

March 19, 2014

Senator Fred Dyson
State Capitol, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB 80

Dear Senator Dyson:

On behalf of Premera Blue Cross, I am writing with respect to SB 80, *an act relating to the practice of telemedicine*. Premera strongly supports SB 80 which promotes telemedicine and improves access to clinical services for Alaskans provided by physicians and podiatrists who are licensed by the Alaska State Medical Board. We urge you to support this bill.

Healthcare costs in Alaska are among the highest in the United States and are continuing to rise each year. Research shows that telemedicine can reduce costs by providing care through more efficient means. In addition, telemedicine improves access to care in remote locations, improves follow-up care for patients with chronic conditions, and creates a better patient experience by reducing travel time and absenteeism from work.

Currently, Medicare and a number of state Medicaid programs cover telemedicine as a measure to improve a patient's health by permitting communication between the patient and the physician located at a distant site. Premera currently covers certain telemedicine services in Oregon and in Washington State. And, a growing number of employers continue to show interest in telemedicine as a way to improve productivity and reduce their health care costs.

SB 80 is a critical bill to improve access to care, especially in rural communities, and utilize more cost-effective technologies to deliver essential and timely care to Alaskans.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sheela Tallman
Senior Manager, Legislative Policy