helping to address staffing shortages and expanding access to care, especially in remote communities where respiratory care may be in high demand.

By supporting this legislation, the Alaska State Legislature will contribute to the overall health and well-being of Alaskan residents, providing a critical service that is essential to both emergency and long-term healthcare needs.

We urge you to support the passage of this bill to ensure that Alaskans continue to receive the highest level of respiratory care. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. We appreciate your commitment to improving healthcare for all Alaskans.

Best Regards,

The Virginia Society of Respiratory Care
Executive Board Members

To: Alaska State Board / Legislative Committee Subject: Letter of Support for Respiratory Care Professional Licensure

Based on the recent communications regarding the **Alaska RT Licensure** initiative, here is a draft you can use. This letter emphasizes patient safety, professional standards, and the alignment with national practices.

Kiley Hodge, BS, RCP, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS Georgia Society for Respiratory Care 12/18/2025

To the Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature/Licensing Board,

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of formal professional licensure for Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCPs) in the State of Alaska. As a dedicated respiratory care professional, I believe that Alaska's residents deserve the same guaranteed standards of specialized care that are mandated in nearly every other state in the nation.

Respiratory therapists are essential high-tech healthcare providers. We manage life-support systems, administer critical inhaled medications, and provide life-saving interventions for patients with chronic lung diseases, trauma, and acute respiratory distress. Without a formal licensure act, there is a significant risk to public safety, as there is no state-level mechanism to verify competency, require continuing education, or provide oversight for those practicing in this high-stakes field.

Implementing licensure will:

- **Protect Public Health:** Ensures only those with the proper education and national credentials (NBRC) can practice.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Provides a regulatory framework to address professional misconduct or incompetence.
- **Support Workforce Stability:** Aligns Alaska with the [Respiratory Care Interstate Compact](#), making it easier for qualified therapists to move to and work within the state to address staffing shortages.

I urge you to support this vital legislation to recognize the essential role of respiratory therapists and, most importantly, to safeguard the health and well-being of all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

KAH Kiley Hodge



Snow College
AAS Respiratory Therapy Program
150 College Avenue
Ephraim, UT 84627
Kelly Rose, MSHS, RRT, AE-C

12 December 2025

To the Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

I am writing in strong support of establishing state licensure for Respiratory Therapists in Alaska. As Program Director of the Snow College Respiratory Therapy Program in Utah, I ensure that graduates meet rigorous clinical and safety standards. Licensure is essential to upholding these standards and protecting patients.

Respiratory Therapists provide critical care, including airway management, mechanical ventilation, rapid response, neonatal stabilization, and pulmonary diagnostics. These high-stakes responsibilities require verified education, demonstrated competency, and ongoing accountability—protections that only licensure can guarantee.

Utah, like most states, has benefited greatly from RT licensure, including improved consistency of care, enhanced patient safety, and stronger workforce reliability across both urban and rural settings. Practicing without licensure introduces preventable risk, particularly in complex respiratory interventions. For Alaska's geographically dispersed healthcare system, standardized competency is especially vital.

Licensure will align Alaska with national standards, strengthen recruitment and retention of qualified RTs, and ensure all patients receive safe, competent care regardless of location.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support for RT licensure legislation. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the health of Alaska's communities.

Sincerely,

Kelly Rose

Kelly Rose, MSHS, RRT, AE-C
Program Director/Assistant Professor
Kelly.Rose@Snow.edu | 801-473-8336

To the Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of state licensure for Respiratory Therapists in Alaska. As the Senior Delegate for the Wisconsin Society for Respiratory Care, I have witnessed firsthand the critical role licensure plays in ensuring patient safety, professional accountability, and the delivery of high-quality respiratory care.

Licensure is not merely a regulatory formality; it is a safeguard for patients and a standard for our profession. In Wisconsin, licensure has strengthened respiratory care practice by requiring verified competency, adherence to evidence-based standards, and ongoing professional development. These measures have led to improved patient outcomes, reduced variability in care, and enhanced collaboration within multidisciplinary teams.

Without licensure, there is a significant risk of inconsistency in practice and gaps in patient safety. Respiratory Therapists manage life-sustaining therapies, including mechanical ventilation and advanced cardiopulmonary support. These responsibilities demand rigorous training and accountability, which licensure ensures.

National alignment on licensure is essential for workforce mobility and professional recognition. Alaska's progress toward this goal reflects a commitment to patient safety and healthcare excellence. I urge you to support this initiative and join the majority of states that have recognized the necessity of licensure for Respiratory Therapists.

Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to advancing healthcare standards in Alaska.

Respectfully,

Dustin Goodman, RCP, LRT, RRT, RRT-NPS, ES
ECMO Coordinator – Abbot Northwestern Hospital (Allina Health)
Simulation Educator| Faculty – Chippewa Valley Technical College
Senior Delegate – Wisconsin Society for Respiratory Care



Alaska State Legislators

To whom it may concern:

We are formally writing to express our support for the state of Alaska implementing state licensure for Respiratory Therapists. Respiratory Therapists are engaged daily in the management of very critical patients in managing airways, and mechanical ventilators for life support in neonatal, pediatric, and adult care. Respiratory Therapists play a vital role in acute resuscitation efforts in all types of patients. Basically, if a patient has a cardiopulmonary/breathing event, then a Respiratory Therapist is needed. William Phillips and I serve as the State Delegates for Tennessee. In 1989, Tennessee implemented state licensure for the Respiratory Therapists of TN. This critical step helped to protect the citizens of TN by:

1. Defining the scope of practice for Respiratory Therapy
2. Ensuring successful completion of formalized Respiratory Therapy programs/training
3. Ensuring competent and high-quality care is being delivered by Respiratory Therapists
4. Ensuring consistent practice guided by the rules and regulations with State Statute basis
5. Ensuring continuing education has been met to renew license biennially
6. Requiring an active credential with the NBRC, credentialing body for the profession, for License renewal and an active credential requires continuing education annually
7. Failures in practice can be disciplined and sanctioned as required or even license can be revoked to protect the citizens of TN
8. Not allowing any unlicensed Respiratory Therapists to work in the State, which helps to protect the citizens of TN by minimizing risks and inconsistencies that arise from non-license practice
9. Formalizing structure for the Profession with the State Licensing Board and legal counsel
10. Providing additional income to the state through licensing fees

Alaska requires Hairdressers & Barbers to be licensed. Therefore, we strongly encourage Alaska to implement a license for Respiratory Therapists that are managing life support systems daily to protect the citizens of Alaska. It appears Alaska is the last state to implement this significant license. The implementation for a Respiratory Therapy license would allow for national alignment with other states and the critical importance of licensure for improved patient safety, meeting workforce standards, and professional recognition n for the state of Alaska. Thank you in advance for your review of this letter.

Respectfully,

Susan Parsons Hunter, MBA, RRT, Senior TN Delegate

William Phillips, DHSc, MS, RRT, Junior TN Delegate



12-11-2025

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the South Carolina Society for Respiratory Care (SCSRC), I am writing to express our full and unwavering support for the State of Alaska as you pursue the establishment of licensure for respiratory therapists. Alaska remains the only state in the United States without licensure for the practice of respiratory care, and the SCSRC strongly believes that enacting this essential safeguard will significantly enhance the safety, quality, and consistency of care delivered to patients across the state.

Respiratory therapists (RTs) are highly trained, credentialed clinicians who provide care for some of the most vulnerable and critically ill patients, including those requiring advanced life support in intensive care units, emergency departments, neonatal and pediatric environments, transport medicine, and throughout the continuum of care. The complexity of modern respiratory care—from ventilator management and airway stabilization to evidence-based disease management and life-saving interventions—demands a regulated and competent workforce.

Healthcare licensure plays a vital role in protecting the public and ensuring high-quality care.

Licensure:

- Establishes minimum competency standards for education, training, clinical practice, and continuing professional development.
- Protects patient safety by ensuring that only qualified practitioners provide respiratory care services.
- Strengthens healthcare teams by clearly defining scope of practice, accountability, and professional expectations.
- Supports workforce mobility and recruitment, allowing hospitals and healthcare systems to confidently hire credentialed professionals.
- Enhances emergency and disaster preparedness, especially critical in a state with vast geography and unique access challenges.

Every other state has recognized the essential nature of licensure to safeguard the public and ensure that respiratory care is delivered by trained, certified, and responsible clinicians. Alaska's patients deserve the same standard of protection, quality, and confidence in the care they receive.

The SCSRC applauds the efforts currently underway and stands ready to provide testimony, letters of support, subject-matter expertise, or additional resources to assist Alaska in advancing respiratory care licensure. This step is not only aligned with national healthcare regulatory



standards—it represents a direct investment in patient safety and improved outcomes for all Alaskans.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to elevating the practice of respiratory care. We are honored to support Alaska in this historic and necessary journey toward licensure.

Sincerely,

Suzi Westmoreland RCP, CPFT, RRT-NPS

Delegate SC

Megan Shell BSRT, RRT-NPS

Immediate Past President/ Delegate SC

December 13th, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for the establishment of state licensure for respiratory therapists in Alaska. As a licensed respiratory care professional in a state where licensure is in place, I have seen firsthand how licensure strengthens patient safety, professional accountability, and workforce standards across healthcare systems.

Respiratory therapists play a critical role in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of patients with cardiopulmonary disease, ranging from neonatal intensive care to emergency response, critical care, and chronic disease management. State licensure ensures that individuals practicing respiratory therapy meet standardized educational, ethical, and competency requirements, which directly supports consistent, high-quality patient care.

In states with licensure, regulatory oversight provides a clear framework for scope of practice, continuing competency, and disciplinary action when necessary. This structure enhances patient safety, supports interprofessional collaboration, and reinforces public trust in the respiratory therapy profession. Licensure also promotes workforce stability by aligning respiratory therapy with other regulated healthcare professions and supporting recruitment and retention efforts.

Conversely, the absence of licensure creates variability in practice standards, limits accountability, and increases risk for patients and healthcare systems. Without licensure, there is no consistent mechanism to ensure minimum competency or to address unsafe practice, which can lead to inconsistencies in care delivery and potential harm.

Based on both professional experience and observed outcomes, licensure has contributed to improved care coordination, clearer role definition, and stronger professional development pathways for respiratory therapists. These benefits ultimately support safer patient outcomes and a more resilient healthcare workforce.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to support legislation establishing state licensure for respiratory therapists in the State of Alaska. Doing so will align Alaska with national standards, enhance patient safety, and recognize the essential contributions of respiratory therapy professionals within the healthcare system.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to protecting the health and safety of the people of Alaska.

Respectfully,

Lauren Driscoll, MHPE, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS
Respiratory Therapist
Bellevue, NE
ldriscollrrt@gmail.com



December 12, 2025

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Idaho Society for Respiratory Care (IDASRC), we are writing to express our support and excitement for the state of Alaska to begin licensing respiratory therapists. This is a crucial step toward standardizing professional practice and protecting patient safety across the state. Alaska remains the only state in the United States of America without licensure for respiratory therapists. This unprecedented lack of regulation creates a dangerous anomaly in healthcare, failing to ensure that all practitioners meet a minimum standard of competency recognized by the rest of the nation. Licensure is not merely a formality; it is the fundamental mechanism through which the public is protected from unqualified or negligent practice. Respiratory therapists are highly trained healthcare professionals who manage and treat patients with life-threatening cardiopulmonary diseases. In the simplest of terms, we help people breathe. We are often there for the first breath, the last breath, and anywhere in between. Furthermore, implementing state licensure will directly benefit Alaska's healthcare infrastructure by reducing the administrative and legal burdens currently placed on hospitals and healthcare systems. In the absence of a statewide license, facilities must individually vet every RT's credentials, which is inefficient and inconsistent. State licensure ensures a uniform standard and facilitates the hiring of qualified professionals, especially valuable in a state that relies heavily on traveling and contract staff.

Respiratory therapists are a pivotal part of the healthcare team. We are excited and proud to support the Alaska Society for Respiratory Care in the pursuit of licensure for respiratory therapists.

Sincerely,

The Idaho Society for Respiratory Care, Board of Directors

Camille Stover, MET, RRT, RRT-NPS, FAARC (camillestover@boisestate.edu)

Megan Koster EdD, RRT, RRT-NPS, FAARC (megankoster@boisestate.edu)

Trevor Lee, MSRC, RRT (trevorlee@boisestate.edu)

Mason Hallinan, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS (mason.hallinan@portmed.org)

Lutana Haan, EdD, RRT (lutanahaan@boisestate.edu)

Dena M. Sanchas, BSRT, RRT, RRT-ACCS (sanchasd@slhs.org)

December 12, 2025

Dear Alaska State Legislators,

My name is Karen LaRoche', I am a Registered Respiratory Care Practitioner, and Clinical Specialist for MultiCare Health System as well as the Respiratory Care Society of Washington Delegate to the AARC. I am writing to you today on behalf of our state society in support of the upcoming legislation for licensure of Respiratory Care Practitioners in your wonderful state of Alaska.

As health care leaders, and as consumers of healthcare, we all have a personal stake in ensuring those caring for patients at their most vulnerable points are educated, skilled, and competent to practice. State licensure helps to create a basic expectation for these to be met, and maintained, by creating minimum standards for all Respiratory Care Practitioners within your state. These basic standards align at a national level through the passing of the National Board for Respiratory Care exam which all states currently require to obtain a license. In addition, state licensure can help to ensure competence and relevance is maintained by requiring continuing education credits to maintain a license, further ensuring quality, safety, and current evidence-based practices are being followed by the Respiratory Care Practitioners to the members of your state. Without a basic shared expectation of who a Respiratory Care Practitioner is, what the fundamental education requirements are, and adherence to a national standard, quality patient care and safety are at an exceedingly substantial risk, particularly in the management of life support.

I appreciate your time, and consideration of this important piece of legislation. On behalf of the Respiratory Care Society of Washington, and the licensed RCPs in the state of Washington, we support this bill and encourage you to do so as well.

Respectfully,

Karen LaRoche', BS-HCM, RRT-ACCS

Karen LaRoche', BS-HCM, RRT-ACCS

RCSW Delegate to the AARC

Clinical Specialist, MultiCare Health System WA



The Hawaii Society for Respiratory Care is a Chartered Affiliate of the American Association for Respiratory Care since Nov 1970.

Date: December 12, 2025

To: The Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature
c/o: Lindsey [Last Name], Vice President & State Delegate
Alaska Society for Respiratory Care

Re: Strong Support for State Licensure for Respiratory Therapists in Alaska

To the Honorable Members of the Alaska Legislature,

On behalf of the Hawaii Society for Respiratory Care (HSRC), I am writing to express our unwavering support for the Alaska Society for Respiratory Care in their pursuit of state licensure for Respiratory Therapists (RTs).

My name is Gary Y.G. Wong. I serve as the Past President and Delegate for the Hawaii Society for Respiratory Care. As a registered respiratory therapist and a healthcare leader, I understand intimately the critical nature of the services we provide. **Hawaii and Alaska share a unique bond as the non-contiguous United States; we both face distinct challenges regarding healthcare access, rural medicine, and the reliance on a highly skilled, mobile workforce.**

It is our strong position that legal licensure is not merely a professional designation, but a fundamental mechanism for **public protection and patient safety.**

I urge you to consider the following points regarding the necessity of licensure:

1. Ensuring Competency and Public Safety

Respiratory Therapists operate life-support systems, manage complex airways, and administer potent medications. In Hawaii, licensure ensures that every individual at the bedside has met rigorous education and competency standards (via the NBRC). Without licensure, there is no legal "floor" for competency. The citizens of Alaska deserve the assurance that the person managing their breathing during a crisis is legally vetted and accountable to a state board.

2. Consistency and Accountability

Licensure provides a legal framework to monitor practice and, when necessary, discipline practitioners who endanger patients. Without a licensure law, Alaska lacks the authority to prevent an individual who has been barred from practice in the "Lower 48" for negligence or misconduct from working in Alaska. Licensure closes this dangerous loophole.

3. Workforce Mobility and Recruitment

As states that often rely on travel practitioners to fill staffing gaps, reciprocity is vital. Professionals are more likely to seek employment in states where their profession is recognized and regulated. By aligning with the national standard—where 49 other states regulate the profession—Alaska will remove barriers to recruiting high-quality talent from the rest of the country.

4. Recognizing the Professional Standard

Respiratory care has evolved significantly. We are no longer just "technicians"; we are clinicians who use critical thinking protocols to treat patients with asthma, COPD, trauma, and viral pandemics. Licensure formally recognizes this evolution and empowers RTs to work to the full scope of their training, ultimately improving patient outcomes and reducing hospital readmissions.

In Hawaii, licensure has been the bedrock upon which we have built a safe, modern, and effective respiratory care system. We strongly believe that Alaska's patients deserve the same safeguards.

We respectfully request that you vote to enact licensure for Respiratory Therapists. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further data or testimony regarding the success of licensure in Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Gary Y.G. Wong

Gary Y.G. Wong, MBA, RRT
Past President / Delegate
Hawaii Society for Respiratory Care (HSRC)
gary@islandsrespiratoryhealth.com
808-295-5670

December 14, 2025

Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for Respiratory Therapist Licensure in Alaska

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

My name is Jefferson H. Mixell, MBA, RRT, RRT-ACCS, and I am writing in strong support of legislation establishing state licensure for Respiratory Therapists (RTs) in Alaska. I have been a licensed Respiratory Therapist since 2013, and I have seen how licensure strengthens public protection by setting clear, enforceable standards for entry-to-practice and ongoing accountability.

Respiratory Therapists routinely provide and manage high-risk, life-sustaining therapies across emergency departments, intensive care units, inpatient units, and transport environments. Licensure helps ensure that individuals practicing in this space meet established education and competency requirements and are accountable to a defined scope of practice. In short, licensure will further protect the public of Alaska by reducing variability in qualifications and creating a consistent framework for safe respiratory care.

A common concern raised during licensure discussions is whether regulation could worsen staffing challenges or drive wage inflation. An American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) issue paper examining the relationship between state regulation, salaries, and vacancy rates found no association between professional regulation (licensure or certification) and overall vacancy rates in respiratory therapy departments (Robertson & Hassan, 2017). The same report found that licensure was not associated with higher real hourly salary for respiratory therapists, addressing concerns that licensure would increase Respiratory Therapist hourly wage rates.

Finally, Alaska has a unique workforce opportunity: once licensure is in place, the state can pursue participation in the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact. Joining the compact would improve the portability of licensed RTs to Alaska and support recruitment and surge capacity, while maintaining strong safeguards for patients through a regulated, accountable workforce.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support Respiratory Therapist licensure in Alaska. Thank you for your consideration and for your work to promote patient safety and high-quality care for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Jefferson H. Mixell, MBA, RRT, RRT-ACCS



Licensed Respiratory Therapist (since 2013)

Junior Delegate and Chair, Legislative Committee for the Pennsylvania Society for Respiratory Care
Mount Joy, Pennsylvania

Reference

Robertson, R. H., & Hassan, M. (2017). The Effect of State Regulation of Respiratory Therapy Practitioners on Salaries and Vacancy Rates (Issue Paper). American Association for Respiratory Care.



Melissa D Smith BS, RRT

President of the Louisiana Society for Respiratory Care

261 Empress Ct.

Madisonville, La 70447

Alaska State Legislature,

Louisiana just celebrated 50 years of licensure. Licensure assures that the standards of care for our cardiopulmonary patients is upheld. Regulations set standards for Respiratory Therapists to achieve to receive a license. I shared our practice act with your Alaska delegation to give them our standards.

Sincerely,

Melissa D Smith BS, RRT

Louisiana Society for Respiratory Care President

Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for Respiratory Care licensure in the State of Alaska and to highlight why maintaining and strengthening this licensure is vital to patient safety, clinical quality, and the overall healthcare system. Respiratory Therapists (RTs) are essential frontline professionals who care for some of the most vulnerable patient populations—individuals with respiratory distress, chronic lung disease, trauma, cardiac compromise, and those requiring life-sustaining mechanical ventilation. The complexity and high-risk nature of this care make professional licensure not just beneficial, but necessary.

The Essential Role of RT Licensure in Ensuring Competency and Quality of Care

Respiratory care is a highly specialized field requiring extensive education, clinical training, and ongoing competency assessment. Licensure ensures that every RT practicing in the state has met rigorous standards in physiology, airway management, mechanical ventilation, emergency response, and evidence-based respiratory care.

Without licensure, there is no guarantee that individuals delivering these critical services possess the skills needed to safely manage ventilated patients, provide life-saving treatments, or respond appropriately in respiratory emergencies. Licensure protects patients and gives healthcare systems confidence that they are entrusting highly technical care to qualified professionals.

How Licensure Has Strengthened Respiratory Care Practice in South Carolina

In states where licensure is well-established, including my own, the impact has been significant. Licensure has:

- Elevated professional standards and accountability
- Improved clinical outcomes by ensuring consistent, evidence-based care
- Created a uniform benchmark of education and competency
- Enabled hospitals and health systems to maintain high-quality, reliable respiratory services
- Supported workforce development and professional growth opportunities

These standards have directly contributed to safer patient care environments, reduced medical errors, and improved management of complex cardiopulmonary conditions.

The Risks and Inconsistencies Associated With Practicing Without Licensure

Removing or weakening licensure places patients at serious risk. Respiratory care involves advanced clinical decision-making and direct intervention in life-sustaining functions.

Without licensure:

- Unqualified individuals may perform tasks requiring specialized training
- Variability in skill level can lead to mismanagement of respiratory failure, improper ventilator settings, medication errors, and delayed emergency response
- Hospitals would face increased liability and risk exposure
- Patients would receive inconsistent and potentially unsafe care
- The public would lose a critical layer of protection that currently ensures only competent practitioners provide respiratory care

The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the indispensable role of trained, licensed RTs. These professionals were vital in managing ventilators, high-flow therapies, airway emergencies, and complex respiratory cases. Licensure safeguards the public by ensuring only competent providers are entrusted with these responsibilities.

Conclusion

Respiratory Care licensure is not a regulatory burden—it is a public safety necessity. It protects Alaska's citizens, supports high-quality healthcare delivery, and ensures that only qualified, trained, and competent clinicians provide respiratory services. I respectfully urge the Alaska State Legislature to uphold and strengthen Respiratory Care licensure to maintain the safety and well-being of all Alaskans.

Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to supporting safe, high-quality healthcare.

Sincerely,

Wayne Barfield, RCP, RRT

South Carolina Society for Respiratory Care

To: Alaska State Legislatures

From: Kevin McQueen, MHA, RRT, RRT-ACCS, CPPS, FAARC
AARC Delegate, Colorado Respiratory Care Society - CRCS

RE: Letter in Support of Respiratory Therapist Licensure

Date: December 12, 2025

Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

I write in strong support of establishing **state licensure for respiratory care practitioners in Alaska**. As a practicing respiratory therapy leader in Colorado and an American Association for Respiratory Care -AARC Delegate, I have witnessed firsthand how licensure safeguards patients, elevates professional standards, and delivers measurable improvements in care. Alaska is currently the only US state without a respiratory therapy licensure program. [aarc.org]

Key points supporting licensure.

The essential role of Respiratory Therapist licensure in ensuring competency and quality of care

Licensure sets minimum education, competency, and ethical standards for respiratory therapists, aligning state requirements with nationally recognized credentials (e.g., NBRC CRT/RRT). In Colorado, the Division of Professions and Occupations explicitly notes that licensure exists to protect consumers, investigate complaints, and enforce disciplinary actions when standards are violated—core functions that uphold patient safety and public trust. [dpo.colorado.gov]

Colorado statute further requires evidence of NBRC credentialing for licensure, ensuring that individuals who provide complex respiratory care—ventilator management, advanced airway support, oxygen titration—have verified, current competencies. These statutory guardrails are a proven framework that Alaska can adopt to assure competency across all care settings. [colorado.public.law]

How licensure has strengthened respiratory care practice in the state of Colorado

Colorado's most recent sunset legislation, **HB24-1253**, continued respiratory therapy regulation through September 1, 2035, and modernized the practice act.

- **Expanded** the definition of respiratory therapy to include orders from **physician assistants**, improving team-based care clarity and access; and
- **Narrowed** the exemption for uncredentialed polysomnographic technologists to strictly limited tasks (oxygen titration with pulse oximetry and noninvasive positive-pressure ventilation titration), thereby closing loopholes that could otherwise expose patients to unqualified practice. [leg.colorado.gov], [leg.colorado.gov]

These targeted updates strengthened Colorado’s licensure framework, standardized roles, and reduced ambiguity for hospitals, clinics, and sleep centers—results your committees can similarly achieve by enacting licensure in Alaska. [leg.colorado.gov]

The risks and inconsistencies associated with practicing respiratory therapy without professional licensure

In a state without licensure, employers and patients lack a state-backed mechanism to verify credentials, investigate complaints, and apply discipline when standards are breached. This creates variability in minimum qualifications and exposes patients—especially the critically ill—to avoidable risks from unverified or inadequately trained practitioners. National advocacy guidance underscores that robust practice acts and licensure boards define scope, set continuing requirements, and issue advisory opinions that keep standards current—functions absent when a profession is unlicensed. [aarc.org]

Licensure also promotes consistency across facilities, helping rural and urban hospitals alike to staff respiratory services confidently, aligning with interdisciplinary teams, and assuring readiness for public health emergencies (e.g., surge ventilation support).

Unanimous support of the Colorado House Health & Human Services Committee during the recent Sunset review

During Colorado’s 2024 Sunset review, the House Health & Human Services Committee voted 10–0 (three members excused) to refer **HB24-1253** forward—an unequivocal, bipartisan endorsement of continuing and refining respiratory therapy licensure. The bill subsequently passed both chambers and was signed by the Governor on May 15, 2024. [leg.colorado.gov], [legiscan.com], [leg.colorado.gov]

Why licensure matters now for Alaska

Alaska's health system spans vast geographies and relies on high-functioning teams to deliver advanced respiratory support in emergency departments, ICUs, home oxygen programs, and sleep medicine. Licensure provides the uniform floor—education, credentialing, accountability—that enables safe mobility of practitioners across facilities, strengthens workforce pipelines, and reassures patients that their care meets state-defined standards. With nursing compact reforms under discussion in Alaska, extending that same spirit of professional consistency and consumer protection to respiratory therapy is timely and aligned with best practice. [\[akleg.gov\]](http://akleg.gov), [\[gov.alaska.gov\]](http://gov.alaska.gov)

Respectfully, I urge you to pass legislation establishing Respiratory Therapist licensure in Alaska. Adopting a framework modeled on NBRC credentialing, clear scope definitions, and a responsive disciplinary process—will enhance safety, improve care quality, and modernize Alaska's respiratory care workforce.

Thank you for your commitment to safeguarding Alaskans' health.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. McQueen, MHA, RRT, RRT-ACCS, CPPS, FAARC

AARC Delegate, Colorado Respiratory Care Society

CRCS Past President 2020-2022

Director – System Lead Respiratory Therapy Director, University of Colorado Health-UCHealth, (Colorado Springs, CO)

References (for committee staff):

- Colorado General Assembly — **HB24-1253** bill page and enacted summary (continues regulation to **9/1/2035**; expands prescriber orders to PAs; narrows sleep technologist exemption). [leg.colorado.gov]
- Hearing Summary & Vote — House Health & Human Services Committee (**10-0** to refer HB24-1253). [leg.colorado.gov], [leg.colorado.gov]
- LegiScan — HB24-1253 roll-ups: House & Senate actions; Governor signed **May 15, 2024**. [legiscan.com]
- Colorado DPO — Respiratory Therapy program purpose (consumer protection; investigation and discipline). [dpo.colorado.gov]
- Colorado statute **C.R.S. 12-300-107** — NBRC credential requirement for licensure. [colorado.public.law]
- AARC — State licensure information (Alaska: **No licensure**). [aarc.org]
- Alaska Legislature & Governor press — current workforce/licensure initiatives (nursing compact context).



To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Iowa Society for Respiratory Care (IaSRC), I strongly urge Alaska to adopt licensure for respiratory therapists. Alaska remains the only state without this safeguard, and implementing licensure will significantly enhance patient safety, care quality, and consistency across the state.

Respiratory therapists are highly trained clinicians caring for the most vulnerable patients—those requiring ventilator management, airway stabilization, and advanced life support in ICUs, emergency departments, and transport medicine. The complexity of modern respiratory care demands a regulated, competent workforce.

Licensure is essential because it:

- Establishes minimum standards for education, training, and continuing competency.
- Protects patients by ensuring only qualified practitioners provide care.
- Defines scope of practice and accountability within healthcare teams.
- Enhances emergency preparedness in a state with unique geographic challenges.

Every other state has recognized these benefits. In Iowa, licensure has strengthened practice standards, improved patient safety, and supported workforce development. Additionally, Iowa has joined the Respiratory Care Interstate Compact, which expands mobility for licensed RTs, aids in disaster response, and helps address staffing shortages—benefits Alaska could share by adopting licensure.

Alaska's patients deserve the same protections and confidence in care as those in every other state. We encourage you to take this important step, and the IaSRC is ready to assist with implementation or share Iowa's experience.

Sincerely,

Colleen Reiland, MS, RRT

President and House of Delegate Member, Iowa Society for Respiratory Care

cmreiland@dmacc.edu



12-11-2025

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Kentucky Society for Respiratory Care (KSRC), I am writing to express our full and unwavering support for the State of Alaska as you pursue the establishment of licensure for respiratory therapists. Alaska remains the only state in the United States without licensure for the practice of respiratory care, and the KSRC strongly believes that enacting this essential safeguard will significantly enhance the safety, quality, and consistency of care delivered to patients across the state.

Respiratory therapists (RTs) are highly trained, credentialed clinicians who care for some of the most vulnerable and critically ill patients, including those requiring advanced life support in intensive care units, emergency departments, neonatal and pediatric environments, transport medicine, and throughout the continuum of care. The complexity of modern respiratory care—from ventilator management and airway stabilization to evidence-based disease management and life-saving interventions—demands a regulated and competent workforce.

Healthcare licensure plays a vital role in protecting the public and ensuring high-quality care.

Licensure:

- Establishes minimum competency standards for education, training, clinical practice, and continuing professional development.
- Protects patient safety by ensuring only qualified practitioners provide respiratory care services.
- Strengthens healthcare teams by clearly defining scope of practice, accountability, and professional expectations.
- Supports workforce mobility and recruitment, allowing hospitals and healthcare systems to confidently hire credentialed professionals.
- Enhances emergency and disaster preparedness, especially critical in a state with vast geography and unique access challenges.

Every other state has recognized the essential nature of licensure to safeguard the public and ensure that respiratory care is delivered by trained, certified, and responsible clinicians. Alaska's patients deserve the same standard of protection, quality, and confidence in the care they receive.

The KSRC applauds the effort underway and stands ready to provide testimony, letters of support, subject-matter expertise, or any additional resources that may assist Alaska in advancing respiratory care licensure. This step is not only aligned with national healthcare regulatory standards—it is a direct investment in patient safety and improved outcomes for all Alaskans.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to elevating the practice of respiratory care. We are honored to support Alaska in this historic and necessary journey toward licensure.

Sincerely,

Lee E. Wisdom PhD, MHS, RRT, RRT-ACCS, RRT-NPS, FAARC & Kyle M. Mahan, EdD, MSM,
RRT, FAARC
Delegates, Kentucky Society for Respiratory Care
Lwisdom01@bellarmine.edu



Procure Home Medical
4215 Credit Union Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

September 26, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Procure Home Medical, I am writing to express my strong support for the efforts of the **Alaska Society for Respiratory Care** to establish licensure requirements for Respiratory Therapists in the State of Alaska.

Procure has long understood and supported the need to employ Licensed Respiratory Therapists in providing Respiratory Equipment to Alaskans in the home care setting. Procure has consistently done just that. Procure Respiratory Therapists have a combined 75 plus years of experience and maintain licensure through other States, until such time as licensure is available in Alaska.

Respiratory Therapists provide critical, specialized care to patients across a wide range of settings, including acute care hospitals, long-term care facilities, and home health environments. Despite the essential nature of their work, Alaska remains the only state without licensure requirements for the practice of respiratory care. This lack of regulation leaves both patients and providers vulnerable and creates potential inconsistency in the quality of care delivered.

Licensure for Respiratory Therapists would:

- Ensure consistent standards of care and enhance patient safety;
- Align Alaska with national standards and best practices in respiratory care;
- Strengthen the healthcare workforce by formally recognizing the education, training, and expertise of Respiratory Therapists; and
- Provide accountability and protection for both patients and healthcare providers.

Supporting licensure is not only a matter of professional recognition, but a necessary step toward safeguarding public health and improving the overall quality of care for the people of Alaska. I commend the Alaska Society for Respiratory Care for their leadership and dedication in advancing this important initiative.

I encourage policymakers and healthcare leaders to support these efforts and move forward with the establishment of Respiratory Therapist licensure in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Wendell Bellah RRT

Wendell Bellah, RRT, Clinical Director
Procure Home Medical