



January 31, 2020

The Honorable Zach Fields
State Representative
Co-Chair, House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 412
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
State Representative
Co-Chair, House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Providence Health & Services Alaska Supports SSHB 182

Dear Representatives Fields and Kreiss-Tomkins:

Providence Health & Services Alaska would like to express our support for the Sponsor Substitute of House Bill 182 Sexual Assault Examination Kits: Testing.

Providence has set the standard for modern health care in Alaska for more than 100 years. Today, Providence is the state's leading health care and behavioral health provider and the largest private employer with nearly 5,000 caregivers across the state.

Unfortunately, Alaska has some of the highest sexual assault rates in the nation. Without treatment, that trauma can affect a person's health and well-being for a lifetime.

Providence Alaska provides comprehensive and compassionate care to women and children who have experienced trauma from abuse at AlaskaCARES. AlaskaCARES is an integrated model of care, serving as the state's child advocacy center and local sexual assault response team. Victim advocates, forensic nursing, law enforcement, child protection, tribal health, and mental health are all in the same facility to support Alaska's most vulnerable women and children. No client or family is charged for treatment at AlaskaCARES. In addition, the forensic nursing services of Providence do not receive private or public reimbursement for the care of men and women who have experienced physical and sexual violence.

In spring 2019 we opened a new state-of-the-art AlaskaCARES facility that was designed to not only care for the survivors of sexual assault, but to assist law enforcement with the successful prosecution of offenders. Interview rooms are equipped with new audio and visual equipment and the Anchorage Police Department Special Victims Unit is co-located in the facility, as is a dedicated team of Alaska State Troopers.

The Providence forensic nursing team is the only service provider for medical-forensic exams in the Anchorage area and has a policy to turn any sexual assault examination kits over to law enforcement within 48 hours. Under the current statutes, it can take up to one year for those kits to be tested.

SSHB 182 includes important victim notification guidelines, requires the sexual assault examination kit to be submitted to an accredited lab within 30-days and for the serological or DNA testing to be completed within 60-days. By compressing this timeline, SSHB 182 decreases the potential for additional victims of serial predators, aids survivors in the healing process and helps hold offenders accountable for their crimes.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this legislation and for your service to Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Simmons', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Preston M. Simmons, DSc., FACHE
Chief Executive, Alaska
Providence St. Joseph Health

cc: The Honorable Geran Tarr, State Representative