

Jan DeNapoli, MHS, PA-C

Two Rivers, AK 99716

Dear Governor Dunleavy, Alaska House and Senate,

I am a PA with 30 years of experience in Alaska and a 35+ year resident of Alaska. Although I am currently retiring at the end of 2025, I am writing to you regarding your appointee for the Alaska State Medical Board - PA Samantha Smith - in the Senate Health and Social Services committee. I feel passionately about this issue for my colleagues and our state.

I am quite concerned about this selection. Ms. Smith is a fairly new graduate from PA school, she is also quite young. She is also fairly new to Alaska, lives in Anchorage and has absolutely NO experience with the rural communities or the issues they face regarding health care access, nor is she familiar with the issues of providing health care with limited resources in a remote location. She is also very limited in her practice knowledge as she is working only in a very odd, niche type of practice with a Chiropractor while having Dr. Hudson (a D.O.) who travels quite a bit as her collaborative physician. Her secondary collaborative doctor is in Fairbanks, Dr. Mark Wade. This is all a bit odd.

Ms. Smith does not practice any conventional medicine. She stated in her first hearing that she became enamored with underserved areas during her training, so she moved to Alaska. She proceeded to move to Anchorage, which is NOT an underserved area but instead is the most populated area in the state, nor did she venture into the rural communities at all. She did not reach out to anyone in Alaska to become more informed about our regulations, she is unaware of the fact that there are no statutes regarding PAs, nor did she try to educate herself on any other aspects of PA practice in Alaska, which as we all know, is quite different than in more populated states.

During her testimony Ms. Smith referred to Alaska medical providers as "subpar". She gave testimony to 2 examples (both of which were presented as a layperson would rather than a medical provider who actually did their homework on the issues) and are suspect for validity. I have often found myself saying how happy I am that we have such quality medical providers in this state (many of whom I have worked side by side with) given the population here, but I chalked it up to this being a place that would attract a lot of outdoorsy and adventurous people, which included some very well trained and high quality medical providers. I have not found our medical care to be subpar as has Ms. Smith and given that I have 35 years living here, as well as 30 years as a medical provider who is familiar with numerous other medical providers in this state, I would think my judgement would be valid on this issue.

During her testimony, she was also asked by Mr. Fields (I believe it was him) how often she meets with her collaborative physician. She proceeded to violate HIPAA and declare that she treats him as a patient and sees him when he has an appointment. She then proceeded to say that she discussed other patients during his visit with her. So, essentially, she stated she uses his paid appointment time for her own benefit for their required meetings and to discuss other patients. She violated HIPAA during this hearing. She should be penalized for this. It is NEVER ok to violate the HIPAA regulations of disclosing patient

information, which includes stating that she treats him as a patient. It was completely unprofessional and illegal.

She was also asked if she has been to any rural communities. Her answer was no, but that she feels she knows all about the rural communities because she talks to people from the villages sometimes and they tell her how things are. This is absolutely ridiculous.

Also, during her testimony, Ms. Smith expressed concern about PAs putting in a chest tube. I can tell you, we are well trained to do this procedure. I have done many, along with other life saving procedures myself, without which, a patient would likely have died. Is she not adequately trained, as are the rest of us? She appears to be all about her definition of "functional medicine", which is all well and good, except that her capabilities won't do a thing to help a patient in an emergency, trauma, acute MI, pneumothorax, or other life threatening situations. She must be familiar with these procedures, our capabilities, our training, and the importance of this ability to save lives in remote situations where we will have to manage a critical patient for hours or even days, depending on medevac availability, weather, or location. It takes someone with experience to handle these situations calmly and professionally under pressure with limited resources and having lesser trained people (even lay people when needed) to help. We are trained to help in many situations. The PA Profession is unique. Has Ms. Smith had many people lean on her for support or comfort when there has been a suicide, accidental death or other death in a remote village? Would she know how to support something like that? PAs in Alaska are unique and so very valuable.

Ms. Smith, while she may have good intentions, is completely unqualified to represent the entire PA population in the State of Alaska. She could actually have very a very detrimental impact on our career given her complete lack of knowledge and experience. I understand there have been many letters opposing her appointment and absolutely ZERO letters in her support, yet you have appointed her. I don't understand this at all and wish you would explain it to us.

I have practiced in Alaska my entire career. I have worked in the Emergency Department at FMH, I have worked in Orthopedic Surgery, I have worked in Prudhoe Bay remotely, I have worked in Neurosurgery and I have had my own outpatient nonsurgical Orthopedic Practice. I have been to several rural communities and even I don't feel like I completely understand the plight of health care access and practice in those communities because I did not spend an extended amount of time there. My time practicing in Prudhoe Bay, often alone, caring for a large population of the oil fields gave me some idea of working with limited resources, but while familiar, I feel it is still not the same as working in a remote village. Samantha Smith certainly does not have the knowledge of these areas, at all.

It is my opinion, that we need someone with extensive PA experience at least in conventional practice (whether family practice, internal medicine, emergency medicine, trauma), someone who is familiar with our regulations and the fact that we have no statutes regulating PAs in this state at this time, someone who understands the particular health care access issues in much of our state outside of the bigger cities/towns, and someone who is able to reach out to others for information and advice when needed. That person needs to have been here long enough to have developed relationships with other medical providers in the state (MD's, DO's, PA's) in order to utilize their knowledge. That person must herself/himself be aware of what they know and more importantly, what they don't know, so they can

educate themselves and make appropriate decisions. Ms. Smith has none of these characteristics. While she may gain these assets at a much later date, now is not the time for this PA to represent the rest of us.

Please, reconsider this appointment and do not let this confirmation happen on April 1, 2025. I feel it is crucial to all of us who have spent our lives dedicated to the healthcare of Alaskans, to have a representative on this board who actually can represent us from experience and first-hand knowledge. I guess I just don't understand this appointment at all and I'm quite disappointed knowing this is who you have chosen. I am hoping you will do the right thing here, because this isn't sitting well with anyone I know and I believe it is undermining our faith in Mr. Dunleavy as our governor. Please reconsider appointing one of the other candidates who applied, with much more experience and longevity in Alaska.

Thank you,

Regards,

Jan DeNapoli, MHS, PA-C

Duke University School of Medicine PA program

**From:** [Mau, Matthew](#)  
**To:** [House Health and Social Services](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in opposition to appointment of Samantha Smith PA-C  
**Date:** Sunday, March 30, 2025 2:18:49 PM

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Matthew Mau

[REDACTED]

Anchorage, AK 99508

3/30/2025

Alaska State Medical Board

P.O. Box 110806

Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Members of the Alaska State Medical Board,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the potential appointment of Samantha Smith to the Alaska State Medical Board as a Physician Assistant (PA) representative. While I respect her personal accomplishments, I believe she lacks the necessary qualifications and foundational knowledge to effectively serve in this capacity.

Firstly, Ms. Smith does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the complex rules and regulations that govern PAs in Alaska. Her lack of familiarity with these regulations, which are critical to ensuring the safety and quality of healthcare, raises concerns about her ability to provide informed, effective oversight in the role of PA representative. Knowledge of these regulations is essential to safeguarding both patient care and the professional standards that PAs in Alaska must adhere to.

Moreover, I find it troubling that Ms. Smith does not practice evidence-based medicine, a cornerstone of modern healthcare. As a medical professional, it is critical to make decisions grounded in the best available evidence, especially when tasked with representing the interests of the public and the medical community. However, Ms. Smith has shown a tendency to criticize others' medical decision-making without adhering to the same rigorous standards of evidence. This behavior is inconsistent with the ideals of professional medical practice and undermines the principles of trust and integrity that the Alaska State Medical Board is responsible for upholding.

Given these concerns, I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider her candidacy for the PA representative position. The role requires a candidate who not only possesses a thorough understanding of the regulations and responsibilities of PAs but also consistently practices evidence-based medicine and demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of patient care. Unfortunately, I do not believe Ms. Smith meets these critical qualifications.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**From:** [Ashley Peterson](#)  
**To:** [House Health and Social Services](#); [Senate Health and Social Services](#)  
**Subject:** Letter regarding the appointment of Samantha Smith to the medical board  
**Date:** Saturday, March 29, 2025 9:57:54 PM

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March 29, 2025

Dear Alaska House and Senate representatives,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the appointment of Samantha Smith to the Alaska medical board. After reviewing her testimony and responses during the recent hearings, I have serious concerns about her suitability for this critical role.

Firstly, PA Smith demonstrated unprofessional behavior in her testimony and responses. Her conduct was not befitting of someone who is expected to uphold the standards and integrity of our medical board.

Secondly, PA Smith lacks the necessary experience for this position. Her background does not include any significant experience in rural medicine, which is crucial given the vast rural areas in our state. Understanding rural and remote medicine is essential for addressing the unique healthcare challenges faced by our communities and medical providers.

Furthermore, PA Smith boldly insulted Alaska's medical providers by calling everyone "subpar." This blanket statement is not only inaccurate but also deeply disrespectful to the dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to provide quality healthcare in often challenging conditions.

Given these points, I strongly urge you not to recommend Samantha Smith for appointment to the medical board. Our state deserves a candidate who is professional, experienced, and respectful of our medical community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ashley Peterson, DMSc, PA-C

**From:** [Lisa Alexia](#)  
**To:** [Senate Health and Social Services](#); [House Health and Social Services](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to confirmation of Ms. Smith to SMB  
**Date:** Sunday, March 30, 2025 9:38:22 AM

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Dear Members of the House and Senate HSS:

As a PA with 25 years living in Alaska, much of that working as a health care provider in rural Alaska and the last 12 years as a PA, I hope you will OPPOSE the confirmation of Ms. Smith for the PA seat on the State Medical Board. I have listened to and/or watched both of the hearings for her at the House HSS Committee, and also observed her during the recent State Medical Board meeting last week.

As the lone PA on this board, Ms. Smith would be the face of the PA profession in this state. She is not qualified for this position at this point in her career. She demonstrates significant deficits as outlined below:

- 1) Lack of collaboration with colleagues in Alaska
- 2) Lack of depth and breadth of medical experience
- 3) Lack of depth and breadth of Alaskan life experience, particularly for rural Alaska
- 4) Lack of discretion with blatant **violation of federal HIPPA** (patient privacy) laws.

PAs are taught from the beginning, the importance of collaboration. Alaskan PAs have been working together and with the SMB as well as with other medical organizations on multiple complex issues in recent years. Ms. Smith came to the first meeting without having met with any of her peers prior to expressing strong opinions and voting on issues they had been working on for years. Without that collaboration, she of course demonstrated a clear lack of understanding of the issues. Confidence does not equate to competence for the responsibilities she will have as of a member of the SMB.

Ms. Smith works in a position that according to her own report, involves little in the way of actual medicine. From her own description, "regenerative medicine" is a very narrow field outside the scope of primary care or any other commonly practiced medical specialty in Alaska. She reports having no actual experience with working in rural Alaska or even with extended visits to rural Alaska. It appears her tenure in Alaska has been limited to Anchorage, and for only a few years. At a most fundamental level, she lacks an understanding of the way medical care works in this state, or the cultures that exist here. It would seem that both solid medical experience and a better duration and breadth of Alaskan life experience, would be essential to being an effective member of the SMB—*especially* for a PA member, since PAs deliver much more frontline healthcare in rural areas of Alaska than do doctors.

A fundamental cultural value of life in rural Alaska, which rural Alaska medical providers learn quickly, is discretion. Knowing how to exist in a community without discussing confidential patient matters is a matter of public trust and it is impossible to be an effective health care provider without such trust. While Ms. Smith's youth and inexperience and strong opinions might not necessarily be disqualifying for this position, violating federal HIPPA privacy laws by identifying a patient in a public hearing should certainly be disqualifying; certainly, it fundamentally demonstrates her inadequate preparation at this time to serve on Alaska's SMB.

There are multiple experienced PAs willing to serve the state of Alaska on the SMB who have submitted their application, and I encourage you to oppose the confirmation of Ms. Smith, and instead confirm a PA who has the experience, maturity, and judgment to work with the complex issues that face the SMB.

Thank you,

Lisa Alexia, PA-C, CAQ-Psych, PMH-C



**From:** [Amy Navarre Cantrell](#)  
**To:** [House Health and Social Services](#)  
**Subject:** PA Smith for Alaska State Board  
**Date:** Saturday, March 29, 2025 4:46:44 PM

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Dear House Health and Social Services Committee Members:

I am writing to you today to request that you decline the nomination of Ms. Samantha Smith to be the Physician Assistant representative on the Alaska State Medical Board.

First, a caveat - I am not an AK resident, but I am a PA with almost 30 years of experience across the disciplines of family medicine, orthopedics, urgent care and currently employed as a hospitalist at a critical access facility in a rural Washington State community where I live. I have traveled the locums provider circuit in AK for the last 6 years, employed by SEARHC, Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Peace Health Medical Group and the Camai Clinic in Naknek. I have an absolute fondness for the clinics and range of primary care providers of the remote communities and am proud to have been able to establish and maintain a variety of personal and professional connections across both states. I'm also proud to be a PA, proud of both the collegiate and experience education my career has afforded me, and proud to uplift my colleagues in the work we do.

Having said this, I'm kind of appalled and confused as to how Ms. Smith's candidacy for this position has made it thus far. I've reviewed her CV and listened to her March 25th interview. While I admire her desire to serve, I find almost every aspect of her statements to that group objectionable - and I take particular offense to the fact that medicine in AK is subpar, and that those of us who do hold multiple state licenses to be suspect in our commitments to the Alaska's healthcare needs. I cannot support a candidate for this position who apparently has open disdain for the AKAPA - the very group of professionals who are her peers. And finally, by claiming to know the heart and the needs of rural / remote residents and medical systems because she sees a tiny cross section of them for moderately evidenced based therapies in an office based in chiropractic care she actually demonstrates the opposite, and there is no service done there.

Please decline Ms. Smith's appointment. Let her grow her practice, her clinical skills, her personal and professional associations before she is able to sit in this position. There may not be rules based criteria other than Alaska licensure and residence to be on the State Medical Board, but this group needs someone who can fairly represent the whole of the PA providers in the state.

Respectfully,

Amy Navarre Cantrell PA-C, CDE

Twisp, WA

Alana Wright

[REDACTED]

Wasilla, AK 99654

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3/30/2025

Members of the Alaska House of Representatives and the Senate Health and Social Services Committee

Alaska State Legislature

P.O. Box 110100

Juneau, AK 99811-0100

Dear Honorable Members of the Alaska House of Representatives and the Senate Health and Social Services Committee,

I am writing to formally oppose the confirmation of Samantha Smith PA-C to the Alaska State Medical Board. While I recognize that the intent of this appointment may be to bring diverse perspectives to the board, I believe that the nominee's limited experience and qualifications do not adequately meet the standards required for such a critical role in overseeing the practice of medicine in Alaska.

My name is Alana Wright and I have lived in Alaska my entire life. I have practiced medicine as a Physician Assistant for the past 5 years, serving underserved communities at South Central Foundation in primary care and in the emergency services department. It is disheartening to hear PA Smith's testimony that the native health care system provides subpar care, and reflects her limited knowledge of the Alaska Native Medical Center. It is particularly interesting given she has never practiced medicine within the native health care system, or within any system other than chiropractic care.

Samantha Smith has spent her professional career working in a chiropractic office, which, does not provide the comprehensive medical knowledge and experience necessary to serve on the State Medical Board. The scope of practice and understanding required for overseeing the

regulation of healthcare professionals in Alaska is vastly broader than the environment in which she has worked.

Furthermore, PA Smith's exposure to the medical field is very limited. As a physician assistant with minimal experience in direct clinical medicine, particularly in a broader healthcare setting, I believe her knowledge of the critical issues facing the medical profession in Alaska is insufficient. The State Medical Board requires members who are experienced, knowledgeable, and deeply familiar with the medical practices, ethics, and the healthcare challenges that Alaska faces, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully urge you to oppose Samantha Smith's confirmation to the Alaska State Medical Board. The Board's work is too important to be entrusted to someone who may not possess the requisite experience or understanding of the diverse and complex issues affecting healthcare delivery in Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alana Wright

MPAS, PA-C

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