

From: [Leslie Bryant](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support Alaska WWAMI medical education program
Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 12:10:19 PM

Dear Committee Finance,

As a 59 year old family physician myself, I remind you that Anchorage faces the imminent retirement of many family physicians, for a number of reasons, and will feel the loss for a long time to come if they are not replaced. This will include much increased cost of taking care of problems in the ER that should and could have been taken care of in the much less expensive office setting. The cost of sending one medical student through four years at WWAMI could be saved by avoiding one or two three day hospitalizations. I myself experienced a \$17,000 bill for 3 hours in the emergency room being evaluated for a problem. I see bills for \$2,000 - 3,000 to have a minor laceration sutured at the emergency room that would have cost just 15-20% of that if they had been done in a family doctor's office. From a purely financial standpoint, the state will spend much more in medical expenses than it will possibly save by terminating the WWAMI program. If the program is abruptly terminated, it will be hard to convince quality faculty to risk signing up for it if we try to start it up again. The legislature should not make any hasty decisions, get someone to really do the math before making such a drastic decision.

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.

Please ensure funding for the WWAMI program continues.

Sincerely,

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