



March 14, 2015

The Honorable Bert Stedman
Chairman, Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska Senate
State Capitol Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chairman

I am writing on behalf of the Interior Independent Practice Association regarding SB 55. We are an organization comprised of independently practicing physicians and associate providers in the Alaskan Interior. Our group represents the majority of all the specialist providers within the Interior. We are dedicated to the goal of providing access to high quality, safe medical care to all residents of the Interior. As such, we respectfully ask that you oppose SB 55. As you are aware, this bill would expand the scope of practice privileges to Optometrists. This would allow a group of providers who have neither completed medical school nor residency training to both perform surgical procedures and use medications with potentially toxic and life-threatening side effects. We do not feel that this would be compatible with the goal of providing safe and high quality care. The practice of establishing and upholding high standards for medical practice has been in place in the United States for over 80 years. The American Board of Medical Specialties and the individual national specialty groups make painstaking effort to ensure that member physicians demonstrate high levels of competency, judgment, and safety in caring for patients. To allow equivalent practice privileges to providers who have not been trained and certified in accordance with these standards both undermines this effort and creates increased potential for significant harm to patients. Please help us in our effort to maintain high standards for patient care and safety in Alaska by voting "no" on SB 55. Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher Jensen, M.D.
President
Interior Independent Practice Association