



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Commerce, Community,  
and Economic Development

STATE MEDICAL BOARD

550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1500  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3567  
Main: 907.269.8163  
Toll free fax: 907.269.8156

February 15, 2019

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Senate  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Senator Giessel:

The Alaska State Medical Board has reviewed Senate Bill (SB) 44, which proposes to add Physician Assistants (PAs) as authorized practitioners of telemedicine.

The Board noted that the telemedicine bill, passed during a previous Legislature, was specific to physicians. This bill would expand that authority to PAs.

The Board determined to support the bill.

Sincerely,

Catherine Hyndman, M.D.  
Board President  
Alaska State Medical Board



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of  
Health and Social Services**

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693  
Main: 907.465.3250  
Fax: 907.465.1398

March 21, 2019

Senator Cathy Giessel  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 111  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

Subject: ACoA Support SB 44, "Prescription of Drugs by a Physician Assist without Physical Examination"

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to express our support for SB 44, relating to the "prescription of drugs by a physician assistant without physical examination," authored by you. Based on our understanding, SB 44 is basically a "clean-up" bill that would provide physician assistants with the same authority to practice telemedicine, like physicians, who were unintentionally left out of the Medicaid Reform bill passed in 2016. SB 44 remedies this omission by adding physician assistants to the list of approved providers to practice telemedicine in Alaska, while requiring the same statutory oversight and disciplinary sanctions as prescribed for physicians.

The Health Resources Services administration defines Alaska as a "Health Care Professional Shortage Area" and "Medically Underserved Health Care Area." Given the health care needs of Alaska's fast-growing senior population as well as those in rural/remote areas where access to medical care is particularly challenging, the Commission views SB 44 as common sense policy to enhance access to affordable health care options by increasing the number of qualified primary care providers approved to practice telemedicine.

Thank you for your leadership on SB 44. Please contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's Executive Director, at 465-4879 or [denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov) for further information.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Gordon Glaser in black ink.

Gordon Glaser  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denise Daniello in black ink.

Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director

February 15, 2018

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

My name is Christopher Dietrich. I am currently a practicing PA providing medical care throughout Alaska. This letter is to support reducing barriers to care for patients involving advanced health practitioners. I am offering my support for Senate Bill 44 addressing the ability to Physician Assistants to establish care for patients via telemedicine. With recent legislation passage of Senate Bill 74 in 2016, advanced level practitioners gained allowable practice to treat patients and establish care via telemedicine. Care requirements did not change under this practice and standard of care still applies to ensure that improving access does not lessen quality. The bill appears to have left out direct language to be applicable for Physician Assistants to establish care via telemedicine. Physician Assistants have played a significant role in Alaska in expanding care to the underserved and acting as medical extenders to patient care teams.

As a psychiatric provider treating pediatric patients, at risk youth, and some of our most underserved populations; the barrier of care establishment is vast and unnecessary. I provide care to remote patients across rural Alaska. Currently the guidelines of telemedicine make our ability to provide care difficult with undue burdens on our patients. In psychiatry, this can delay care and create a barrier to services. As many of residents know all too well, traveling to a clinic to receive services is not something always easily done. Requiring a face to face exam in person creates an additional requirement for our patients that has no evidence based benefit in changing outcomes. This can require them additional costs for travel and decrease the patient outcomes for recovery due to delays in treatment.

I have had many pediatric patients that may have significant trauma be seen via telemedicine and subsequently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. These patients may reside in a rural location and an alternative psychiatric provider may not be easily available for weeks to months. Delaying the ability to establish care drastically increases the morbidity to these patients and is harmful to their recovery. SB44 has the potential to continue promote what SB74 was intended by increasing access options for our state.

PA's such as myself are pleased to support your efforts on behalf of Senate Bill 44. For further information, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact me at: [chris@obhn.org](mailto:chris@obhn.org).

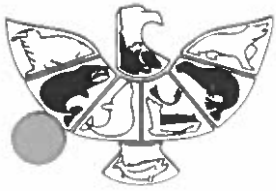
Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris D. Dietrich", followed by a large, stylized flourish.

Christopher D. Dietrich, PA-C, PSY-CAQ  
Assistant Medical Director  
Orion Behavioral Health Services

President, Board of Directors  
Alaska Collaborative of Telehealth & Telemedicine.

Health Practitioner  
Department of Corrections, State of Alaska



# Alaska Native Health Board

THE VOICE OF ALASKA TRIBAL HEALTH SINCE 1968

☎ 907.562.6006 ☎ 907.563.2001 • 4000 Ambassador Drive, Suite 101 • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • [www.anhb.org](http://www.anhb.org)

March 26, 2019

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
President of the Alaska Senate  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 44

Dear Senator Giessel,

The Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) is writing in support of Senate Bill 44.

ANHB was established in 1968 with the purpose of promoting the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and cultural well-being and pride of Alaska Native people. ANHB is the statewide voice on Alaska Native health issues and is the advocacy organization for the Alaska Tribal Health System (ATHS), which is comprised of tribal health programs that serve all of the 229 tribes and over 175,000 Alaska Natives and American Indians (AN/AI) throughout the state. As the statewide tribal health advocacy organization, ANHB assists tribal partners, state and federal agencies with achieving effective communication and consultation with tribes and their tribal health programs.

ANHB supports Senate Bill 44 (SB 44), a bill to allow Physician Assistants (PAs) the ability to administer prescription drugs without a physical (in-person) exam, thusly allowing PAs to deliver services via telemedicine to Alaska's remote communities. Rural communities in Alaska are overwhelmingly the home to our AN/AI population, and the health care in these communities is predominately delivered by Tribal Health Providers.

ANHB welcomes and applauds this expansion of service, and we believe it will help expand access to needed care in the State's designated health care shortage areas. Telemedicine is an invaluable tool for providing healthcare in these small, remote communities. While this bill expands the reforms of Senate Bill 74 to include PAs, it should also include other prescribing provider types, such as Nurse Practitioners, Dentists, and Optometrists. Expanding to include these additional providers will further fulfill the intent of expanding care via telemedicine.

ANHB also advocates for additional changes to AS 08.64.364(b). The Alaska State Legislature should additionally amend AS 08.64.364(b) to change the reference "licensed health care provider" to "licensed or certified health care provider" and delete the term "diagnosis". This change would allow Community Health Aide/Practitioners (CHA/Ps) to assist physicians and practitioners via telemedicine with physical exams for treating patients using medication assisted treatment (MAT). MAT is the use of medications in

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

ALEUTIAN PRIBILOF  
ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

ARCTIC SLOPE  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL BAY AREA  
HEALTH CORPORATION

CHICKALOON VILLAGE  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

CHUGACHMIUT

COPPER RIVER  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN  
TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES

KARLUK IRA  
TRIBAL COUNCIL

KENAITZE INDIAN TRIBE

KETCHIKAN  
INDIAN COMMUNITY

KODIAK AREA  
NATIVE ASSOCIATION

MANILAQA ASSOCIATION

METLAKATLA INDIAN  
COMMUNITY

MT. SANFORD  
TRIBAL CONSORTIUM

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF EKLUTNA

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

NATIVE VILLAGE  
OF TYONEK

NINILCHIK  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

NORTON SOUND  
HEALTH CORPORATION

SELDOVIA VILLAGE TRIBE

SOUTHCENTRAL  
FOUNDATION

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL  
HEALTH CONSORTIUM

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

UTAT TLINGIT TRIBE

YUKON-KUSKOKWIM  
HEALTH CORPORATION

VALDEZ NATIVE TRIBE

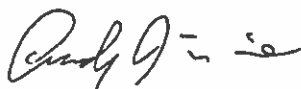
combination with counseling and behavioral therapies for the treatment of substance use disorders.<sup>1</sup>

Like PAs, CHA/Ps work with a collaborating physician; CHA/Ps however are certified rather than licensed. In Alaska, CHA/Ps are the most common practitioners in the ATHS with their farthest reach in rural communities. There are approximately 550 CHA/Ps that serve 170 rural Alaskan villages. The important role of CHA/Ps in the MAT telemedicine treatment process was recently recognized by the US Drug Enforcement Agency and Indian Health Service.<sup>2,3</sup> But due to the wording in AS 08.64.364(b), CHA/Ps cannot currently help facilitate telemedicine visits related to controlled substances, limiting the use of MAT via telemedicine for the treatment of substance use disorders in rural Alaska.

We hope that by expanding access to needed treatment options through telemedicine, both through prescribing PAs and CHA/P involvement for MAT treatment of substance use disorders, that Alaska's AN/AI peoples can receive the care they deserve.

If you would like to have further questions or comments on these issues, please contact ANHB at (907) 562-6006 or [anhb@anhb.org](mailto:anhb@anhb.org).

Sincerely,



Andrew Jimmie,  
Chairman  
Alaska Native Health Board

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Advisory* (2012). "An Introduction to Extended-Release Injectable Naltrexone for the Treatment of People with Opioid Dependence." Volume 11, Issue 1.

<sup>2</sup> Drug Enforcement Agency (2018). *Use of Telemedicine While Providing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)*. Accessed: <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/sites/default/files/2018-09/hhs-telemedicine-dea-final-508compliant.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Indian Health Service (2018). *Indian Health Service Manual*, Chapter 38 – Internet Eligible Controlled Substance Provider Designation. Accessed: <https://www.ihs.gov/ihtm/pc/part-3/chapter-38-internet-eligible-controlled-substance-provider-designation/>.

**From:** John Western <[jrwesternnavy@gmail.com](mailto:jrwesternnavy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 08, 2019 12:09 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** SB 44

Good day,

I am writing in support of this important legislation. My primary role is a rural and remote PA. I often work on the north slope and I am usually alone but need all the tools I can get. The distance from one place to the next can be very long as you know. Being able to offer treatment as the sole provider could occur just by speaking with a patient. Transportation is often a hindrance to care, but by allowing less restriction we could enhance the ability to provide quality and necessary care.

Thanks  
John Western PA  
Fairweather LLC  
Southcentral Foundation

**From:** Ashley Westbrook <[awestbrook@NSHCORP.ORG](mailto:awestbrook@NSHCORP.ORG)>

**Sent:** Monday, March 04, 2019 2:55 PM

**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** AK PAs and telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am a PA practicing in the Norton Sound villages of Elim, Golovin, and White Mountain and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. Covering multiple remote villages, I cannot be in each location at once and rely on telemedicine frequently.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Ashley

Ashley Westbrook, PA-C, MPAS  
Norton Sound Health Corporation  
PO Box 966  
Nome, AK 99762  
[awestbrook@nshcorp.org](mailto:awestbrook@nshcorp.org)



**From:** Katie Rulapaugh <[katierulapaugh@yahoo.com](mailto:katierulapaugh@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2019 12:06 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** In support of increased PA use of telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA who has worked in a variety of locations in the Aleutian Islands, Bristol Bay and other parts of rural Alaska. I have also worked in family medicine clinics in Kenai and Wasilla and an emergency department in Anchorage. I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Here is a hypothetical (but realistic) situation where improving access and use of telemedicine could improve care for rural Alaskans: A person in a remote village sustains an ankle fracture/dislocation. The dislocated bone is putting pressure on a blood vessel, which is limiting blood flow to the foot, and the foot is starting to turn blue and cold. The weather is too bad to fly the patient out of the village for several hours. The dislocation needs to be reduced (put back into place) properly so the foot can have normal blood supply. If the foot does not receive normal blood supply soon, the patient's foot will need to be amputated. The local provider has never reduced an ankle dislocation. The orthopedist the local provider contacts is busy in the operating room, but the orthopedist's PA is available. The PA is perfectly capable of talking the local provider through how to reduce the dislocation and properly splint it. It is much more effective to do this via telemedicine than by phone, because in using telemedicine, the PA can see exactly what the limb looks like, and what the local provider is doing. If the PA had access and ability to use telemedicine in this situation, it could save the patient's foot.

I have treated patients with a variety of dislocated body parts while working in bush clinics (including some types of dislocations I had never seen before). I have had to send at least one person with a dislocation I couldn't reduce into Anchorage by plane to have it treated several hours later. If I had had access to the appropriate specialist or his/her PA via telemedicine, I might have been able to treat this patient locally, which would have spared the patient the prolonged discomfort and expense of having to fly all the way to Anchorage to have his issue treated.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Katherine Van Atta, PA-C  
Itinerant PA at Camai Community Health Center in Naknek (and other locations)

**From:** "Angela S. Lucien" <[Angela.Lucien@tananachiefs.org](mailto:Angela.Lucien@tananachiefs.org)>  
**Date:** February 20, 2019 at 5:16:02 AM AKST  
**To:** "[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** SB44 - Telemedicine for Alaska PAs

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in the Upper Tanana and Fairbanks regions of Interior Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

A large portion our rural patients are served by telemedicine visits which provide faster access to diagnoses and initiation of treatment plans, as well as follow up visits. Many of our village patients have limited resources (financial, childcare, transportation) to get to town for appointments and rely heavily on telemedicine for their healthcare needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Angela Lucien, PA-C

**Angela Lucien, MPAS, PA-C**  
*Coordinator / Instructor - Upper Tanana Subregion*  
Community Health Aide Program  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Upper Tanana Health Center - North  
PO Box 289 | Tok, AK 99780  
Office: 907-883-5185 ext. 5230  
Cell: 907-301-8892  
Fax: 907-459-3978

**From:** Louisa M. Albright <[lmalbright@NSHCORP.ORG](mailto:lmalbright@NSHCORP.ORG)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 27, 2019 10:23 AM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** PA telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing at Norton Sound Health Corporation, currently living in Unalakleet. I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Living in Unalakleet with telemedicine I would be able to offer visits to my patients in Koyuk, Shaktoolik, St Michaels and Stebbins, initially over the video teleconference, then following up in person as appropriate. For many chronic health conditions, the patient needs frequent monitoring. Patients appreciate being able to be seen from their village. I can reinforce health lifestyle, adjust medicines, and address concerns with greater frequency without worrying about weather affecting travel.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Louisa Albright PA-C  
*Anikkan Clinic, Unalakleet, AK 624-3535*  
Norton Sound Health Corporation

**From:** Riley Bennett <[riley\\_bennet@hotmail.com](mailto:riley_bennet@hotmail.com)>

**Date:** February 20, 2019 at 8:24:21 PM AKST

**To:** "[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** Telemedicine

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am a PA practicing in rural Alaska. I request and strongly support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This is already happening throughout rural Alaska. For 6 years I practiced as a PA in Nome and various villages all throughout the region. I frequently used telemedicine to provide care to patients in very remote villages all over the Norton Sound Region. The requirement to see a patient in person limits patient access to care. This is unnecessary when licensed and qualified PAs are just as capable as physicians of providing services via telemedicine. This web-based communication platform allows people living in the most remote locations to access medical care they would not otherwise be able to.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

*Riley E Bennett-Vockner PA-C*

*907-841-0736*

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Kim Aikey <[kaaiskey64@gmail.com](mailto:kaaiskey64@gmail.com)>

**Date:** March 13, 2019 at 3:37:19 PM AKDT

**To:** [Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)

**Subject:** Telemedicine

I am a PA practicing in Anchorage and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kim Aikey, PA-C

Alaska Urgent Care Medical Clinic

2-28-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as a clinic coordinator and billing liaison and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. As a billing liaison I do notice that for any patients that are not in driving distance that the amount of money either spent on travel by the patient/family/insurance far outweighs the cost of a telemedicine visit. It can also be a very big burden on care for patients/families if telemedicine is the best choice, but not covered, that can impact a patient from even getting the care that they need due to not being able to afford the care.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jessi Eby

Orion Behavioral Health Network

Eagle River, AK 99577

**From:** Wendy Smith <[wendys@alaskafamilypractice.com](mailto:wendys@alaskafamilypractice.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 18, 2019 2:36 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Telemedicine bill, letter of support

*Dear Senator Giessel:*


*I am a PA practicing in Juneau and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

*Wendy Smith, PA-C  
Family Practice Physicians  
Akapa President 2019*

Sent from my iPhone




The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau, AK 99801

2-27-19

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as Pediatric Psychiatric PA with Orion Behavioral Health and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine.



This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I grew up in an Alaskan village and many of my friends and family suffer from lack of access to care. I pursued a career in pediatric psychiatry in order to help with this tremendous shortage.

Telemedicine offers a lifeline to rural Alaskan pediatric patients in need of psychiatric care, and access to care in general.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Shigone Beighle, Pediatric Psychiatric PA-C  
Adolescent & Child Psychiatry  
Orion Behavioral Health Network





2-28-19

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am currently working as Certified Medical Assistant in a psychiatric clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We often have patients that have to wait months to be seen in person, delaying their care, and ultimately causing further damage to the patient. If this law is revised we can accommodate and treat patients quickly and effectively through tele-medicine for our rural patients.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

Lillie, CCMA  
Orion Behavioral Health Network  
17025 Snowmobile Lane  
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

**From:** Thomas Dale <[tmd3@me.com](mailto:tmd3@me.com)>  
**Date:** March 9, 2019 at 5:04:04 AM AKST  
**To:** [Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)  
**Subject:** Telemedicine & PAs

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am a PA practicing in Fairbanks and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,  
Tom Dale, PA-C  
Emergency Medicine, Fairbanks*

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** ALP Medical <[alpmed@conocophillips.com](mailto:alpmed@conocophillips.com)>  
**Date:** February 20, 2019 at 5:43:56 AM AKST  
**To:** "[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)" <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Telemedicine & Physician Assistants

Senior Giessel,

Thank you for taking the time to read this note. I work in Alaska in a near isolated setting as a Physician Assistant. Formally, I worked in the California State Prisons where we utilized telemedicine effectively. The ability to "see" a patient and provide quality care is multiplied and enhanced with the use of telemedicine.

With fewer providers willing to deliver care in the remote and rural areas of Alaska it would seem logical to promote the use of telemedicine. With the improvements in technology it allows PAs to "see" patients in their homes (with privacy assured), as it no longer requires bulky and sophisticated equipment, simply a cell phone.

As a provider in remote Alaska for the last 11 years I have a feel for the remoteness and distance from care many physicians would not. The ability to used telemedicine to reach even more secluded areas or regions of oil and mining exploration would increase the quality of care for Alaskans

David M. Decker PA-C, MICP  
Ak Lic 780

2011 Huffman Rd #24547  
Anchorage Alaska 99515

2-28-19

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am currently working as an Administrative Assistant at a Psychiatric Clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We see patients all over Alaska and these current laws hinder our care for our patients that are out in the rural areas of the state. This is especially difficult for patients that are unable to travel.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jenni

Orion Behavioral Health Network  
17025 Snowmobile Lane  
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

<http://www.obhn.org>  
tel: 907-696-7466  
fax: 907-726-0332

**From:** Jessica Harper <[jessicaharperlll@yahoo.com](mailto:jessicaharperlll@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 20, 2019 10:35 AM

**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>

**Subject:** Revise Alaska Law for PAs to use telemedicine!

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am a PA student in Anchorage Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement **limits patient access** to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jessica Harper PA-S*

*Medex Northwest, UW*

**From:** Karen Millstein <[Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org](mailto:Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org)>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 08, 2019 12:17 PM  
**To:** Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>  
**Subject:** telemedicine

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA practicing in Kodiak Alaska and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I have been practicing in Kodiak for almost 20 years and have traveled frequently to the 6 villages on Kodiak Island to provide medical care. I also work closely the Community Health aides who live in the villages. I speak to them daily by phone and work with them monthly in the clinic. I am very comfortable with their skills and limitations. There have been many times that I am unable to get to the village or patients with medical issues are unable to get to town due to weather. We can provide good medicine using telehealth and being able to see and talk to patients with the health aide there to do the exam. Often I am familiar with the patients but frequently we have new patients that move back and forth between Anchorage and the villages or people who are just there in the summers for fishing. I see new patients all the time in the clinic and don't see any reason not to see them via Telemedicine. We use Telemedicine quite frequently here for Behavioral health, physical therapy and specialist appointments in the villages and psychiatry and specialist clinics here in Kodiak. Please contact me if I can answer any questions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

**Karen Millstein**

Physician Assistant

D: (907) 486-9864 | [Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org](mailto:Karen.Millstein@kodiakhealthcare.org)

Kodiak Area Native Association | 3449 Rezanof Drive East | Kodiak, Alaska 99615

[www.kodiakhealthcare.org](http://www.kodiakhealthcare.org)  

2-28-19

The Honorable Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

*I am currently working as an LPC at Orion Behavioral Health Network and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. I have worked with patients who have low access to care in rural Alaska and have had to wait to receive prescriptions. I have also had patients who have had a lapse in taking medications due to not being able to obtain their prescriptions quickly. I am in support of increasing access of care and I believe SB44 be beneficial.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

Aurora Sidney-Ando, LPC

Thank you~

**Aurora Sidney-Ando, Ph.D., LPC**  
**Orion Behavioral Health Network- OBHN**  
**Phone (907) 696-7466**  
**Fax (907) 726-0332**

Approximate work schedule Thursday - Friday 8am-6pm

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[aurora@obhn.org](mailto:aurora@obhn.org)

24 Hour ACMHS/Providence psychiatric or behavioral crisis line (907) 563-3200



**From:** [gilttrout@gmail.com](mailto:gilttrout@gmail.com)

**Date:** March 9, 2019 at 6:51:55 PM AKST

**To:** [Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)

**Subject:** SB 44

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am a PA practicing in Anchorage and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*



*Gilbert L Trout III, PA-C*

*Alaska Urology, 3841 Piper St T300, Anchorage AK 99508.*

*907-563-3103*

Sent from my iPhone





-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Wehling <[rwehling@afoc.com](mailto:rwehling@afoc.com)>

Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2019 7:11 AM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <[Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)>

Subject: SB44

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am a PA now practicing in Orthopedics and I strongly request and support revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska.

In the beginning of my career and during my training I had the opportunity to practice with telemedicine for the Alaska Dept of Corrections which provided service for remote facilities as well as remote communities suffering from lack of access due to a lack of providers or a willingness of providers to service remote communities. PAs are a vital asset around the country and even more so in a state like ours. Please support SB44 and give Alaskans the care they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Wehling, PA-C

Anchorage Fracture and Orthopedic Clinic, Total Joint Replacement Team and  
Adjunct Professor Department of Biological Sciences University of Alaska  
Anchorage

Cell: (907) 854-0839

2—28-19

*Dear Senator Giessel:*

*I am currently working as a Medical Assistant in a psychiatric clinic and I strongly request and support SB44 revising Alaska law to allow PAs to use telemedicine without being subject to limitations like requiring an in-person exam before a PA may treat a patient via telemedicine. This requirement limits patient access to care when licensed and qualified providers are available to provide services via telemedicine- which is particularly important in rural areas of Alaska. We see patients all over the state of Alaska and these current laws in effect are hindering our care for our remote patients and prescribing the necessary medications.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.*

*Sincerely,*

**Kim, MA**

Orion Behavioral Health Network  
17025 Snowmobile Lane  
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

<http://www.obhn.org>  
tel: 907-696-7466  
fax: 907-726-0332

# Legislative Testimony

## Senate Bill 44

*March 2019*



Senator Reinbold & Members of Senate Labor & Commerce,

Alaska has some of the highest health care costs in our country. One of the drivers of these costs is almost certainly the fact that we have a number of medically underserved areas in our state, particularly rural areas. Fewer providers who can perform services results in a lack of competition and this in turn can lead to higher health care costs.

In recent years, Alaska has made some progress in our medically underserved areas by expanding telehealth services to these communities. Senate Bill 74 (as passed in 2016) contributed to these improvements but did not include Physician Assistants in the telehealth section.

Expanding Physician Assistants ability to practice using telehealth, with the same authorities and restrictions as currently apply to their practices, is one step the legislature can take in helping reduce the cost of health care for Alaskans.

Bethany L. Marcum  
Executive Director  
Ph 907-334-5853

