

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate Health and Social Services Committee

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Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 161 - "An Act relating to the licensure of dentists"

Senate Bill 161, "An Act relating to the licensure of dentists," would allow the Board of Dental Examiners (Board) to grant a temporary license when a dentist is suddenly incapacitated and needs an immediate replacement.

This bill would be useful in situations where either a general dentist or dental specialist becomes incapacitated. Often in Alaska a small community is served by only one general dentist. Alaska also has a limited number of dental specialists, many of whom serve multiple small communities and are fully scheduled. An immediate replacement could be needed in either a small community with one general dentist or a group of communities served by a single dental specialist. If a specialist is suddenly incapacitated, and there is no reserve to draw from, multiple small communities could be without specialist care. If a general dentist or dental specialist were to be incapacitated, an area could go with unmet dental needs for the period of incapacitation.

Small communities have historically had a hard time recruiting healthcare practitioners. This trend seems to be worsening. A temporary dental license would allow the dental board to maintain dental care in these communities until a full-time dentist could be found.

Senate Bill 161 will allow the Board, at its discretion, to grant a temporary license in times of need. The Board is in the best position to evaluate the need to circumvent the transitional licensing program for dentists in exceptional circumstances.