

January 24, 2012

Dear Committee members of the House and Senate:

As physicians who care for children and their families, we are encouraged to see SB144 introduced. This bill would reinstate the funding for underinsured children who don't have access to VFC vaccine, and for underinsured and uninsured adults. With the current gaps in payment for vaccine coverage, we risk seeing a significant drop in vaccination rates and risk consequent outbreaks of preventable illnesses in our Southeast Alaska communities. One of the most effective public health advances of the twentieth century was the development of vaccines. The vaccine coverage that has recently been cut is not for rare and obscure illnesses. The vaccines that will not be completely funded without SB 144 prevent such devastating illnesses as pneumonia, meningitis (a deadly brain infection), cervical cancer in women, and life-threatening diarrhea-causing infections in infants. By having a robust statewide vaccination program, and fully funding it, Alaskans can be proud to provide the very best of basic preventive health care to all. By leaving funding gaps and having incomplete coverage, our legislature sends the message to our communities and citizens that such basic public health care is not a priority of our state. We recognize the current economic climate requires frugality, but cutting evidence-based preventive health services will not result in long-term savings or wellness for our state. As health care providers and concerned citizens, we strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 144.

Sincerely,

SEARHC Medical Staff members:

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Cc: Senator Bert Stedman & Representative Peggy Wilson