

From: [Gavin Carmichael](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: We Must Support Alaska WWAMI medical education program
Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 6:10:08 AM

Dear Committee Finance,

The WWAMI program is critical to the sustained success of healthcare delivery in Alaska, and ultimately to the health of Alaskans.

It's also strategic to keep the program. The shortsighted, and ill-conceived perception of cost savings by not supporting WWAMI will be adversely recognized by Alaskans long term by 1) a general decrease in access to care, and quality of life, due to a lack of providers delivering simple, statistically demanded primary care by a population, 2) increased cost to state and Federal health programs due to decreased availability to preventive services and the subsequent consequences of delayed care and 3) a downward spiral in the availability of specialists due to a smaller presence of referring primary care providers (and hence an increase in overall cost of care to home health programs, LTC, acute ED visits, etc and patient volume spikes). These costs will increase subsequently (perhaps years later) due to the general principle failure of 1 and 2, above.

We've already proven medical tourism does not work, especially in Alaska, except for a very small n of elective procedures that are not time sensitive. Although some elderly seek their primary care in Yuma, etc as snowbirds; the Alaskan adage of "Hearts don't wait" still holds true. We are simply not going to fly AMI patients to Seattle!

Pause and think about your own care: if your primary care provider is in Yuma or Phoenix; that is where you will get your procedure done, right? The challenge is most Alaskans have support groups to help them after surgery - that live in Alaska.

Alaskans require preventive services in Alaska, and at an adequate supply to sustain our population (demand) that chose to retire, seek work, and live here.

WWAMI is a collaborative medical school among universities in five NW states. Operating for over 44 years, the program has consistently provided some of the best and brightest Alaskans access to the medical education and training necessary for them to return home and serve their communities, helping to address our state's shortage of physicians. The intent language included in the House budget will eliminate the program.

The elimination of this program will have long term impacts for Alaska's health care system. Without the program, physician shortages will worsen and recruitment challenges will increase. The result will be an increase in health care costs and a decrease in health care quality as we are no longer able to "grow our own" physicians. The WWAMI program is a success and a critical part of the state education and health care infrastructure.

To protect the health of all Alaskans, remove the intent language to eliminate the program from the budget. This program represents one of the most efficient and cost-effective tools Alaska has available to invest in our health delivery system and the health of our people.

Please ensure funding for the WWAMI program continues.

Gavin H. Carmichael, MBA, Fellow, American College of Healthcare Executives

Sincerely,

Gavin h. Carmichael, FACHE
11001 Totem Rd
Anchorage, AK 99516