

Anita Halterman

From: Rep. Liz Vazquez
Sent: Saturday, January 16, 2016 10:22 PM
To: Anita Halterman
Subject: Fwd: HB 234

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From: John DeRuyter <JDeRuyter@hopecounselingcenter.org>
Date: January 14, 2016 at 9:29:01 AM AKST
To: "'Representative.Liz.Vazquez@akleg.gov'" <Representative.Liz.Vazquez@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 234

Dear Representative Vazquez,

I write this letter as practicing Psychologist, a Training Director for the Alaska Psychology Internship Consortium, a former member of the Alaska Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners, and the Executive Director of Hope Counseling Center in Fairbanks. As a psychologist, I am a current provider of mental health services delivered via telehealth technologies.

Recently I was made aware of the HB 234, a bill which you are sponsoring. I completely support the premise that insurance companies doing business in the State of Alaska be required to reimburse for mental health services delivered via telehealth technologies. However I am very concerned that the bill's language specifically prohibits a requirement that face to face evaluation occur prior to telehealth services being reimbursed. This prohibition is a SIGNIFICANT end run around Best Practices and the safe delivery of mental health services using telehealth technologies.

For the safety of those who would receive mental health services I STRONGLY recommend that the prohibition to require face to face contact prior to being reimbursed by insurance for those services be removed. Obviously there are cases when face to face contact is simply not possible (i.e. emergencies, or extremely limited transportation access). However those should be the extreme exception. Perhaps language could be included that stipulates prior authorization by the

insurance company before initiating telehealth mental health services without previous face to face contact.

Representative Vazquez, this is truly a Protection of the Public issue. There are many other safety considerations I've not mentioned. However, for the purposes of this bill's language and what it would allow if passed, I make my concerns known.

Respectfully,

John DeRuyter Psy.D

Executive Director

Hope Counseling Center Inc.

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