

Alaska Chapter

Incorporated in Alaska

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



March 13, 2025

President

Anna Ogena, MD, FAAP

Re: SB 89

Vice President

Jody Butto, MD, FAAP

Dear Senator Bjorkman,

Secretary-Treasurer

Wesley Gifford, MD, FAAP

The American Academy of Pediatrics, Alaska Chapter strongly opposes the passage of Senate Bill 89 in its current format. Giving Physicians Assistants fully independent practice in Alaska, without guardrails could potentially increase their scope of practice in ways that are inappropriate to their initial training.

Past President

Lily J. Lou, MD, FAAP

Executive Director

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Passage of SB 89 has the potential to harm children who receive care from an individual who does not have proper training. A Board-Certified Pediatrician practicing in Alaska has been through 4 years of medical school plus 3-7 years of residency and fellowship. They receive robust training and must complete between 12,000 and 16,000 hours of patient care to receive certification. In comparison, a PA is not required to complete a residency or fellowship.

Website

www.aapalaska.com

We ask that SB89 be amended to include the following:

- 10,000 hours of training under a licensed physician. This is the training requirement that states like Utah require for independent practice by PA's. It would mean that a PA would have a post graduate training regimen like physicians. These extra hours would provide additional education and training under supervision to help coach new graduates.
- 8,000 hours of training plus a collaborative agreement with a specialist in a specific field for a Physician's Assistant who chooses to switch specialties. Physicians must complete a fellowship plus board certification to become a specialist. They receive exposure to the variety of clinical problems that arise in a specialty and opportunity for close collaboration with an expert in the field. Physicians who change specialties must complete a second residency or fellowship. Physicians Assistants should also have rigorous training requirement before they can practice independently in a new specialty.
- Amending the language regarding surgical procedures. The current version of SB 89 states that a PA may perform surgery with assistance. We would like to see it amended to state that a PA may perform surgery only with the assistance of a licensed physician
- Clarification about using appropriate titles when providing clinical care, so that patients and families understand who is providing the health care.

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Children in Alaska deserve quality care from individuals who receive extensive and comprehensive training. Parents should be assured that those treating their children are providing care based in vetted science and that follows professionally developed guidelines. They should feel confident that a provider has completed post graduate training under a physician. Parents may not understand the difference in training and experience between providers. Guaranteeing adequate training for all providers caring for Alaskan children ensures that parents can be confident their children are receiving appropriate care. For these reasons, we urge you to amend SB 89.

Sincerely,

Anna Ogena, MD, FAAP

Jody Butto, MD, FAAP

Patricia Clay, MD. FAAP

Benjamin Westley, MD, FAAP, FACP, FIDSA

Wesley Gifford, MA, FAAP

Jennifer Austin, APRN

