6405 Colgate Drive
Anchorage, AK  99504
gailbraten@gmail.com

January 22, 2024

To: Alaska State Senate Finance Committee
Senate.Finance.Committee@akleg.gov
Re: Senate Bill 91

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Alaskans with complex life-threatening diseases need Senate Bill 91.  Please hear it and pass it through the Finance Committee.  SB91 has been sitting in the Finance Committee since April 2023.  My family needs action now.  Collaboration and cooperation between multiple disciplines is key in solving or managing a complex health issue.  When a person has a life-threatening diagnosis, this type of care is critical.  My husband, Tim Jennings, was diagnosed with ALS December 12, 2023.  Research is fast-paced and new treatments are being developed regularly.   This requires the whole care team to stay up to speed on the best way to manage the disease for their discipline and to collaborate with the other disciplines.  Alaska does not have specialized, multidisciplinary care teams for ALS and other rare, life-threatening diseases.

We will be travelling to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota in February 2024 to attend the ALS Multidisciplinary Clinic. We will be meeting with a neurologist, physical rehabilitation specialist, speech pathologist, registered dietician, occupational therapist, respiratory therapist, research coordinator for clinical trials, a social worker, and palliative care provider who will all be working together to coordinate my husband's care.  It is highly recommended that we attend the ALS multidisciplinary clinic every 3 months. Eventually, it will become more and more difficult to travel, but we will still need the expertise and developing therapies found at Mayo Clinic. Telemedicine with all disciplines will be key to managing his disease, but unless SB 91 passes, that won't be an option. Patients with a life-threatening disease need the collaboration of a healthcare team that helps to manage their disease without the burden of long-distance travel.

Senate Bill 91 will allow Alaskans to receive telehealth services from all non-physician members of the care team.  It does not take work away from local health care providers, but rather, it improves access to specialized healthcare that isn't available in Alaska. For my husband's care, we also work with a local provider to implement the recommendations of our ALS care team at the Mayo Clinic. Please hear Senate Bill 91 and pass it through the Finance Committee.  This bill will aid all Alaskans and their care givers.  Time is of the essence because of the short, terminal prognosis for this disease.  Please act now.

I may be contacted at gailbraten@gmail.com and (907) 306-4005 (text is best).

Sincerely,
Gail K. Braten

Cc: Senator.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov
Cc: Claire.Lubke@akleg.gov
Cc: Sheila.e.reilly@gmail.com

National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

April 4, 2023

**RE: SUPPORT Senate Bill 91 Multidisciplinary Telehealth**

Senator Claman,

Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system. Currently there is no cure. Symptoms vary from person to person and may include disabling fatigue, mobility challenges, cognitive changes, and vision issues. An estimated 1 million people live with MS in the United States. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical to minimize disability. Significant progress is being made to achieve a world free of MS.

The Society's vision is a world free of MS and our mission is that we will cure MS while empowering people affected by MS to live their best lives. Our advocacy around expanding access to comprehensive, affordable health care is based largely on the Society's Access to High Quality Healthcare Principles (Principles). We believe that these Principles are realized when people with MS are at the center of their healthcare decision making. This means having access to and receiving high quality care from a comprehensive network of providers and healthcare providers, who are focused on producing the best outcomes at affordable costs. These providers have a greater awareness, resources, and tools to enable the timely diagnosis, treatment, and symptom management of MS.

A full overview of our principles is available on the Society's website, and it is through this lens that we will evaluate any policy proposal put forth to assess its impact on healthcare needs for people affected by MS. **We appreciate your commitment to include select, qualified, out-of-state providers to join multidisciplinary care teams for complex conditions and support the amendments to current statute contained within Senate Bill 91. We look forward to a hearing in the Senate Health & Human Services committee in the near future.** Please contact me with any questions or for further information regarding Alaskans and multiple sclerosis.

Respectfully,

Laurie Johnson

**Seth M. Greiner**
Senior Manager, Advocacy
Washington State | Oregon | Alaska | Idaho | Montana
Mobile: 720-369-1665
Seth.Greiner@NMSS.org

**Laurie Johnson**
President, Greater Northwest Chapter
Washington State | Alaska | Montana
Mobile: 206-239-8913
Laurie.Johnson@NMSS.org

February 12, 2024

Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Sheila Swanson, and I live in Anchorage. Alaska has been my home for almost 25 years. I moved here from New York City at age 32 because I wanted to be somewhere that I could hike the mountains in my backyard rather than stare out a window in a concrete jungle. I discovered a passion for XC skiing and sprint triathlons after I moved here, and I met and married Rob Swanson, the love of my life, at age 45. I worked in finance and investments at Cook Inlet Region, Inc. for 16 years. Then, at age 50, for a midlife crisis, instead of buying a new car, I earned a law degree. I put my JD to work at Davis Wright Tremaine, Anchorage office, for almost three years until I was diagnosed with ALS on March 31, 2022.

ALS is a debilitating, fatal disease for which there is no cure. The prognosis for a PALS (Person with ALS) is to die within two to five years of onset, basically by being paralyzed to death through progressively weaker muscles. Treatment is focused on quality of life and some FDA-approved drugs that may slow the progression of ALS by three to four months. Upon diagnosis, my local neurologist referred me to an ALS clinic in Seattle because no such clinic exists in Alaska. ALS clinics bring the healthcare providers to the PALS in one place and time; provide more ALS expertise; and have better connections with equipment suppliers and specialist pharmacies. According to the ALS Association PALS who are treated at ALS clinics tend to survive longer.

I attend the ALS clinic at Swedish Hospital in Seattle, Washington. My multidisciplinary team includes an ALS neurologist, nurse, respiratory therapist, speech/swallow therapist, registered dietician, physiatrist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, and a social worker. Only two of these providers are physicians. I visit every three to four months, but travel is expensive, and it is getting harder for me to physically endure the trip. I have used telehealth with the neurologist in between appointments.

My hope for SB91 “An act related to telehealth; relating to multidisciplinary care teams; relating to the practice of medicine,” is that you approve it quickly. Telehealth that gives me access to the rest of my team provides me better care. My telehealth appointment with my neurologist mentioned above should have also included my speech therapist because we were discussing the feeding tube that the speech therapist recommended. Under SB91 she would have been on the call too. Moreover, as my physical condition of difficult speech, weak arms/hands and challenged balance make traveling harder, telehealth with my team will play a more important role in my treatment and quality of life. This will be true for other PALS in Alaska. I suspect I speak for other PALS too in my desire to stay and live in my home of Alaska, while doing whatever I can to improve my quality of life for me and my friends and family.

While I am so appreciative of the providers in Anchorage, who have some ALS experience and help me when I need local access, the ability to receive treatment from an out-of-state ALS team, who have ALS expertise, is important for my health, needed equipment, and quality of life. Current telehealth law allows telehealth access to my ALS-team neurologist when I can no longer travel because of my condition, but as currently written it does not allow the same for the rest of his team. These other providers give equally crucial care.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sheila Swanson
7210 Thiel Circle
Anchorage, AK 99502

From: Dorothea G. Aguero

Email Address: aguerolaw@gci.net

February 27, 2024

To: Alaska State Senate Finance Committee
Senate Finance Committee

RE: Senate Bill 91

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Please hear and pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers to serve people with a terminal diagnosis. My friend's husband was recently diagnosed with ALS. This is devasting. If he is lucky, he will have 5 more years to live as the disease robs him of the ability to eat, walk and talk. The best outcome he can hope for is to attend an ALS Certified Treatment Center of Excellence. There aren't any in Alaska.

ALS is being actively researched and it takes a whole team of experts to stay up with the latest information on ALS to help manage his care. He will need to meet with his multidisciplinary team every three months. The Team will include many health care experts in addition to the neurologist but others who are not doctors such as a speech pathologist, respiratory therapist and palliative care specialist. The continuity, coordination and quality of care is critical.

Eventually he will not be able to travel. Telehealth with all the disciplines will help provide continuity of care and help inform his care providers in Alaska on the next best steps. Please hear and pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers for a person with a diagnosis like ALS. The disease won't wait, please act now! Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dorothea G. Aguero

Dorothea G. Aguero

cc: Senators Matt Claman, Claire Lubke, and Bill Wielechowski

6406 Colgate Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99504

February 2, 2024

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capital
120 4th Street
Juneau, Alaska  99801

Re: Senate Bill 91

Honorable Chairs of the Senate Finance Committee:

My neighbor was recently diagnosed with ALS. This devastating disease will slowly rob him of his ability. to eat, walk and talk. He is the guy we call on when we need help and he is always willing. Alaskans with complex life-threatening diseases need Senate Bill 91. Please hear it and pass it through the Finance Committee. With research rapidly evolving, the whole care team is laser focused on the best way to manage the disease for their discipline and to collaborate with the other disciplines. Alaska does not have specialized, multidisciplinary care teams for rare, lethal diseases.

Travel outside Alaska for multidisciplinary care may need to happen every 3 months. This is hard on a terminally ill patient. Senate Bill 91 will allow Alaskans to receive telehealth services from all non-physician members of the care team and help maintain continuity of care. Please hear Senate Bill 91 and pass it through the Finance Committee now. Time is running out for my neighbor with a diagnosis for a terminal disease.

I may be contacted at (907) 337-4861.

Sincerely,

Vickie Carlock

Vicki Carlock

Cc: Senator Donald Olson
Cc: Senator Bert Stedman
Cc: Senator Matt Claman
Cc: Senator Bill Wielechowski

Claire Lubke

**Claire Lubke**

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**From:** Nothing But Driveways <carlock_troy@hotmail.com>
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 6, 2024 2:18 PM
**To:** Sen. Matt Claman
**Cc:** Claire Lubke
**Subject:** Senate Bill 91

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Feburary 6, 2024

To: Alaska State Senate Finance Committee
Senate.Finance.Committee@akleg.gov
Re: Senate Bill 91

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Please hear and pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers serve person with a terminal diagnosis. My parents have a neighbor that often helps them out. He was recently diagnosed with ALS. This is devastating. If he is lucky, he has 5 more years to live as the disease robs him of his ability to eat, walk and talk. The best outcome he can hope for is to attend an ALS Certified Treatment Center of Excellence. There aren't any in Alaska.

ALS is being actively researched and it takes a whole team of experts to stay up with the latest information on ALS to helpmanage his care. He will need to meet with this multidisciplinary team every three months. The team will include many health care experts in addition to the neurologist who are not doctors such as a speech pathologist, respiratory therapist, registered dietician, social worker, physical therapist and palliative care specialist. The continuity and coordination of care is critical.

Eventually he will not be able to travel. Telehealth with all the disciplines will help provide continuity of care and help inform his care providers in Alaska on the next best steps.

Please hear and pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers for a person with a a diagnosis like ALS. The disease won't wait. Please act now! Thank you.

Sincerely,

Troy L. Carlock

P.S. I see that Matt Claman, a democrat, sponsored this bill. I am a staunch Republican; however, this is a bipartisan issue that will help all Alaskans.

**From:** efoylesaft@aol.com
**Sent:** Sunday, February 4, 2024 7:36 PM
**To:** Senate Finance Committee; Sen. Matt Claman; Claire Lubke
**Subject:** Senate Bill 91

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Dear Leaders of our great state of AK,

Thank you for serving us and considering the many diverse needs of Alaskan residents. I imagine that it is a big chore, and I wanted to express my appreciation.

My family has resided in Alaska since 1991. We are teachers and engineers and enjoy living in this great state. We realize how fortunate we are to be part of a diverse community.

I am writing to ask you to respectfully reconsider SB 91. It is a bill that will enable many seniors with serious illnesses to remain living here in our great state.

Traveling to the Mayo Clinic in MN is difficult for patients with ALS, as well as other terminal diagnoses. The ability to meet with a multidisciplinary team while in Anchorage would reduce the great stress on patients and families suffering.

Granting allowance for permitting tele-health for health care care providers to serve Anchorage seniors with terminal illnesses may appear to be a huge ask. However, these individuals are Alaskan leaders in our community and deserve our consideration as they struggle with all that terminal illness brings.

I ask you to reconsider SB 91. We all grow old, if we are lucky and each of us has a Mom and/or Dad that may face an obstacle such as this.

Yours truly,
Eileen Foyle-Saft
907-717-5539 (cell)

February 5 2024

To:  Alaska Senate Finance Committee

Re:  Senate Bill 91

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

We are writing to you about SB 91. We hope you will move this through the finance committee and get this bill passed quickly.  It is essential for Alaskans that are facing life threatening illnesses.

Alaskans with complex life-threatening diagnoses may need to travel outside Alaska for multidisciplinary care.  This may need to happen as often as every three months.

We have a friend who has a deadly disease that requires a multidisciplinary team to manage it.  They are not all doctors.  SB 91 will be a great help to him so that he won't have to travel outside Alaska every 3 months.

Senate Bill 91 will allow Alaskans to receive telehealth services from all non-physician members of their care care team and jelp maintain continuity of care.  Please hear Senate Bill 91 and pass it through the Finance Committee.  This bill will aid all Alaskans and their care givers  Time is of the essence because of the short terminal prognosis for terminal diseases.  Please act now.

We may be contacted at leonandkarenak@gmail.com or (907) 474-8135

Sincerely,

Karen Post

Leon Lynch

Cc:  Senator.Matt.Claman@akleg

Cc:  Claire.Lubke@akleg.gov

Cc:  Senator.Click.Bishop@akleg

# Claire Lubke

**From:** ROGER SAFT <rrsaft@aol.com>
**Sent:** Friday, February 2, 2024 4:47 PM
**To:** Senate Finance Committee; Sen. Matt Claman; Sen. Bill Wielechowski; Claire Lubke
**Subject:** Senate Bill 91

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Honorable Chairs and Members of Senate Finance Committee:
Please hear and pass SB91 allowing telehealth for health care providers to serve people with terminal diagnosis such as ALS.  It will allow patients to attend in this way specialized multidisciplinary team care such as an ALS Certified Treatment Center of Excellence which is not available in Alaska.  Such care may significantly extend the lives of ALS patients.  Please hear and pass SB91 to help patients with ALS and other devastating diagnoses.
Sincerely,
Roger R. Saft
9073011640
RRSAFT@AOL.COM
2/2/2024

Sent from my iPhone

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| | |
|---|---|
| **From:** | Sue Sokoloff <sokoloff51@gmail.com> |
| **Sent:** | Monday, February 5, 2024 9:58 AM |
| **To:** | Sen. Matt Claman |
| **Subject:** | Fwd: SB 91 |
| **Follow Up Flag:** | Follow up |
| **Flag Status:** | Flagged |

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** Sue Sokoloff <sokoloff51@gmail.com>
> **Date:** February 5, 2024 at 8:22:07 AM AKST
> **To:** Senate.Finance.Committee@akleg.gov
> **Subject: SB 91**
>
> A good friend of mine has just been diagnosed with ALS. He and his family are in for a terrible time. SB91 will help them get the help they will need to get thru this ordeal .
>
> Please hear and pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers for a person with a a diagnosis like ALS. The disease won't wait. Please act now! Thank you.
>
> Sincerely,
> Susan Sokoloff

To: Senator Matt Claman, Alaska State Senate – District H

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 91 - An Act Relating to Telehealth and Multidisciplinary Care Teams

Dear Senator Claman,

I am writing on behalf of the ALS Association to express our strong support for Senate Bill 91, "An Act relating to telehealth; relating to multidisciplinary care teams, and relating to the practice of medicine." Our organization is dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and advocating for policies that enhance their quality of life.

ALS is a devastating neurodegenerative disease that profoundly impacts the lives of those diagnosed and their loved ones. As an organization committed to improving the lives of ALS patients, we believe that Senate Bill 91 presents a crucial opportunity to enhance access to healthcare services, promote multidisciplinary care, and address the unique challenges faced by individuals living with ALS in the state of Alaska.

SB 91 focus on telehealth is particularly significant. Telehealth has proven to be a valuable tool in expanding healthcare access to Alaskans living with ALS. By facilitating remote consultations and monitoring, telehealth can help overcome geographical barriers, allowing individuals to receive timely and specialized care from the comfort of their homes.

Unfortunately, current Alaska law does not allow patients to take full advantage of the benefits offered by telemedicine. Specifically, it does not allow patients to consult with the allied health professional members of a multidisciplinary care team via telemedicine.

This is why we commend the attention given to multidisciplinary care teams in SB 91. ALS is a complex disease that requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving various healthcare professionals. The establishment and support of multidisciplinary care teams can improve patient outcomes, enhance coordination of care, and address the diverse needs of individuals with ALS, leading to a more holistic and patient-centered healthcare experience.

Furthermore, the provisions related to the practice of medicine in SB 91 reflect a forward-thinking approach to healthcare delivery. By recognizing the evolving landscape of medical practice, including the integration of telehealth and multidisciplinary care, the legislation aligns with the changing needs of patients and providers alike.

In conclusion, the ALS Association urges the Alaska State Legislature to support and pass Senate Bill 91. This legislation has the potential to significantly improve the lives of individuals affected by ALS by advancing telehealth services, promoting multidisciplinary care, and adapting medical practices to contemporary standards.

We appreciate your dedication to the well-being of your constituents and look forward to witnessing the positive impact that Senate Bill 91 can have on the ALS community and healthcare in Alaska.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Clark Hansen, Managing Director of Advocacy, The ALS Association

## Claire Lubke

**From:** Hosanna Heartsong <sunrize@gci.net>
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 3, 2024 12:43 PM
**To:** Rep. Justin Ruffridge
**Cc:** Sen. Matt Claman; Claire Lubke
**Subject:** SB 91, An Act relating to telehealth; relating to multidisciplinary care teams; and relating to the practice of medicine

Hosanna Heartsong
247 Katmai Ave
Soldotna, AK 99669

3 April, 2024

To: Honorable Justin Ruffridge,
Vice Chair of Alaska House Health and Social Services
Representative.Justin.Ruffridge@akleg.gov
Re: Senate Bill 91: *An Act relating to telehealth; relating to multidisciplinary care teams; and relating to the practice of medicine.*

Representative Ruffridge,

I am one of your constituents in Soldotna. Alaskans with complex life-threatening diseases need Senate Bill 91. Please pass it through the House Health and Social Services Committee. Collaboration and cooperation between multiple disciplines is key in solving or managing a complex health issue Research is fast-paced and new treatments are being developed regularly. This requires the whole care team to stay up to speed on the best way to manage the disease for their discipline and to collaborate with the other disciplines. Alaska does not have specialized, multidisciplinary care teams for ALS and other rare, life-threatening diseases.

Travel outside Alaska for multidisciplinary care may need to happen as often as every three months. Senate Bill 91 will allow Alaskans to receive telehealth services from all non-physician members of the care team and help maintain continuity of care. Please hear Senate Bill 91 and pass it through the House Health and Social Services Committee. This bill will aid all Alaskans and their caregivers. Time is of the essence because of the short, terminal prognosis for this disease. Please act now.

I may be contacted at **sunrize@gci.net** and **(907) 575-7677**

Sincerely,
Hosanna Heartsong

**PS:**

- I see that Matt Claman, a democrat, sponsored this bill. You are a Republican. This is a bipartisan issue that will help all Alaskans. Diseases don't care!
- Care providers working under a physician on a multidisciplinary team would not be there unless they were well qualified for their position regardless of where they obtained their license.

- Allowing telehealth with care providers licensed in other states does not compete with providers in Alaska. We don’t have the population to support  specialized training in a disease like ALS.

Namasté

**From:** Marilyn Gardner
**To:** Rep. Genevieve Mina
**Cc:** Sen. Matt Claman; Claire Lubke
**Subject:** Senate Bill 91
**Date:** Sunday, March 31, 2024 10:09:14 PM

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3-31-2024
2236 Alder Drive
Anchorage, AK  99508

To: Honorable Genevieve Mina,
Member of the Alaska House Health and Social Services
Representative.Genevieve.Mina@akleg.gov
Re: Senate Bill 91, An Act relating to telehealth; relating to multidisciplinary care teams; and relating to the practice of medicine.

Representative Mina,

I am one of your constituents living in the Airport Heights neighborhood of Anchorage. Recently, the Alaska Senate passed SB 91 unanimously. This is a bill affecting the health care of Alaskans with very complex and life threatening diseases. It has been moved to the House Health and Social Services Committee. Please help to pass this bill out of this committee as soon as possible.

I have a friend, whose husband has been diagnosed with ALS. He has been told that he may have another five years to live. For the best outcome, he would need to attend an ALS Certified Treatment Center of Excellence. Unfortunately,
there are none in Alaska.

ALS is being actively researched and it takes a whole team of experts to stay up with the latest information to help manage his care. He will need to meet with this multidisciplinary team every three months. The team will include many health care experts in addition to the neurologist who are not 'doctors', such as a speech pathologist, respiratory therapist, registered dietitian, social worker, physical therapist, and palliative care specialist. The continuity and coordination of care is critical.

Eventually he will not be able to travel. Telehealth, with all the disciplines, will help provide the kind of care he needs and help to inform his care providers in Alaska on the next best steps.

Please pass SB 91 to allow telehealth for health care providers and their terminally ill patients. ALS won't wait. Please help now! Thank you.

Sincerely,
Marilyn Gardner
907-444-0460