

Senate Labor & Commerce Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB89 – "An Act relating to physician assistants; relating to collaborative agreements between physicians and physician assistants; relating to the practice of medicine; relating to health care providers; and relating to provisions regarding physician assistants in contracts between certain health care providers and health care insurers."

Dear Members of the Senate Labor & Commerce Committee,

My name is Howard Chaitoff, and I am a psychiatric physician assistant (PA-C) and a Veteran Air Force medic. I served as the Primary Care Manager for the Wounded Warrior Unit at Fort Richardson and have dedicated my career to providing psychiatric care to Alaskans in need. I have been practicing as a PA for 17 years and have called Alaska home since 1987, when I first served as a medic at Eielson Air Force Base. Today, I write to urge you to pass SB89 to ensure that physician assistants like me can continue to serve our communities.

I want to be clear: I am not a physician, nor have I ever claimed to be. I am a physician assistant, trained in the medical model, practicing evidence-based medicine as part of a collaborative healthcare team. My role has never been to replace physicians, but rather to complement their work and expand access to care. The foundation of my psychiatric training has been shaped by physicians I deeply respect and am privileged to call both colleagues and friends.

Unfortunately, my ability to provide care is being systematically eroded by insurance companies that are no longer reimbursing for psychiatric services provided by PAs. Under the passive model, where clinics historically billed for services rendered without direct payer negotiation, my role was financially viable. However, with the active model—where clinics must directly contract with insurance companies—insurers are increasingly restricting reimbursement to independent practitioners only. This shift has forced me to transfer my existing patients to other providers and prevents me from caring for the hundreds of Alaskans in dire need of psychiatric services.

This is not just an issue for me—it is an issue for Alaska. The shortage of behavioral health providers in our state is a well-documented crisis. By failing to

recognize PAs as essential healthcare providers, we are exacerbating this crisis, reducing access to care, and driving experienced professionals like me out of Alaska. If this downward trend continues, I will be left with no choice but to leave the state I have proudly called home for nearly four decades in search of a place where I can practice with parity.

Alaska has long relied on physician assistants to provide care in remote and underserved areas. If we fail to act, we risk losing a critical segment of our healthcare workforce. If, however, we recognize the value PAs bring to our communities—whether in psychiatry, primary care, or other specialty practices—then we must act now. **Passing SB89 ensures that PAs can continue to serve Alaskans without unnecessary administrative and financial barriers.**

I implore you to pass SB89 so that I, and my PA colleagues across Alaska, can continue providing the care our communities desperately need. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to the health of Alaskans.

Sincerely,  
Howard J. Chaitoff, PA-C  
Psychiatric Physician Assistant  
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