

## Konrad Jackson

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**From:** SUL ROSS THORWARD <srthorward@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 09, 2025 5:09 AM  
**To:** Sen. Matt Claman; Senate Labor and Commerce  
**Cc:** Pam Ventgen  
**Subject:** Senate Bill No. 83(HSS)

I wish to speak in favor of SB 83. Especially I speak for the need of

*\* Sec. 2. AS 21.42.422 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:*

*9 (c) A health care insurer shall reimburse a health care provider for health care  
10 services, including behavioral health services, provided through telehealth on the same  
11 basis and at least at the same rate as for comparable health care services provided in  
12 person.*

MY name is Sul Ross Thorward, MD, DLFAPA. I am a psychiatrist and have been practicing in the village of Yakutat for 2+ years at the Yakutat Community Health Center. Prior to that I lived and practiced for 13+ years in Sitka. There I served as the Medical Director for Behavioral Health of SEARHC. Thus I have been serving patients in southeast Alaska for 15+ years.

Since retiring from SEARHC, I see patients part time in Yakutat. I travel and am in Yakutat physically for face to face service for 4 day clinics about four times a year. The rest of the year I serve through telemedicine from my home in Columbus, Ohio. I am licensed in Alaska and Ohio as well as Texas and Washington State.

Since I am not in Yakutat full time, Telemedicine allows me to provide continuity of care to my patients throughout the year and between my in-village clinics. I also am able to provide consultation and support as needed to the primary care staff in the clinic as well

When I see my patients via telemedicine, it is a fully comparable service. My patients still come to the health center for our appointments. They check in and their vital signs are taken in the same manner as when I am in the village. The patients go to the same interview room in which I usually see them. I communicate with them by two way video through a laptop which is sitting at my usual desk. I communicate face to face with both the patient and support staff in live time just as if I was in the clinic.

All services and support for the visit are the same as if I was in the village. The interaction is the same. But there are actually additional costs to this service not less. In addition to normal clinic costs, there is the additional burden of needing a secure private location in Ohio, as well as additional HIPAA secure computer and internet service to empower our interaction and charting, and order entry.

Therefore, I see no justification for a discounted service which actually has increased cost. Please act affirmatively. Please pass and enact SB 83.

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Remember to hold hands when crossing rapids!!

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