

Alaska State Senate

Senator Forrest Dunbar

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 281: HEALTH CARE COMPACTS; RURAL HEALTH PROGRAM

“An Act Relating to the Rural Health Transformation Program, Relating to Physician Assistants, relating to Interstate Medical Licensure Compacts”

In December 2025, the Alaska Department of Health was awarded \$272 million in annual federal funding over five years through the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). Alaska may score higher in subsequent rounds of funding if the state enacts certain compacts, though the scoring process is opaque.

Senate Bill 281 would enact Alaska's participation in four interstate medical licensure compacts:

- Interstate Medical Licensure Compact
- PA Licensure Compact
- Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact
- EMS Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact

These compacts create streamlined pathways for physicians, physician assistants, emergency medical services personnel, and psychologists to obtain expedited licenses across state lines. By joining these existing multi-state agreements, it is possible Alaska could improve healthcare access, enhance workforce mobility, and reduce administrative barriers while preserving state regulatory authority.

In addition, this bill updates the scope of practice for physician assistants. It maintains the collaborative agreement structure currently in place for physician assistants working outside licensed medical facilities, while reducing the bureaucratic burden on those working within them. Physician assistants will continue to receive oversight from the State Medical Board.

Lastly, Senate Bill 281 establishes an Advisory Council for the Rural Health Transformation Program. It outlines the council's roles and responsibilities, as well as the timeline for the expiration of its duties. The bill also sets requirements for the Department of Health regarding timelines for public updates, the distribution of funds, and reporting to the legislature.

The purpose of introducing this bill is to hear from stakeholders and determine whether these compacts would be in Alaska's best interest.