

From: [Patrick Bloecher](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support Alaska WWAMI medical education program
Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 11:30:11 AM

Dear Committee Finance,

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.

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. 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.

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.

As an accepted candidate to the program I can personally relate to the importance of the WWAMI program in retaining health professionals. I have worked in rural environmental health for the past four years and am grateful to have an opportunity to stay in Alaska to begin my medical career. Without the WWAMI program, I would have left Alaska and may not have returned.

I can also attest to the advantage of having Alaskans trained in Alaska to provide medical care Alaska style. With some health organizations in the state suffering from over 30% staff turnover rates annually, patients rarely get continuity of care. Having Alaskans trained as medical providers in Alaska builds a foundation for providing better medical care. Continuing to pay out of state professionals to come to Alaska for high wages and little time is not a sustainable solution.

Please ensure funding for the WWAMI program continues so Alaskans like myself have an opportunity to serve the people of this great state.

Sincerely,

Patrick Bloecher
2632 Glacier St
Anchorage, AK 99508