

**HOUSE BILL NO. 52**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES VANCE, McCabe

Introduced: 1/30/23

Referred: Health and Social Services, State Affairs

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to the right of patients ~~and residents~~ to have a support person in  
2 person **present as a visitor** during treatment and during stays at certain facilities;  
3 ~~and relating to a requirement that health care facilities make certain information available to the public."~~

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
6 to read:

7 SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Alaska No Patient Left Alone Act.

8 \* **See. 2. AS 18.08 is amended by adding a new section to read:**

9 **See. 18.08.093. Right of patients to support person.** (a) A provider of  
10 emergency medical services who treats a patient shall allow a support person of the  
11 patient's choice to be in person during treatment, subject to reasonable restrictions.  
12 The support person may be any individual and is not required to be the patient's  
13 surrogate under AS 13.52.030.

14 (b) A provider of emergency medical services shall have written policies and

**Commented [J1]:** AHHA recommends deleting this section. Section AS 18.08 covers first responders, air ambulance, and other emergency medical service providers where this does not seem applicable. For example, applying this provision to AS. 18.08 could interfere with a first responder's ability to control an accident scene or medical crisis. Emergency medical services occurring in a hospital, such as an emergency room, are covered in the hospital section below.

1 procedures regarding a patient's right to have a support person in person during  
2 treatment, including provisions describing any clinically necessary or reasonable  
3 restriction the provider may place on access to the patient and the reason for the  
4 restriction. A provider of emergency medical services shall inform each patient or  
5 support person, as appropriate, of the patient's right to have a support person in person,  
6 including any restriction on that right, and shall ensure that a support person enjoys  
7 full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences and the policies  
8 and procedures. A support person's visitation privileges may not be limited to the  
9 visitation hours of the provider of emergency medical services.

10 (e) A patient's right to a support person under this section may not be withheld  
11 based on a state or federal declaration of disaster.

12 (d) The rights specified in this section may not be terminated, suspended, or  
13 waived by the Department of Health or any other state agency.

14 (e) Within 24 hours after adopting the policies and procedures required in (b)  
15 of this section, a provider of emergency medical services that maintains an Internet  
16 website shall make the policies and procedures available to the public on the  
17 provider's Internet website. If the provider does not maintain an Internet website  
18 available to the public, the provider shall make the policies and procedures available  
19 to the public in printed form and display a notice in a place conspicuous to visitors  
20 stating that the policies and procedures may be requested at any time.

21 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 18.20 is amended by adding new sections to read:

22 **Article 6. Patient and Resident Right to ~~Support~~ a Persons present as a  
visitor.**

23 **Sec. 18.20.600. Right of patients and residents to support person.** (a) A  
24 hospital or mental health facility shall allow a patient to have a support person ~~present~~ as visitor of the  
25 patient's choice in person at all times during the patient's stay ~~subject to any  
clinically necessary or reasonable restriction or limitation.~~ A long term care  
26 facility or hospice shall allow a resident to have a support person of the resident's  
27 choice in person at all times during the resident's stay. The support person may be any  
28 individual and is not required to be the patient's or resident's surrogate under  
29 AS 13.52.030.

30 (b) A hospital, mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice must

**Commented [J2]:** AHHA recommends striking "support" because "support person" is a term of art in healthcare. The intent of the bill is to make it clear that a patient has the right to designate a person to be present during the hospital stay. In healthcare, a person present with the patient is considered a "visitor" on the hospital / facility premises. To appropriately align terms of art, especially with the extensive requirements in federal law, AHHA recommends using "visitor" in describing a patient's right to choose a person to be present during the hospital stay. Note, a "support person" generally is a person selected / used by a patient with a disability.

have written policies and procedures regarding a patient's ~~or resident's~~ right to have a ~~support person in~~ person ~~present as a visitor~~ during the patient's ~~or resident's~~ stay, including provisions  
describing any clinically necessary or reasonable restriction ~~or limitation~~ the hospital, ~~mental health~~  
~~facility, long term care facility, or hospice~~ may place on access to the patient ~~or resident~~ and the reason for the restriction. A hospital, ~~mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice~~ shall inform each patient, ~~resident, or support person~~ ~~present as a visitor~~, as appropriate, of the patient's ~~or resident's~~ right to have a ~~support person in~~ person ~~present as a visitor~~, including any ~~clinically necessary or reasonable~~ restriction ~~or limitation~~ on that right, and shall ensure that a ~~support person~~ ~~present as a visitor~~ enjoys full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient ~~or resident~~ preferences and the policies and procedures. A hospital, ~~mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice~~ may not require a support person to provide proof of the ~~person present as a visitor's support person's~~ vaccination or immunization status.

(c) ~~A patient's or resident's right to a support person under this section may not be withheld based on~~ The requirements and provisions in (b) shall remain in effect during a state or federal declaration of disaster.

(d) Within 24 hours after adopting the policies and procedures required in (b) of this section, a hospital, ~~mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice~~ that maintains an Internet website shall make the policies and procedures available to the public on the Internet website of the hospital, ~~facility, or hospice~~. ~~If the hospital, mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice does not maintain an Internet website available to the public, the hospital, mental health facility, long term care facility, or hospice shall make the policies and procedures available to the public in printed form and display a notice in a place conspicuous to visitors stating that the policies and procedures may be requested at any time.~~

**Sec. 18.20.605. Minors in health care facilities.** (a) A minor has the right to have a parent, guardian, or person standing in the place of a parent in person with the minor at all times while the minor receives care as a patient in a health care facility.

(b) A parent, guardian, or person standing in the place of a parent who is in person under (a) of this section may leave during the course of a patient's stay or

28 appointment and return to the health care facility that is caring for the patient.

29 (c) A health care facility may not

30 (1) require a patient to waive the right granted under (a) of this section;  
1 (2) prevent a parent, guardian, or person standing in the place of a  
parent of a minor receiving care in the health care facility from having daily physical  
2 access to the minor at reasonable times; or

3 (3) separate from a minor receiving care in the health care facility the  
4 parent, guardian, or person standing in the place of a parent of the minor, except in  
5 cases of suspected abuse, threats of violence, or to prevent disruption to the care of the  
6 minor.

7 ~~See. 18.20.610. Complaints to the commissioner of health. An individual  
8 may file a complaint with the commissioner of health if a health care professional or  
9 health care facility violates AS 18.08.093, AS 18.20.600, or 18.20.605. The  
10 commissioner of health shall investigate the complaint. If the commissioner finds a  
11 violation of AS 18.08.093, AS 18.20.600, or 18.20.605, the commissioner may impose  
12 a penalty adopted under AS 47.05.010(18).~~

13 ~~See. 18.20.620. Civil liability. (a) A patient, support person, parent, guardian,  
14 or person standing in the place of a parent may bring a civil cause of action against a  
15 health care professional or health care facility that violates AS 18.08.093,  
16 AS 18.20.600, or 18.20.605.~~

17 ~~(b) If a plaintiff prevails in an action brought under this section, the court shall  
18 enjoin the defendant from violating AS 18.08.093, AS 18.20.600, or 18.20.605, or  
19 aiding or abetting a violation of AS 18.08.093, AS 18.20.600, or 18.20.605, and award  
20 (1) nominal damages in an amount of not less than \$1,000;  
21 (2) compensatory damages for injury or harm, including loss of  
22 consortium and emotional distress, resulting from the defendant's conduct; and  
23 (3) costs and attorney fees as provided in AS 09.60.010.~~

24 **Sec. 18.20.630. Health care facility liability.** Unless required by federal law  
25 or regulation, a state agency may not take action against a health care facility for  
26 prohibiting a visitor

27 (1) from entering an operating room, isolation room, isolation unit,  
28 behavioral health setting, or other typically restricted area;  
29 (2) from remaining in person during the administration of emergency

30 care in critical situations; or

31 (3) access beyond the room, unit, or ward in which the patient or  
1 ~~resident the~~ visitor is visiting is receiving care, or beyond general common areas.

2 **Sec. 18.20.635. Construction of AS 18.20.600 - 18.20.630.** (a) Nothing in  
3 AS 18.20.600 - 18.20.630

4 (1) affects the rights of a guardian or holder of a power of attorney; or

5 ~~(2) waives or changes a long term care facility resident's rights under~~

6 ~~AS 47.62.~~

7 (b) A health care facility may restrict access of a person to a patient ~~or resident~~

8 (1) at the request of the patient or a law enforcement agency; or

9 (2) according to a court order.

10 (c) If a health care facility has restricted physical access to a patient ~~or resident~~  
11 ~~resident~~, the health care facility shall allow the patient access to visitors through  
12 telephone, telecommunication, or other means that ensure the protection of the patient  
13 ~~or resident~~.

14 (d) The rights specified in AS 18.20.600 and 18.20.605 may not be  
15 terminated, suspended, or waived by

16 (1) a health care facility;

17 (2) the Department of Health; or

18 (3) the governor upon declaring a disaster emergency ordering the  
19 Department of Health to take action, ordering any other state agency to take action, or  
20 in any other manner available under state law.

21 **Sec. 18.20.640. Definitions.** In AS 18.20.600 - 18.20.640,

22 (1) "guardian" has the meaning given in AS 13.26.066(j);

23 (2) "health care facility" means a hospital, health care provider's office,  
24 long-term care facility, mental health facility, or hospice licensed in this state;

25 (3) "health care provider" has the meaning given in AS 18.23.400;

26 ~~(4) "hospice" has the meaning given in AS 47.32.900;~~

27 (5) "hospital" has the meaning given in AS 18.20.130;

28 ~~(6) "long term care facility" has the meaning given to "long term care~~  
29 ~~facility" in AS 47.62.090;~~

30 ~~(7) "mental health facility" has the meaning given to "designated~~  
31 ~~treatment facility" in AS 47.30.915;~~

(8) "minor" has the meaning given in AS 47.30.705;

(9) ~~"resident" means a person receiving services from a long term care~~  
~~piece.~~

\* **Sec. 4.** AS 18.23 is amended by adding a new section to article 4 to read:

5                   **Sec. 18.23.410. Availability of visitation policies and procedures.** A health  
6                   care facility that maintains an Internet website shall make a current version of its  
7                   visitation policies and procedures available to the public on the facility's Internet  
8                   website. If the facility does not maintain an Internet website available to the public,  
9                   the facility shall make its visitation policies and procedures available to the public in  
10                  printed form and display a notice in a place conspicuous to visitors stating that a copy  
11                  of the policies and procedures may be requested at any time. In this section, "health  
12                  care facility" has the meaning given in AS 18.20.640.

13 ~~\* Sec. 5. AS 47.05.010 is amended to read:~~

14 Sec. 47.05.010. **Duties of Department of Health.** The Department of Health  
15 shall

16 (1) administer adult public assistance, the Alaska temporary assistance  
17 program, and all other assistance programs, and receive and spend money made  
18 available to it;

19 (2) adopt regulations necessary for the conduct of its business and for  
20 carrying out federal and state laws granting adult public assistance, temporary cash  
21 assistance, diversion payments, or self sufficiency services for needy families under  
22 the Alaska temporary assistance program, and other assistance;

23 (3) establish minimum standards for personnel employed by the  
24 department and adopt necessary regulations to maintain those standards;

25 (4) require those bonds and undertakings from persons employed by it  
26 that, in its judgment, are necessary, and pay the premiums on them;

27 (5) cooperate with the federal government in matters of mutual  
28 concern pertaining to adult public assistance, the Alaska temporary assistance  
29 program, and other forms of public assistance;

30 (6) make the reports, in the form and containing the information, that  
31 the federal government from time to time requires;

1 (7) cooperate with the federal government in adopting state plans to  
2 make the state eligible for federal matching in appropriate categories of assistance, and  
3 in all matters of mutual concern, including adoption of the methods of administration  
4 that are found by the federal government to be necessary for the efficient operation of  
5 welfare programs;

6 (8) adopt regulations, not inconsistent with law, defining need,  
7 prescribing the conditions of eligibility for assistance, and establishing standards for  
8 determining the amount of assistance that an eligible person is entitled to receive; the  
9 amount of the assistance is sufficient when, added to all other income and resources  
10 available to an individual, it provides the individual with a reasonable subsistence  
11 compatible with health and well being; an individual who meets the requirements for  
12 eligibility for assistance shall be granted the assistance promptly upon application for  
13 it;

14 (9) grant to a person claiming or receiving assistance and who is  
15 aggrieved because of the department's action or failure to act, reasonable notice and an  
16 opportunity for a fair hearing by the office of administrative hearings (AS 44.64.010),  
17 and the department shall adopt regulations relative to this;

18 (10) enter into reciprocal agreements with other states relative to  
19 public assistance that are considered advisable;

20 (11) establish the requirements of residence for public assistance that  
21 are considered advisable, subject to the limitations of other laws of the state, or law or  
22 regulation imposed as conditions for federal financial participation;

(12) establish the divisions and local offices that are considered necessary or expedient to carry out a duty or authority assigned to it and appoint and employ the assistants and personnel that are necessary to carry on the work of the divisions and offices, and fix the compensation of the assistants or employees, except that a person engaged in business as a retail vendor of general merchandise, or a member of the immediate family of a person who is so engaged, may not serve as an acting, temporary, or permanent local agent of the department, unless the commissioner of health certifies in writing to the governor, with relation to a particular community, that no other qualified person is available in the community to serve as

1 local welfare agent; for the purposes of this paragraph, a "member of the immediate  
2 family" includes a spouse, child, parent, brother, sister, parent in law, brother in law,  
3 or sister in law;

4 (13) provide education and health related services and referrals  
5 designed to reduce the number of out of wedlock pregnancies and the number of  
6 induced pregnancy terminations in the state;

7 (14) investigate reports of abuse, neglect, or misappropriation of  
8 property by certified nurse aides in facilities licensed by the department under  
9 AS 47.32;

10 (15) establish state policy relating to and administer federal programs  
11 subject to state control as provided under 42 U.S.C. 3001 - 3058ee (Older Americans  
12 Act of 1965), as amended, and related federal regulations;

13 (16) administer the older Alaskans service grants under AS 47.65.010 -  
14 47.65.050 and the adult day care and family respite care grants under AS 47.65.100;

15 (17) establish an electronic application process for all assistance  
16 programs administered by the department and allow an applicant to submit either a  
17 written or an electronic application; the electronic application must inform an  
18 applicant that a false statement made on the application will be investigated and is  
19 punishable under AS 11.56.210; in this paragraph, "electronic application" means an  
20 application for benefits or renewal of benefits, whether the department exclusively  
21 administers the benefits or administers the benefits in coordination with another state  
22 agency or federal agency, electronically completed and submitted through the  
23 department's Internet website;

24 (18) adopt regulations necessary to carry out AS 18.08.093 and  
25 AS 18.20.600 - 18.20.640, including a schedule of reasonable penalties for  
26 violations of AS 18.08.093, AS 18.20.600, and 18.20.605.