

February 6, 2024

To: HHSS Committee
Re: SB 115

Members of the HHSS Committee,

My name is Bartholomew Grabman and I am writing to oppose SB 115. I do not believe that the number of hours required, as proposed in the bill, are sufficient to ensure safe and effective medical practice.

I worked full-time as a paramedic in Anchorage and rural Alaska for a total of 5 years, before completing 4 years of medical school. I am currently a resident physician (MD) completing my advanced training in emergency medicine, and plan to return to Alaska to practice medicine upon the completion of my training. I was president of my medical school class at the University of Washington (WWAMI program). In addition to evaluating, treating, and transporting thousands of patients as a paramedic, I also completed medical rotations in various specialties, including pediatrics, general surgery, psychiatry, anesthesia, neurosurgery, cardiology, family and internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and geriatric medicine. In addition to a full year of paramedic school, I completed two years of didactics in medical school prior to two additional years of medical rotations with hands-on care of patients, accounting for over 10,000 hours of clinical time.

All physicians must then complete a medical residency in order to be eligible for licensure and board certification. I chose emergency medicine – unfortunately, there are no training programs in Alaska. However, during my emergency medicine training, I work an average of 50-60 hours per week for three years – accounting for another 8,000+ hours of direct clinical experience – and will likely complete another year of additional advanced training. Though I am already more than halfway through my residency training, I do not feel prepared nor comfortable to care for patients independently yet, and I am still required to consult with my supervising physician before finalizing plans for every patient I treat.

SB115 would allow Physician Assistants (PAs) in Alaska to practice independently without collaboration or oversight if they work for 2,000 hours – or, about one year of practice if working a full-time job. While certainly admirable and PAs are an integral component of our healthcare system, 2,000 hours is simply not enough to be confident and competent to adequately treat all the complex problems that patients have without additional oversight.

I work closely with a PAs, Nurse Practitioners, other resident physicians, and more experienced physicians, and appreciate the important role that all of us play in the care of patients. However, I do not believe it is safe for anyone with only one year of experience to be able to practice medicine independently.

I urge you to reconsider this bill and to not pass this bill as written.

Please feel free to contact me for any additional questions, clarification, or concerns.

Thank you,
Bartholomew Grabman, MD
Anchorage, AK

