

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE



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HB 285 Version N – Health Information Exchange

Sponsor Statement

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009 mandated the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) across states by linking federal funding to rigorous technical standards. HITECH removed the fragmented, state-by-state approach to medical record-keeping and replaced it with a unified national vision. This legislative push was critical in establishing Health Information Exchanges (HIE) within states, allowing for the seamless and secure flow of clinical data across geographic and institutional boundaries.

In response, the 26th Alaska Legislature passed SB 133, providing the framework to establish a statewide HIE and improve the safety, cost effectiveness, and quality of health care in Alaska. Since 2009, both EHRs and HIEs have matured and evolved, necessitating updates to Alaska's HIE law.

HB 285 improves the holistic approach to Alaska's HIE, while continuing to uphold the strict privacy and security standards required by law. It promotes transparency and improves the allowable uses and governance of the HIE.

Key changes in HB 285 includes:

- Providing clarity in the division of responsibilities between the Alaska Department of Health and the designee administering the HIE system
- Ensuring that an individual who is the subject of individually identifiable information can authorize disclosure of their information for purposes they choose
- Clarifying the scope of data by providing specific detail on allowable uses for limited health care operations and codifying public health as a primary allowable use (which is currently in regulation)
- Adds a representative to the governing body, representing behavioral health providers

HB 285 does not change the core allowable uses of the HIE but provides updated and clear language ensuring that Alaska's HIE effectively functions as core health care infrastructure. The updated language balances the maximum benefit of the HIE while protecting patient privacy.