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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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HB 292 Sponsor Statement

"An Act relating to insurance coverage for pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders; and providing for an effective date."

HB 292 closes an important coverage gap for children in Alaska's insurance laws by mandating coverage for the diagnostic evaluation and treatment for PANS and PANDAS. These disorders are increasingly being diagnosed and treated throughout the country. However, currently Alaska children face insurance denials and delays in care for the treatments they need leaving them to suffer because the treatment deemed medically necessary is inaccessible.

Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) are pediatric medical diagnoses that result in sudden and severe neuropsychiatric illnesses in children. Children can experience drastic behavioral changes: such as obsessions and compulsions, food restrictions, anxiety, tics, mood disorders, sleep problems, urinary symptoms, sleep disturbances, and sudden academic deterioration. Not having timely medical treatment can result in long-term permanent disabilities and can even result in suicide.

HB 292 ensures that consistent application of treatment coverage, including intravenous administration of immunoglobulins (IVIG), is equal amongst Alaska insurers. Treatment coverage for PANS and PANDAS must match the extent of coverage available for any other medical condition in terms of cost-share requirements or treatment coverages.

Coverage under HB 292 would include evidence-based treatment established by a consortium of subject experts and published in the Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychopharmacology Journal in 2017 to help these Alaskan children. This bill also prohibits insurers from denying or delaying coverage based on a patient's prior receipt of treatment, variations in diagnostic vocabulary, age limitations, or seeking treatment out of state when medically necessary and not available in Alaska.