



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ALASKA CHAPTER
ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

April 11th, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
house.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

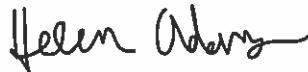
Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Alaska Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (AK ACEP) I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). Emergency medicine is a team sport, working together in high stress or crisis scenarios, we shine. Those who work in this setting do so in answer to a personal calling. As a result we care tremendously about our nursing colleagues and recruitment of such. I have heard personally from many nurses that the state credentialing process has been burdensome and a barrier to recruitment in Alaska.

Difficulties in recruitment to Alaska, are not new. We have had similar problems for years, but the after shocks of the pandemic are felt greatly in this arena. Currently we are on track to have one of the largest nursing staff shortages in the country. We support any changes that make the licensure process more streamlined. Those opposed to the NLC argue that it will precipitate an exodus from our work force, but data has shown that this is not the case. Alaska is an amazing place to live, as nurses come from outside they see this as well - respectively 1 in 4 healthcare workers who come to Alaska from the lower 48 stay.

When we are not fully staffed with nurses, Alaskans suffer. It is not uncommon that our EDs are operating at half speed due to encumbered rooms and not enough nurses to move patients through the hospital. Waiting months to onboard new nurses due to a slow licensing process is unacceptable.

It is time that we join the 39 other states who are effectively using the NLC. I urge you to please pass HB 149.



Helen Adams, MD
AK ACEP Vice President



ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

April 12, 2023

Representative Jesse Sumner
Chair, House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: ANTHC Support of House Bill 149

Chair Sumner,

On behalf of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), I write in support of House Bill 149 and Alaska becoming the 40th state to join the multistate nurse licensure compact.

ANTHC is a statewide tribal health organization serving all 229 Tribes and all Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) individuals in Alaska. ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation co-manage the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), the tertiary care hospital for all AN/AI people in Alaska. ANTHC also provides a wide range of statewide public health, community health, environmental health and other programs and services for Alaska Native people and their communities.

ANMC and the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS) face significant challenges in workforce recruitment and retention. The statewide demand for healthcare professionals continues to exceed supply, and nursing is no exception. In December 2022, ANMC had approximately 200 nursing position vacancies, from registered nurses to nursing assistants. Unable to fill these positions, additional financial resources are required to contract with costly nursing agencies in order to maintain patient access to services.

ANMC is not alone in this workforce challenge, with many other facilities also required to contract with Lower 48 staffing agencies to ensure Alaskans can continue to access needed services in the state. From the Alaska Hospital and Healthcare Association, Alaska is expected to have the highest nurse vacancy rate in the United States by 2030. House Bill 149 is a commonsense policy to begin addressing this imbalance and cost driver, eliminating a longstanding bureaucratic barrier to increasing the healthcare workforce supply in Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or if additional information can be provided.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique R. Martin".

Monique R. Martin
Vice President, Intergovernmental Affairs



April 3, 2023

Chair Summer and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Commerce,

I am writing to express Fresenius Medical Care North America's strong support of House Bill 149 relating to a multistate nurse licensure compact (NLC). Fresenius Medical Care North America (FMCNA) is a kidney health care organization that provides life-sustaining dialysis services to approximately 215 Alaskans with kidney failure in 9 outpatient dialysis clinics. We support Alaska's inclusion in the NLC to increase access to care while maintaining public protection at the state level.

Dialysis nursing is a specialized field. In times of critical need, dialysis providers must rely on the ability to bring in trained dialysis nurses from other states quickly to ensure patients have continued access to quality and timely services. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has strict requirements for registered nurses in the dialysis setting, requiring only nurses with dialysis experience to fill in during times of shortages, natural disasters, or other times when providing nursing care across state boundaries may be necessary.

Under the NLC, nurses licensed in one NLC state can practice in other states without having to obtain additional licenses. The reciprocity of state nursing licenses benefits healthcare providers and the patients they serve. The ability to seamlessly bring in qualified out-of-state nurses is critical for dialysis centers and hospitals when providing life-sustaining treatments for patients. An additional benefit of the NLC is the ability to provide telehealth services to dialysis patients. Nurses may provide these services for dialysis patients located in multiples states. Finally, more patients are dialyzing independently at home. A license under the NLC allows nurses to continue to provide services if a patient travels out of state and needs nursing advice while dialyzing in a different state. 39 jurisdictions are currently part of the NLC.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB 149 so that Washington can be one of the next states to join the NLC. If you have any questions regarding this letter, you can contact me at maria.c.garcia@freseniusmedicalcare.com.

Sincerely,

Maria Garcia (she/her)
Senior Director, State Government Affairs

Fresenius Medical Care North America
M 707-246-2773
fmcna.com | Maria.C.Garcia@freseniusmedicalcare.com



April 4, 2023

**Members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801**

Sent via email

Dear Representatives Sumner, Ruffridge, Prax, Saddler, Wright, Carrick, and Fields,

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its share of the hospital's profits back into the community through grants, scholarships and systems change work to improve the health and wellness of Mat-Su residents. On behalf of the MSHF Board of Directors, I am writing to express support for HB 149 so that Alaska can join the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC).

The Mat-Su Health Foundation is advocating for HB 149 because it addresses the critical healthcare workforce shortage that is leaving Alaskans at risk. Our state is projected to have the highest rate of nurse vacancies in the United States by 2030, with over 5,000 openings and a 22% shortfall. Here in Mat-Su we expect to grow from 625 registered nurses in 2016 to 743 by 2026, and it's hard to think where they will all come from. The NLC will encourage Alaskans who got their education Outside to come back, and it will reduce delays in the licensure process - a known barrier for nurses who are want to start their careers in Alaska or move here. Further, Alaska is home to thousands of military members on assignment, many with spouses and family who are nurses. Joining the NLC will help these individuals seamlessly transition into our healthcare workforce.

Alaska's participation in the NLC will align our state with the vast majority of the country; after the passage of this legislation, we would be the 40th state to become part of the NLC. It will modernize Alaska's licensing of nurses, taking the process from months to a matter of days. A primary reason the NLC was founded 20 years ago was to address the growing demand for nursing services in rural and underserved areas.

It's important to note that quality of care will not be impacted by joining the NLC. Alaska's Board of Nursing will maintain full control of licensure, discipline, scope of practice, and authority to suspend unqualified nurses in Alaska.

Alaska nurses overwhelmingly support the NLC with 92% of respondents favoring the NLC in a formal survey conducted in 2019 by the Alaska Board of Nursing, and the Mat-Su Health Foundation does as well. Please support HB 149 by moving it out of committee.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ripley

President and CEO
Mat-Su Health Foundation



April 4, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of Providence Valdez Medical Center, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare delivery.

I cannot fill job openings for virtually all job types, and nurse openings are some of the most challenging. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, it is well documented that we are on track to lead the nation with the biggest shortfall of nurses.

In my facility, nursing shortages are at crisis levels, requiring us to limit the services that we can provide to our community. Prolonged wait times for nursing licenses have impacted our ability to bring qualified nurses into the state and have continued to foster our dependency on a high volume of traveling nurses that are already providing care in Alaska, a financially unsustainable model which has impacts across our organization.

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and our licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses, is unacceptable. Licensing in other states (under NLC) has become so efficient, that we cannot compete in the national market- and we need to.

It is time to modernize and look at what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensure, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to align with best practices across the country.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Melanee Tiura, DHA, FACHE
Administrator
Providence Valdez Medical Center
melanee.tiura@providence.org
(907)359-1658

April 4th, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

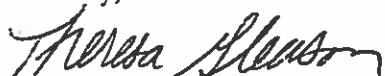
Dear Committee Members,

My name is Theresa Gleason, and I am a practicing nurse in Alaska. I urge you to pass HB 149 so Alaska can join the multistate nurse licensure compact (NLC). I can say firsthand that Alaska is plagued by nursing shortages and unlike everywhere else, it takes months to get licensed in our state.

Alaska is expected to have the biggest shortfall of registered nurses in the entire country by 2030. Our slow, broken licensing system does us no favors. The rest of the country has moved toward license reciprocity through the NLC. How can we justify not doing this? Nurses will be able to get to work in a matter of days, not months, and the way we practice nursing in our state remains the same thanks to the Board of Nursing maintaining full local control under the NLC.

We were here for you when you needed us, and we are now asking for your help., Vote for HB 149.

Sincerely,



Theresa Gleason, RN, BSN
PO Box 877348
Wasilla, AK 99687

April 5, 2023
House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Jacob Parkinson and I am a practicing nurse in Alaska. I urge you to pass HB 149 so Alaska can join the multistate nurse licensure compact (NLC). I can say firsthand that Alaska is plagued by nursing shortages and, unlike everywhere else, it takes months to get licensed in our state.

Enacting reciprocity with 39 other states and jurisdictions through the NLC is what we want and need. Allowing 3 to 4 month delays for licensing nurses not only hurts me and my colleagues, it hurts our patients. I have worked in states that took 1 week to get a license and we still had staffing shortages. I can say from experience since moving that having nurses willing and able to work, but unable to do so 5+ months after applying for their license in this state is absurd.

If you ask nurses directly, we overwhelmingly support the NLC and why wouldn't we? This was demonstrated in a 2019 survey from the Board of Nursing that showed 92% support. Attracting more nurses to our state and getting them to work faster is exactly what we need. 39 other states and jurisdictions use this, and it is time Alaska does the same.

Thank you,
Jacob Parkinson

Dear committee members,

My name is Elise Kubo and I am an RN in Petersburg, Alaska. I ask you to please support HB 149, allowing Alaska to join the nurse licensure compact.

It is difficult to recruit nurses from out of state, because our licensing is so difficult. When I moved here sixteen years ago, it took me four months to get my license here so that I could work. We are losing out on many valuable team members once they look at the licensing process here compared to other states.

Every nurse I have talked with hopes that this bill passes.

Thank you
Elise



Elise Kubo

Sir and Madam,

I am writing in regards to HB149.

As a Nurse who has traveled to Alaska to help with the current shortage of Nurses and have taken a permanent position to work in the State of Alaska., I have seen the need for travelers as it is difficult to staff nurses in the communities of Alaska. The process to get a Nursing license is long and tedious. On several occasions I have seen other Nurses have their paperwork held up for weeks and even months. There is always something that they have to get verified and then overnight the paperwork to the State board of Nursing and then they wait and wait longer to get a response often times they have to call and send several emails before they finally are given their license. This is totally unacceptable when the need for Nurses is so great here in Alaska.

Having Alaska part of the Compact licensure it would make it easier for Hospitals, Long Term Care facilities, The recruiters and the Nurses. There wouldn't be the long wait times to get the staff needed to help in the Medical facilities within Alaska. With Alaska shortage projected to be worse by 2030, it is in the best interest of the State of Alaska to pass HB149 and start having a better process for the Nurses coming to Alaska to help with the shortage currently and in the future.

I hope that the legislature takes a serious look at the need for travel Nurses within the State of Alaska and passes Bill HB149. The shortage is not going away any time soon and we need travel Nurses to help fill in the gaps in the hospitals and Long term care facilities within the state. Having been a travel Nurse I have seen the need in many communities here in Alaska and having HB149 passed will help bring Nurses here to work with shorter waits from the Board of Nursing which will get them to the facilities faster.

Christel Arnold LPN

April 3, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Monique Clupper, RN and I am a practicing nurse in Valdez, Alaska. I urge you to pass HB 149 so Alaska can join the multistate nurse licensure compact (NLC). I can say firsthand that Alaska is plagued by nursing shortages and, unlike everywhere else, it takes months to get licensed in our state.

Enacting reciprocity with 39 other states and jurisdictions through the NLC is what we want and need. Allowing 3 to 4 month delays for licensing nurses not only hurts me and my colleagues, it hurts our patients. I am currently a nurse manager and am finding myself working so very many extra hours to cover shifts at the bedside, in addition to managing my own position as manager. Our nurses are over worked, and desperate for newly hired nurses to have a more expedited experience to come and work in our beautiful state! We have many nurses willing and able- even nurses that have accepted positions here in Alaska, only to have the licensure process so incredibly delayed that they ended up having to accept jobs in other states simply so they could get to work sooner. We need help in Alaska, and we need it NOW!

If you ask nurses directly, we overwhelmingly support the NLC and why wouldn't we? This was demonstrated in a 2019 survey from the Board of Nursing that showed 92% support. Attracting more nurses to our state and getting them to work faster is exactly what we need. 39 other states and jurisdictions use this, and it is time Alaska does the same.

We (nurses) were here for you when you needed us throughout the past 3 years, and we are now asking for your help. Please vote for HB 149!

Thank you,

Monique Clupper RN,BSN || Manager, LTC

April 4, 2023

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Elizabeth Miller and I am a practicing nurse in Alaska. I urge you to pass HB 149 so Alaska can join the multistate nurse licensure compact (NLC). I can say firsthand that Alaska is plagued by nursing shortages and, unlike everywhere else, it takes months to get licensed in our state.

Enacting reciprocity with 39 other states and jurisdictions through the NLC is what we want and need. Allowing 3 to 6 month delays for licensing nurses not only hurts me and my colleagues, it hurts our patients. I am a travel nurse and it took almost 6 months to get a license here in this state last December.

If you ask nurses directly, we overwhelmingly support the NLC and why wouldn't we? This was demonstrated in a 2019 survey from the Board of Nursing that showed 92% support. Attracting more nurses to our state and getting them to work faster is exactly what we need. 39 other states and jurisdictions use this, and it is time Alaska does the same.

Thank you,

Elizabeth S. Miller

April 3, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of Utuqqanaat Inaat, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare delivery.

I cannot fill job openings for virtually all job types, and nurse openings are some of the most challenging. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, it is well documented that we are on track to lead the nation with the biggest shortfall of nurses.

In my facility, we struggle to provide optimal care to our Alaska voting residents. I have worked as a nurse in other states where the NLC was enacted and the hiring process was streamlined considerably. It is important that this measure be supported now more than ever. We are all trying to recover and move on from the COVID-19 pandemic. We have all learned a lot and this knowledge needs to be absorbed by the House Labor & Commerce Committee.

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and our licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses, is unacceptable. This effects patient care and outcomes directly. Alaska cannot remain at the top of the healthcare field when they do not support HB 149. Not supporting the NLC has and will continue to negatively affect our state.

It is time to modernize and look at what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensure, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to align with best practices across the country.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Mary Willis, BSN, RN, LNFA

April 5, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801 House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of SEARHC, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare delivery.

We cannot fill job openings for virtually all job types, and nurse openings are some of the most challenging. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, it is well documented that we are on track to lead the nation with the biggest shortfall of nurses.

In my facility, we have had multiple traveling nurses that have waited 3-4 months for an Alaska state nursing license. There are only so many traveling nurses with Alaska licenses currently and we cannot wait 3-4 months when we need staff now!!

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and our licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses, is unacceptable! I moved here in April of 2020 from Washington state. I started the process of getting my license in November of 2019! I only received it 1 week before I arrived. This was at the height of the pandemic and they were desperate for nurses!

It is time to modernize and look at what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensure, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to align with best practices across the country.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Elizabeth M. Stamon RN
SEARHC Rural Nurse



3760 Piper Street
P.O. Box 196604
Anchorage, AK 99508
t: (907) 562-2211
providence.org

April 2, 2023

The Honorable Representative Jesse Sumner
Chair, House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 421
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Providence Supports House Bill 149: NURSING: LICENSURE; MULTISTATE COMPACT

Dear Representative Sumner:

Providence has set the standard for modern health care in Alaska for more than 100 years. Today we remain the state's largest health care and behavioral health provider, and the largest private employer, with nearly 5,000 caregivers across the state. We are writing in strong support of Alaska joining the Nurse Licensure Compact and House Bill 149.

Alaska is facing severe health care workforce shortages and creative solutions are required to build and retain a strong nursing workforce. A major barrier to bringing new nurses to Alaska, and encouraging nursing school graduates to stay in state, is the State of Alaska's cumbersome and duplicative professional licensing process. A solution is for Alaska to formally join the multistate Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC).

Today, prospective nurses can wait more than four months to receive their Alaska state nursing license. This process is in addition to facility background checks, hiring processes and credentialing procedures required by federal law and/or employers. Like other Alaska hospitals, Providence is losing new hires who cannot afford to wait nearly five months to begin work. These are nurses who are choosing to live and work in Alaska (including at our Critical Access Hospitals in Kodiak, Seward, and Valdez) but are being turned away by red tape at a time when we need them the most.

Created by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the NLC is an interstate agreement between 39 states and U.S. jurisdictions allowing qualified nurses to practice across state lines with a single license. States who join the NLC do not sacrifice quality, safety, or local control; nurses are subject to the discipline and laws of the Board of Nursing in the state of residence.

Building and retaining a vibrant health care workforce is anchored by the critical work to support our existing caregivers and nursing staff. Providence is committed to remaining an employer of choice and has implemented a number of improvements for our caregiver experience, including: examining our own processes to reduce administrative burden whenever possible; expanding

opportunities for caregiver education and professional development; providing additional caregiver mental health and wellbeing programs; sign-on and referral bonuses for all RN positions; exploring creative staffing models; focusing on culture to include Mission connection and leadership development; and ongoing salary market reviews and adjustments.

Through this work, Providence decreased our turnover rate by a full percentage point from January 2022 to January 2023. We are trending in the right direction and will continue to prioritize our caregiver experience, especially during their first year at Providence.

Nothing can replicate the value and importance of nurses living in the communities they serve. Unfortunately, the existing pool of in-state workers is not sufficient to maintain current need or the growing demand for health care services from an aging population. Providence Alaska could hire every University of Alaska Anchorage nursing graduate and retain the vast majority of our non-retirement age nurses, and still have a workforce shortage. Alaska must attract and retain new health care workers and reduce bureaucratic red tape to remain competitive during a national nursing shortage.

As chief executive and chief nursing officer for Providence Alaska, we have a combined 58-years of health care experience, serving Alaskans in Critical Access Hospitals, emergency departments, intensive care units, and both inpatient and outpatient settings. We understand the importance of reducing barriers to delivering care. Alaska is at a significant market disadvantage and cannot compete with states whose professional licensing process takes less than half the time as ours.

This is not just a health care issue; it is a workforce issue. Our ability to support and grow a robust health care system directly impacts Alaska businesses' ability to attract and retain employees. Providence Alaska is in strong support of HB 149.

Sincerely,



Ella Goss, MSN, RN
Chief Executive
Providence Alaska



Carrie Peluso, DNP, APRN, ACNS-BC, CENP
Chief Nursing Officer
Providence Alaska

Bartlett Regional Hospital

3260 Hospital Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801

907.796.8900

www.bartlethospital.org

April 4, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare delivery.

I cannot fill job openings for virtually all job types, and nurse openings are some of the most challenging. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, it is well documented that we are on track to lead the nation with the biggest shortfall of nurses.

In my facility, we are spending upwards of \$550,000 per month on travel nurses to fill critical positions in our organization – this level of spending is unsustainable.

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and our licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses, is unacceptable. We have lost out on hiring nurses due to the lengthy delay in processing, continuing our reliance on costly travelers.

It is time to modernize and look at what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensure, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to align with best practices across the country.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Sincerely,


David Keith
Chief Executive Officer

April 4, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of Marvel Medical Staffing and the Traveling Nurses across the United States, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare staffing.

I work with over a dozen hospitals across Alaska to send them Travel nurses, and each of them always have a variety of positions that they need filled, but nurse openings are some of the most challenging for us to help fill. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and while many we work with are interested in taking a travel contract in Alaska, not being a part of the NLC has been prohibitive for them to get employment in the state.

Getting an AK license from the Board of Nursing takes substantially longer than most other states, and our Nurses are almost always secure a contract in an NLC state in less than a week.

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and the licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses, is unacceptable. Very few of the highly qualified nurses I work with are willing to wait to get their AK license because so many other states can get them employment in a matter of days.

It is time to modernize and look at what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensure, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to align with best practices across the country.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Chandler Heida

Nursing – National Accounts Manager
Direct Line: 323-977-4115 (Call or Text!)
Cell: 402-981-4997
Fax: 402-625-0205

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April 4, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
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Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

On behalf of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital of Foundation Health Partners, I am asking you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). While Alaska is facing workforce challenges across all industries, I want to tell you about what we are seeing in healthcare delivery.

I cannot fill these vacancies in a timely fashion and open nurse positions are some of the most challenging. Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, it is well documented that we are on track to lead the nation with the biggest shortfall of nurses.

In my facility, I oversee Dialysis, Wound Clinic, Intensive Care, and Cath Lab. These are all highly specialized nurses which could mean closing access to our community if we cannot fill the need. The slow licensure, that applicants have experienced, has turned some away and pushed them to seek opportunity elsewhere. Applicants are so used to the quick turnaround of licensure, they have experienced in other states, that they are shocked when they find out it will be months before they are able to work in our state.

Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to meet demand, and our licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for nurses coming from other states, is unsafe and unacceptable. The causal sequence leads to burn out of the nurses trying fill in the gaps created with unfilled vacancies due to slow licensure.

It would be great to align with what the rest of the country is doing around licensure. It is clear a vast majority of states have moved toward reciprocity for licensing, and joining the nurse licensure compact is our opportunity to commensurate with best practices across the country. This is not a step back but rather a step forward into the future for nursing and ensuring the care capability is there for our patients. We need to do better.

I urge you to please pass HB 149.

Colleen Kowalchuk, MSN, RN, CCRN-K, CNML
Director
Cath Lab Services, Wound Ostomy Clinic, Intensive Care Unit, Inpatient Dialysis
Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
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colleen.kowalchuk@foundationhealth.org