



February 17, 2014

The Honorable Bert Stedman
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Passage of Senate Bill 159, to allow air ambulance membership programs to continue.

Dear Representative Munoz,

My name is Chris Martin; I am the Executive Director of Airlift Northwest (ALNW). I have been at ALNW for the past 5 years, previous to that I served as the director of Emergency Services at Harborview Medical Center for 23 years. I have been acutely involved in the care and treatment of patients transported from Alaska for quaternary trauma and emergency care.

Airlift Northwest supports SB 159 which allows air ambulance membership programs to be reinstated in the state of Alaska. ALNW has offered a Membership program, known as AirCare in Alaska since 2009. We have 4,066 Alaskan AirCare members residing throughout SE Alaska who enjoy peace of mind and financial security knowing that if they had a medical emergency that they will not have to worry about financial hardship as well.

Lifesaving air medical transport can be expensive. Flying seriously ill patients to Anchorage or the lower 48 can cost up to \$95,000 per flight. Insurance may not cover all costs. As an AirCare member, only your insurance company receives a bill. Airlift Northwest works directly with your insurance company for claims processing. The AirCare membership program is secondary to all payers. The purpose of the AirCare membership is to cover the deductible and coinsurance amounts that may not be covered by the primary payer. Peace of mind through an Airlift Northwest AirCare Membership is only \$99 per household for Southeast Alaskans. It is a successful and stable program offered similarly by medical flight programs across the United States.

The solution you have proposed in SB 159 maintains consumer protection through an appropriate level of regulatory oversight by the Division of Insurance while allowing any air medical transportation group to offer Alaskans a Membership program.

When a house fire in Sitka, Alaska in 1978 claimed the lives of three children before they could reach the right type of care, a determined UW physician, Michael Copass had a world-changing idea: If patients are losing their lives because they can't access proper care in time, why not fly proper care to the patients? Since 1983 ALNW has been flying Alaskans to a higher level of care.

Airlift Northwest was the region's first flying intensive care unit. On every mission, we fly with two highly skilled nurses with current certifications in:

- Advanced cardiac life support
- Pediatric advanced life support
- Trauma nursing core course
- Neonatal resuscitation program
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

Each team also has flight nurses with one of the following certifications:

- Critical care nursing (CCRN)
- Emergency nursing (CEN)
- Flight nursing (CFRN)
- Specialty (RNC)

Airlift Northwest has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Services, or CAMTS, since 1997. Airlift Northwest was the first air medical service in Southeast Alaska to receive this recognition. Accreditation means a medical transport service meets a series of industry standards that address issues of patient care and safety.

Airlift Northwest is proud to have a base in Juneau serving SE Alaska communities with both an Aero Commander Turbo Prop and a Lear 31A jet. The dual platform allows us to serve a broader range of communities with shorter runways or steeper approach. We have 15 FTE, Juneau based, nurses flying missions with the aircraft.

Thank you for your time and effort in sponsoring SB 159. We are eager to support you in the bill passing this session so we can return to offering the same great air medical care and financial peace of mind to the residents of SE Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

Chris Martin, RN
Executive Director
Airlift Northwest.