



ALASKA NATIVE
MEDICAL CENTER



January 18, 2024

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 to reiterate our support of House Bill 149 and Alaska joining the vast majority of other states benefiting from 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) people 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. ANMC has well over 100 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 continues to serve as commonsense policy solution, needed to address this supply imbalance and patient cost driver by 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 contact me at emstevens@anthc.org with any questions or if additional information can be provided.

Sincerely,

Emily Stevens
Chief Nursing Officer

CC Representative Prax, Representative.Mike.Prax@akleg.gov