

From: [David McCandless](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Support Alaska WWAMI medical education program
Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2015 8:40:12 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.

Please ensure funding for the WWAMI program continues.

I have spent over 20 years helping to train future medical professionals in the WWAMI program, and with the residency program, where many of these students continue their training. This is the only access kids from AK would realistically have to medical training in their own communities. It is a bargain compared to what most states invest to have physician level medical care, and it has been successful. If you discontinue this, you will go back to what you had before. You can only consider this by forgetting about this. When I came here it was with a few good doctors in the public health service, and a scattering of dedicated physicians, that were diluted by those who could not practice elsewhere or were escaping their past mistakes. It has taken decades to climb out of that hole, and I can tell you I'm not going through that again. Please continue this program.

Dave McCandless MD

Sincerely,

Dave McCandless MD
PO BOX 1549
HAINES, AK 99827