



School of Social Work
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

3211 Providence Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4614
T 907.786.6900 • F 907.786.6912
socialwork.uaa.alaska.edu

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TO: House Health and Social Services Committee

Chair: Representative Wes Keller

Members:

Representative Dick
Representative Herron
Representative Seaton
Representative Cissna
Representative Miller
Representative Millett

RE: HB 78 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers

Dear Committee Members,

The purpose of this letter is to strongly support HB 78 and encourage you to push this important legislation forward for passage. The University of Alaska Anchorage has developed a distance delivered Master of Social Work program to make it possible for Alaskans to remain in their communities while they earn an advanced degree in social work. Our graduates reside in rural communities throughout the state, serving some of Alaska's most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, these graduates often carry excessive student loan debt as they move into social work jobs. Department of Labor data indicates the average master's level social work graduate earns approximately \$43,100/year. Our students often carry over \$60,000 in student loan debt. HB 78 will assist Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) to repay their student loans while motivating them to seek employment in "shortage priority" areas.

Please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions about the distance MSW program and supporting graduates to repay their loans.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Sirles, PhD, Director
School of Social Work