

From: [Tamera Weaver](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support Alaska WWAMI medical education program
Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2015 12:20:20 PM

Dear Committee Finance,

I am writing to ask you to please continue support of the WWAMI medical program. WWAMI is a collaborative medical school among universities in five NW states. Operating for over 44 years, the program has consistently provided some of the best and brightest Alaskans access to the medical education and training necessary for them to return home and serve their communities, helping to address our state's shortage of physicians. The intent language included in the House budget will eliminate the program.

I have lived in Alaska for 48 years; it is my home and I would like to retire here. For all Alaskans, access to quality health care is a crucial factor in deciding where to live. The WWAMI program provides a steady source of doctors to the state as the graduates return to the state they love, to work in the communities that need them so badly.

The elimination of this program will have long term impacts for Alaska's health care system. Without the program, physician shortages will worsen and recruitment challenges will increase. It is never more cost efficient to recruit talent from Outside, when you can grow your own. Imported professionals tend to have short tenures and the expensive recruitment process begins again. The result will be an increase in health care costs and a decrease in health care quality as we are no longer able to "grow our own" physicians. The WWAMI program is a success and a critical part of the state education and health care infrastructure.

I have a 21 year old daughter that has spent the last 6 years preparing to enter medical school. She is finishing her 3rd year of college at UAF with a perfect 4.0 gpa in Biological Science. She has job shadowed at various clinics and hospitals in the area and in Idaho while an exchange student. She has a summer job interning at a clinic in Fairbanks. She is volunteering 10 hours a week on research grants as an undergraduate with 2 professors at UAF. She takes the MCAT entrance exams in June and will apply to med school this summer to begin Fall 2016. This is a kid who will likely be accepted at other medical schools, but her heart has always been on entering the WWAMI program. She has met with multiple faculty members and advisors in Anchorage to prepare and to tour the facilities. It would be such a shame for her to go to medical school Outside and likely never return to practice in Alaska.

I understand the there are not resources to fully fund many valuable programs right now. This is not a permanent problem and participation in the WWAMI program should not be abandoned. At the very least, temporarily reduce the number of spots for Alaskans from 20 per year to a lower number. Alaskan students applying to other medical programs will be disadvantaged by being non-residents of these other state. There will be very few spots available to them to compete for, and the costs will be exponentially higher as non-residents.

To protect the health of all Alaskans, remove the intent language to eliminate the program from the budget. This program represents one of the most efficient and cost-effective tools Alaska has available to invest in our health delivery system and the health of our people.

Please ensure funding for the WWAMI program continues.

Sincerely,

Tamera Weaver
1449 Ithaca Rd
Fairbanks, AK 99709