

Alaska State Medical Association

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • (907) 562-0304 • (907) 561-2063 (fax)

March 31, 2011

Honorable Bill Stoltze
Honorable Bill Thomas Jr.
Co-Chairs
State of Alaska
House of Representatives
Finance Committee
Room 519
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re - HB78 - Recruitment Incentives for Certain Health Care Professionals

Dear Representatives Stoltze & Thomas:

The Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA) represents physicians statewide and is primarily concerned with the health of all Alaskans.

ASMA strongly supports HB78. It was one of the stakeholders that came together to develop the concept for loan repayment and direct incentive program proscribed in HB78. This measure will provide for an effective recruitment tool for physicians as well as other health care professionals in short supply.

Alaska competes with all other states in the recruitment of an ever shrinking pool of physicians practicing general internal medicine or family medicine. Currently only about 2% of medical school graduates are choosing general internal medicine or family medicine residencies. 46 of those states with whom Alaska competes for these physicians already have a loan repayment or direct incentive program.

HB78 will help to solve Alaska's chronic and acute (in certain practice specialties) physician workforce shortages. Those practice specialties include family medicine, general internal medicine, psychiatry and general surgery.

HB78 is needed to help put Alaska on a more level playing field with other states trying to recruit for the same limited and shrinking supply of physicians needed to provide the care. Obviously, by attracting and keeping physicians in the State, the people of Alaska have better access to health care; but not so obvious is that our physician community is an important "economic engine" that materially contributes to a stronger state economy.

ASMA urges you and the other members of the House Finance Committee to support HB78 and to expeditiously take action to ensure enactment of this critical measure.

Sincerely,



By: James J. Jordan, Executive Director
For: The Alaska State Medical Association.