

Providence Health & Services Alaska
3760 Piper Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99508



February 24, 2014

The Honorable Bob Lynn, Chairman
State Affairs Committee
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Lynn:

On behalf of Providence Health & Services Alaska, I write today to express opposition to the provision in House Bill 127 that seeks to extend ombudsman authority and jurisdiction to patient complaints from certain private, non-governmental health care providers. As has been pointed out to the committee by the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, there is a fundamental misconception about the nature of services provided by residential behavioral health care providers. We concur with that observation.

Providence serves between 350 and 400 patients a month in our Psychiatric Emergency Department. In addition, we care for over 784 patients per year in our inpatient Behavioral Health Units. We incorporate multiple treatment modalities in which clients learn healthy patterns of living through constant exposure to role models and strict expectations. We are a voluntary, general hospital unit serving adults and adolescents. We provide a therapeutic environment that is physically secure and emotionally safe. Family members are included in the treatment of our patients and may visit at any time during their stay.

All behavioral health providers in Alaska are subject to three layers of oversight which require formal grievance and complaint procedures. We believe with the policies and procedures we have in place, coupled with the required oversight already in position, additional oversight as outlined in House Bill 127 is unnecessary and will take away valuable patient care time, replacing it with potentially labor-intensive processes.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie Herman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laurie Herman, Director
Government Relations