



February 26, 2016

Senator Peter Micciche
State Capitol Room 514
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Micciche,

On behalf of the Mat-Su Health Foundation and its Board of Directors, I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 98, “An Act relating to diagnosis, treatment, and prescription of drugs without a physical examination.”

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its profits from that partnership back into the community in order to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su. A Community Health Needs Assessment conducted in 2013 drew on input from more than 500 Mat-Su residents to identify the top health and wellness goals for our community. The top five goals were all related to behavioral health care. We built on the Community Health Needs Assessment project by commissioning a Behavioral Health Environmental Scan in order to better understand what is working in the Mat-Su behavioral health care system and what can be improved. It is clear from the data collected in this study that our residents do not have adequate access to vital behavioral health care. Telemedicine is a proven way to increase access to health care, which can reduce costly visits to emergency rooms for problems that could have been resolved before they turned into a crisis.

We believe that SB98 reflects successful evidence-based practices that can help ease the access to care issues facing the Mat-Su, as well the entire State of Alaska, and that is why we support it, along with other policy changes and legislation related to this issue. Thank you for introducing this important and timely legislation. If you have any questions or would like copies of the reports mentioned in this letter, please don't hesitate to contact me directly via email: eripley@healthymatsu.org.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ripley
Executive Director