

Konrad Jackson

From: Jill Valerius <dr.valerius@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 11:32 AM
To: Senate Labor and Commerce; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Rep. DeLena Johnson
Subject: Opposition to SB 89 – Prioritize Patient Safety and Responsible Scope of Practice Reform

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Legislators,

I am writing to you as a family physician practicing in Alaska and a committed advocate for the health and safety of our communities. I urge you to reconsider and oppose SB 89 in its current form, which would grant physician assistants (PAs) full practice independence after only 4,000 hours of clinical experience—just two years of full-time work.

This proposal, as it stands, does not align with national standards or reflect the complexity of patient care in our unique state. In Utah, for instance, PAs are required to have 10,000 hours of supervised experience before gaining independence. Even North Dakota, which also sets the bar at 4,000 hours, ensures a team-based model with ongoing oversight and credentialing systems.

Alaska's current version of SB 89 lacks these critical safeguards.

Let me be clear: I value the role of PAs. I work with exceptional ones. But independence without sufficient clinical seasoning puts patients at risk, especially in rural and frontier communities where resources are limited, and the margin for error is slim. While PAs are highly trained professionals, their education and clinical exposure are not equivalent to that of physicians. Equating them through policy shortcuts does not improve access to care—it dilutes it.

If legislators believe this model is safe and effective, I invite you to commit to seeing *only* independent primary care physicians (PAs) for your medical care in the future. This would demonstrate true confidence in the system you're voting to create.

We must ask: Who is truly benefiting from this bill? The push toward rapid independence appears more aligned with cost-containment strategies favored by insurance companies than with what is best for patients. Our constituents deserve better than policy decisions that prioritize corporate interests over quality care.

As physicians, we are trained to prioritize safety, evidence, and outcomes. We are not opposed to scope evolution, but it must be implemented responsibly, with thoughtful transition, adequate clinical experience, and structured guardrails.

This is your opportunity to ensure that any changes to the scope of practice in Alaska serve the people, not just the system.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jill Valerius, MD, IFMCP
Family & Integrative Medicine Physician
Palmer, Alaska

In health,

Jill K Valerius, MD, ABoIM, IFMCP, ATC



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