

Alaska State Medical Association

4107 Laurel Street • Anchorage, Alaska 99508 • (907) 562-0304 • (907) 561-2063 (fax)

February 11, 2019

Honorable Cathy Giessel
Alaska Senate
State Capital Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senate Bill 37

Dear Senator Giessel:

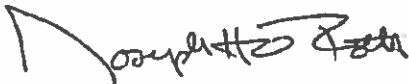
The Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA) represents physicians statewide and is primarily concerned with the health of all Alaskans.

I am writing to support Senate Bill 37, Renewal of Vaccine Assessment Program.

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 37. It is well documented that vaccines improve the overall health of our communities and can ultimately prove to save future health care costs. ASMA supported your previous effort to increase the availability of vaccines to Alaskans and supports passage of SB 37 to reauthorize that program.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to further support passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,



President For: The Alaska State Medical Association



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

February 25, 2019

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

Subject: ACoA Support SB 37, Renewal of Vaccine Assessment Program

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to express our support for SB 37 to renew the statewide immunization program that provides recommended vaccines for all Alaskans. This legislation, authored by you, utilizes a successful public/private partnership business model established in 2014 that allows the program to be self-sustaining with revenues collected from assessment fees paid by health insurance payers and savings resulting from the state's bulk purchase of vaccine supplies at a reduced cost. Moreover, this program uses no undesignated general funds. Although SB 37 addresses the immunization needs of all Alaskans, our comments will focus on the benefits of this legislation we perceive for older Alaskans.

Preventative services, such as immunizations, are important tools for maintaining the health of all Alaskans at every stage of life. Immune systems weaken with age, which places older people at risk for severe illnesses from pneumonia, influenza, and shingles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccines for these conditions for all people over the age of 60. Vaccines for pneumonia, influenza, and shingles are included in the statewide immunization program as proposed by SB 37. Alaska's statewide immunization program improves access to these select vaccines for seniors who are low-income, older persons not eligible for Medicare, and for seniors who receive services by providers who do not accept Medicare. Deaths from pneumonia and influenza are highest among older age groups.

According to data from the Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 70.9% of Alaskans age 65+ utilized the pneumonia vaccine in 2017 compared to 64.1% in 2013. In addition, 50.5% seniors (age 65+) received the influenza vaccine compared to 52.4% in 2013. BRFSS data also reports 37.8% of Alaskans age 50+ received the shingles vaccine in 2014 (with no other years reporting). Mortality rates for influenza/pneumonia among older Alaskans (age 65+) have declined from 81.9 in 2010 to 71.1 in 2017. While these findings are not conclusive about the benefits of the statewide immunization program for seniors, nor do they indicate the percentage of seniors who receive vaccines through the statewide immunization program, the data shows promising trends of an increasing utilization of the pneumonia vaccine for those age 65+ and lower mortality rates among seniors from influenza/pneumonia over time.

The statewide immunization program also assists a growing number of Alaskan seniors who are grandparents raising grandchildren on a fixed income with limited insurance coverage. They desire healthy grandchildren who have access to recommended immunizations recognized by public health standards and required for school admission. Rather than seeing their grandchildren go without immunizations, many grandparents will make personal and financial sacrifices to insure their grandchildren receive the recommended immunizations. The statewide immunization program helps to relieve the economic burden on grandparents and improve access to vaccines for children being raised by grandparents with modest incomes.

The Alaska Commission on Aging supports SB 37 to continue the statewide immunization program utilizing an innovative public-private partnership that is cost effective for improving health outcomes for all Alaskans. We thank you for your leadership on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Gordon Glaser
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director



Alaska Primary Care
ASSOCIATION

February 14, 2019

Senator Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau AK 99801

Re: Senate Bill 37, *An Act Relating to the Statewide Immunization Program*

Dear Senator Giessel,

It is with pleasure that the Alaska Primary Care Association submits this letter of support for the reauthorization of the Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program.

Alaska's 27 Community Health Centers are committed to public health and have as one of their primary objectives, to promote immunizations for infants, children and adults. In 2014, when the Alaska Vaccination Assessment Program legislation was passed, Health Centers were among the strongest of supporters. This program allows these non-profit organizations a streamlined and cost-effective way to purchase, manage and administer vaccinations to their patients. The assembly of private and public dollars to purchase vaccine through the AVAP eliminates the need for Health Centers to manage and maintain two separate stores of vaccine. It also affords Health Centers a way to provide vaccinations to lower income and uninsured adults, preventing them from contracting debilitating infectious diseases. This innovative program has succeeded in making both procurement and distribution of vaccine efficient and effective for the State of Alaska, payers and healthcare providers across Alaska.

Alaska Community Health Centers work every day to improve the immunization rates of all children and adults regardless of their ability to pay, and the AVAP gives them the framework and cost savings to do this. APCA strongly supports the reauthorization of the Alaska Vaccination Assessment Program through passage of SB 37.

Sincerely,

Nancy Merriman
APCA Executive Director



Administering Programs
to Fund Vaccines

February 12, 2019

Senator Natasha von Imhof, Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Senate Bill 37-Renewal of Vaccine Assessment Program

Dear Senators von Imhof and Stedman:

KidsVax® (KV) administers the Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program (AVAP) pursuant to a contract with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). Mindful of that role, KV looks to statutes adopted by the AK Legislature and DHSS for policy guidance and does not advance policy positions. However, we are more than happy to provide any information which may be helpful as the Legislature considers AVAP's reauthorization. KV was instrumental in all aspects of AVAP's setup after legislation was passed five years ago. Similarly, KV was the founding administrator and I personally served in the initial Executive Director role for programs in the States of NH, WA, VT, and ME. KV also has assisted those states, together with CT, NM, and ID, in securing TRICARE's participation in State Vaccine Program (SVP) funding.

A few salient points from AVAP's history are the following:

1. AVAP's Advisory Council, made up of a cross section of payers, providers, and state officials, unanimously supports its reauthorization.
2. AVAP has been exemplary in adopting financial best practices:
 - a. All AVAP costs are covered by the assessments paid by those who benefit from cost savings achieved through this program.
 - b. AVAP funds are collected through a dedicated lockbox, segregated, and timely accounted for with 24/7 view availability.
 - c. AVAP has contracted with an AK-licensed CPA to perform an annual financial audit.
 - d. AK submits its operating results for review by an independent CPA who annually calculates payer cost savings.
3. AVAP maintains an easily-accessible website and full financial transparency by posting minutes, audited financials, and assessment calculation worksheets. That website is available to the public, as well as State policy makers, and incorporates full search functionality.
4. Operationally, AVAP has enjoyed strong operating results:
 - a. Annual operating costs have fallen materially each year from its formation. For the most recent audit period, they amounted to less than 7% of revenues.
 - b. AVAP has fully funded its targeted cash reserve needed to maintain DHSS's qualification to access the cost-beneficial national CDC vaccine purchase contract.
5. AVAP was able to absorb vaccine cost increases for the upcoming 2019 operating year and still reduce assessments. It contemplates that its assessment increase rate in the near term should remain below the annual vaccine manufacturer cost increases in the CDC contract.

KV will to do its best to provide any background data helpful to your committee or to other legislators as they consider this important legislation. Feel free to call or write at any time.

Very truly yours,

Fred L. Potter, Managing Member

FLP/tmm



ALL ALASKA
PEDIATRIC
PARTNERSHIP

All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
PO Box 230567
Anchorage, AK 99523

Senator Cathy Giessel
Alaska State Senate

Dear Sen. Giessel:

I am writing in support of the reauthorization of Alaska's Vaccine Assessment Program under Senate Bill 37.

The All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (AAPP) was an instrumental partner in the creation of VacTrAK, the Alaska Immunization Information Center. Until recently, AAPP also hosted Alaska's immunization Outreach Coalition and actively engaged communities and Public Health clinics throughout the state in promotion of on-time immunizations through events and education. We continue to partner with Alaska's Immunization Program at the Dept. of Health and Social Services to provide immunization outreach, especially in light of recent measles outbreaks in Alaska and Washington.

As you know, Alaska was a universal vaccine provider until 2010 when Federal funding was reduced and a cumbersome, expensive 2-tier system took its place. In 2015 Alaska successfully developed the AVAP (Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program), a consortium of public and private funding that once again provides universal vaccine access to Alaska's children. The program has been incredibly successful in providing efficiency in procurement and distribution while simultaneously offering significant financial savings.

Reauthorization of this important legislation is key to continued success in Alaska continuing to be a universal vaccine provider. We have made great strides in increasing our rates of immunization, having the infrastructure in place to support efficient distribution, storage and tracking is crucial to our continued efforts to increase our rates.

Sincerely,

Tamar Ben-Yosef

Executive Director
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
tamar@a2p2.org



February 13, 2019

The Honorable Bert Stedman & Natasha von Imhof
Co-Chairs of Senate Finance
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 37 – Statewide Immunization Program

Dear Senator Stedman & Senator von Imhof,

Aetna would like to submit comments of support for SB 37 (Statewide Immunization Program). Aetna applauds the efforts of Senator Giessel to renew the Statewide Immunization Program that has been in effect for Alaskans for over thirty years. The program allows the Department of Social Services to purchase all pediatric and most adult vaccines at cost below those of private purchase alternatives. Immunizations are an important part of public health and can help to prevent disease in adults and children.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our support for SB 37.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Butler".

Shannon Butler
Senior Director of Government Affairs, West Region

January 29, 2019

Senator Cathy Giessel
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 37

Dear Senator Giessel,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 37, *an act relating to the statewide immunization program*.

Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska provides healthcare coverage to over 100,000 members in Alaska and offers a range of innovative programs focused on wellness and prevention to help members improve their overall health. Our health benefit plans cover in-network preventive care in full which includes coverage for all vaccinations recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for members under age 19 and certain vaccines for adults without cost sharing.

Premera supports SB 37 to maintain the state's universal vaccine program to ensure that Alaskans can continue to access the recommended vaccines in a cost-effective manner. The state would continue to purchase vaccines at a bulk, discounted rate thereby minimizing healthcare costs for these critical immunizations.

We look forward to working with the stakeholders and the Department of Health and Social Services to establish a sustainable solution for the Alaska market that helps to lower healthcare costs while preserving access to important preventive healthcare services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Gary Strannigan
Vice President, Congressional and Legislative Affairs

GROWING HEALTHY ALASKANS

3340 Providence Drive, Suite 500-Building A, Anchorage, AK 99508 / T. 907-562-2423 / F. 907-563-1170

1/24/19

Anchorage Pediatric Group
3340 Providence Dr #500
Anchorage AK 99508
(907)562-2423

The Honorable Cathy Giessel Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 111,
Juneau AK, 99801
Phone: 907-465-4843

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am writing in support of AVAP's reauthorization (LS-0162).

As you know, Alaska was a universal vaccine provider until 2010 when Federal funding was reduced and a cumbersome, expensive 2-tier system took its place. In 2015 we successfully developed the AVAP (Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program), a consortium of public and private funding that once again provides universal access of vaccines to Alaska's children. The program has been incredibly successful in providing efficiency in procurement and distribution while simultaneously offering significant financial savings.

Reauthorization of this important legislation is key to continued success in Alaska continuing to be a universal vaccine provider.

Sincerely,

Jody Butto MD FAAP

butto@gci.net



American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Alaska Chapter

Alaska Chapter Executive Committee

President

Lily J. Lou, MD, FAAP
3200 Providence Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: 907/632-4378
Fax: 907/212-5834
E-mail: lilylou@mindspring.com

Vice President

Anna Ogena, MD, FAAP
15700 Southpark Loop
Anchorage, AK 99516
Phone: 907/250-8427
E-mail: atogena@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer

Jody Butto, MD, FAAP
10101 Hampton Cir
Anchorage, AK 99507
E-mail: jlbutto@gci.net

Chapter Executive Director

Dale K. Moon
Phone: 907-317-1397
E-mail: dkmoon@alaska.net

Chapter Web site

www.aapalaska.org

AAP Headquarters

345 Park Blvd.
Itasca, IL 60143
Phone: 630-626-6000
Fax: 874-434-8000
E-mail: kidsdocs@aap.org
www.aap.org

To: The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: LS0162 – Letter of Support for AVAP Reauthorization

Date: January 24, 2019

Dear Senator Giessel,

I speak for the pediatricians of Alaska, as a fellow pediatrician and the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics-Alaska Chapter. I am writing in enthusiastic support of reauthorization of the Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program (AVAP), which was created with bipartisan support in 2015, with plans to sunset in January of 2021.

Vaccine preventable disease is one area of health care where there are clear cost-effective savings demonstrated. All Alaskans benefit from high immunization rates. AVAP has operated effectively for the past four years, establishing a workable process, saving Alaskans money on state purchase of vaccines, keeping pace with evidence-based recommendations, and even navigating the recent mumps outbreak with provision of additional MMR doses. After a phased opt-out option ended, there is near universal participation in this successful program, and TRICARE is participating as well. In fact, Alaska was recognized by the CDC in 2018 with an award for most improved coverage for teen vaccines.

I believe it is essential to continue to support AVAP, and the pediatric community is grateful for your leadership on this issue from the very beginning. I feel this program should be reauthorized, with strong consideration for reauthorization without a scheduled sunset date.

Thank you for considering my views. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you further on this or any other children's health issue.

Best regards,

Lily J. Lou, MD, FAAP
AAP-AK Chapter President