

March 25, 2025

Representative Justin Ruffridge
State Capitol Room 424
Juneau AK, 99801
Representative.Justin.Ruffridge@akleg.gov

RE: AHHA Supports House Bill 144 – Prior Authorization

Dear Representative Ruffridge,

For over 70 years, the Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association (AHHA) has served as a non-profit trade association representing Alaska's hospitals, nursing homes, and a growing number of healthcare partners across the continuum of care. AHHA members play an invaluable role, both as community providers and essential employers, in cities, towns, and villages across Alaska.

AHHA strongly supports HB 144, and we thank Representative Ruffridge for introducing this important piece of legislation.

Prior authorization is a review process commonly used by insurers that essentially requires healthcare providers to obtain express authorization to provide a specific treatment or procedure for their patients. While prior authorization can be useful for reviewing the appropriateness of medical care, it can also cause significant delays in necessary, urgent patient treatment.

We hear story after story about time-consuming appeals, endless paperwork, lack of consistency and transparency, and needless interruptions to treatment when patients are at their most vulnerable. This has contributed to a contentious relationship between providers and insurers in Alaska and across the country.

AHHA spent the interim working to align insurers, providers, and regulators around shared priorities. To start, we partnered with our member hospitals to identify practical, workable solutions to the prior authorization challenges. We then engaged with the Division of Insurance to assess feasibility and impact from a regulatory perspective. From there, discussions with insurers revealed common ground, making it clear that we could agree to concrete reforms to improve the prior authorization process.

HB 144 is the result of this collaborative effort. The bill has the strong backing of Alaska's hospitals through AHHA, physicians via the Alaska State Medical Association, and the state's major health insurers. The bill prioritizes system automation and injects a new level of transparency for prior authorization, including policies, peer review and appeals, enforcement, and accountability.



HB 144 also includes the following reforms that will have an immediate and positive impact on patients:

- Faster turnaround times for decisions – from five working days to 72 hours
- Long-term approval for treatments concerning chronic conditions
- Prohibit restrictions on key therapies for Stage Four Advanced Metastatic Cancer
- A clear process for requesting exceptions to step therapy requirements

Finally, AHHA is proud of the work that went into HB 144 and is grateful to Representative Ruffridge for bringing this legislation forward. This bill exemplifies effective, stakeholder-driven reform that will create lasting improvements in patient care. We strongly support HB 144 and urge the committee to swiftly consider and pass this bill.

Thank you for considering this request and for your commitment to advancing healthcare for Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Kosin', written over a circular scribble.

Jared C. Kosin, JD, MBA
President & CEO

March 21, 2025

The Honorable Genevieve Mina
Chair, House Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 106
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Subject: Support for House Bill 144 – Prior Authorization

Dear Chair Mina:

I am writing to you on behalf of Central Peninsula Hospital to express our strong support for House Bill 144, which aims to improve the prior authorization process.

Central Peninsula Hospital is committed to providing high-quality, efficient care to our community. However, the current prior authorization process often creates unnecessary delays and administrative burdens for our patients. House Bill 144's provisions, such as the establishment of clear timelines for responses, the requirement for transparent and evidence-based standards, and implementation of a prior authorization application programming interface, will streamline the process and enhance patient access to timely care.

This legislation makes prior authorization standards that ensures transparency, establishes a process for health care providers to request a clinical peer review of a prior authorization request. In addition, it ensures that clinical expertise is considered in the decision-making process, mandates that prior authorizations for chronic conditions are valid for a minimum of 12 months and reduces the administrative burden associated with ongoing care. These are all positive improvements over today's prior authorization process!

We believe this legislation will have a positive impact on the delivery of care in Alaska, and we urge you hear and move this legislation as quickly as possible. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Shaun Keef
CEO
Central Peninsula Hospital

CC: Representative Justin Ruffridge

April 1, 2025

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[Representative Mina, Chair](#)
[House Health & Social Services Committee](#)
[State Capitol Room 106](#)
[Juneau, AK 99801](#)
House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

RE: Heritage Place Supports House Bill 144 – Prior Authorization

Dear Chair Mina and Committee Members,

Heritage Place is a 60-bed Long-Term Care Facility centrally located on the Kenai Peninsula, dedicated to serving our community's most vulnerable residents. Our mission is to provide the highest quality of care, and to this end, we strongly support **HB 144**.

Currently, the prior authorization process causes significant delays in providing timely care for our residents. These delays are particularly concerning given that our residents often have frail, compromised health, and lack the physical reserves to endure the wait for essential treatments. Each delay in care puts our vulnerable population at further risk, underscoring the urgent need for reform.

HB 144 is important because it brings much needed reforms to the prior authorization process that will help our residents. Speeding up turnaround time for prior authorization decisions, providing long-term prior authorization for treatment of chronic conditions, prohibiting restrictions on key therapies for advanced cancer, requiring an exception process to step therapy, increasing transparency and accountability, and prioritizing automation, are all positive steps for improving access to timely, quality care in our state. Please pass HB 144.

Thank you for your work in addressing healthcare challenges for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Cathy Reaktenwalt MSN, RN-BC, LNHA
Administrator, Director of Nursing

Heritage Place
232 W. Rockwell Ave.
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www.foundationhealth.org
1650 Cowles Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701

April 1, 2025

Representative Genevieve Mina, Chair
House Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

Re: Support for HB 144 – Prior Authorizations

Dear Chairwoman Mina and Committee Members:

Foundation Health Partners (FHP) is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation operating Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Denali Center, and Tanana Valley Clinic. As a healthcare system dedicated to providing a full continuum of health care services to Interior and Northern Alaska residents, FHP recognizes the urgent need to reform prior authorization processes to improve patient care and alleviate administrative burdens on providers.

Prior authorization, while intended to ensure the appropriateness of medical treatments, has become a significant barrier to timely patient care. Hospitals and healthcare providers across the state, including those under FHP, continually face delays caused by inefficient and inconsistent prior authorization requirements. These delays can lead to negative health outcomes, particularly for patients requiring urgent or ongoing treatment.

FHP's patients, families, and neighbors have countless stories about how the current prior authorization system has caused delays and failures in communication. HB 144 introduces much-needed reforms that will benefit both healthcare providers and the patients we serve by reducing delays in patient care, enhancing transparency and efficiency, protecting patients with chronic and advanced conditions, and establishing clear exceptions for step therapy.

These reforms will enable FHP and other healthcare providers to focus on what matters most—delivering high-quality, timely care to our patients. By addressing the inefficiencies and inconsistencies that have long plagued prior authorization, HB 144 ensures that Alaska's hospitals can operate more effectively and improve health outcomes statewide.

Foundation Health Partners is proud to support this collaborative, stakeholder-driven reform and urges the committee to advance HB 144 for the benefit of all Alaskans. Thank you for your commitment to improving healthcare access and efficiency in our state.

Sincerely,



Shelley D. Ebenal
Chief Executive Officer
Foundation Health Partners



Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

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April 1, 2025

Transmitted via email: House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

Representative Genevieve Mina, Chair
House Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 106
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for House Bill 144: Insurance - Prior Authorization

Dear Chair Mina and Committee Members,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)¹ writes to express our support for House Bill (HB) 144 Prior Authorization. Prior authorization is a review process commonly used by insurers that requires healthcare providers to obtain authorization to provide a specific treatment or procedure for their patients. While prior authorization can be useful for reviewing the appropriateness of medical care, it can also cause significant delays in necessary, urgent patient treatment.

Across the Alaska Tribal Health System, the current prior authorization process serves as an administrative challenge to our ability to provide healthcare services and medications in a timely and efficient manner. To preserve limited healthcare resources for direct patient care, it is critical that we work together to improve the existing prior approval process through a collaborative and coordinated effort. HB 144 is a product of this effort, representing a significant step in strengthening our care delivery system and the health of the patients we serve.

HB 144 is important because it brings much-needed reforms to the prior authorization process that will help patients. Speeding up turnaround time for prior authorization decisions, providing long-term prior authorization for treatment of chronic conditions, prohibiting restrictions on key therapies for advanced cancer, requiring an exception process to step therapy, increasing transparency and accountability, and prioritizing automation, are all positive steps for improving access to timely, quality care in our state.

¹ ANHB was established in 1968 to promote the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and cultural well-being and pride of Alaska Native people. ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is comprised of Tribal health programs that serve all 229 Tribes and over 234,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people throughout the state. As the statewide Tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB supports Alaska's Tribes and Tribal programs to achieve effective consultation and communication with state and federal agencies on matters of concern.

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PRIBILOF
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

ARCTIC SLOPE
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL BAY AREA
HEALTH CORPORATION

CHICKALOON VILLAGE
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

CHUGACHMIUT

COPPER RIVER
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN
TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES

KARLUK IRA
TRIBAL COUNCIL

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE

KETCHIKAN
INDIAN COMMUNITY

KODIAK AREA
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

MANIILAQ ASSOCIATION

METLAKATLA INDIAN
COMMUNITY

MT. SANFORD
TRIBAL CONSORTIUM

NATIVE VILLAGE
OF EKLUTNA

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

NATIVE VILLAGE
OF TYONEK

NINILCHIK
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

NORTON SOUND
HEALTH CORPORATION

SELDOVIA VILLAGE TRIBE

SOUTHCENTRAL
FOUNDATION

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

YAKUTAT TLINGIT TRIBE

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM
HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE

We urge the Legislature to advance HB 144. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the well-being of all of Alaskans. If you have any comments or questions regarding this letter, please contact ANHB at anhb@anhb.org or (907) 729-7510.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.F. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chief William F. Smith, Chairman
Alaska Native Health Board

Alaska State Medical Association

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • (907) 562-0304 • (907) 215-3305 (fax)

March 31, 2025

Representative Genevieve Mina, Chair
House Health and Social Services
Juneau AK, 99801
House.Health.and.Social.Services@alaska.gov

RE: ASMA Support for House Bill 144 – Prior Authorization

Dear Representative Mina:

On behalf of the Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 144, which addresses prior authorization processes for medical care covered by health care insurers.

This legislation represents a significant step toward improving access to timely and necessary medical care for Alaskans. By streamlining prior authorization requests and incorporating an application programming interface, HB 144 reduces administrative burdens on healthcare providers and ensures that patients receive the care they need without unnecessary delays.

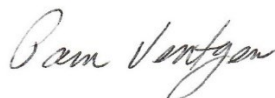
The provisions related to step therapy offer a balanced approach to treatment protocols, prioritizing patient health and safety while maintaining cost-effective care.

Additionally, the peer-to-peer review criteria will greatly reduce physician frustration with having to explain current standard of care to a physician reviewer who is often not familiar with the best practices in the provider's medical specialty.

ASMA believes that HB 144 aligns with our mission to advocate for policies that enhance the quality and accessibility of healthcare in Alaska. We urge the legislature to pass this bill and stand ready to provide any assistance or testimony needed to support its enactment.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the health and well-being of Alaskans.

Sincerely,



Pam Ventgen, Executive Director, Alaska State Medical Association