



Alaska APRN Alliance  
PO Box 240443  
Anchorage, AK 99524

February 25, 2020

Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

The Alaska APRN Alliance supports passage of SB 120 "An Act relating to administration of psychotropic medication to a patient without the patient's informed consent; and providing for an effective date". The bill addresses the expansion of licensed health care providers allowed in statute to administer psychotropic medications to patients in crisis to include Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants.

We understand that in this bill, administration of psychotropic medications without a patient's consent would be time limited with the initial order written for no more than 24 hours and if medically justified, could be renewed every 24 hours for a maximum total of 72 hours. The medication order would require regular patient assessments of their status and a determination if a crisis still exists that supports this type of intervention. We also understand this statute would be limited to patients who are hospitalized by a court order in an evaluation facility or designated treatment facility. While not stated in the bill, it is assumed that the Advanced Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant is on site at the facility and is able to assess the situation with first hand knowledge to determine if administration of a psychotropic medication without consent is the best intervention for the patient in crisis.

An APRN is a licensed registered nurse with a graduate degree who has been additionally licensed in an advanced practice role. That licensure as an APRN is contingent upon completion of an accredited graduate-level education program and passage of a national certification examination. The four APRN roles in Alaska are Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP), Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), and Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). In Alaska, there are many Certified Nurse Practitioners who have completed graduate education and are certified as Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners or have obtained additional training in psychiatric care. As independent practitioners, Certified Nurse Practitioners, play a unique and important role in assessing and diagnosing patients with acute and chronic behavioral health conditions, developing treatment plans, prescribing behavioral health medications and providing ongoing care both in outpatient and inpatient settings. Their training also includes the use of behavioral health interventions as well as psychotropic medications for patients in crisis situations.



ALASKA  
**APRN**  
ALLIANCE

Alaska APRN Alliance  
PO Box 240443  
Anchorage, AK 99524

Patients in crisis are at risk of harming themselves, endangering staff and in some situations require immediate intervention to prevent ongoing escalation of their behaviors and assure their safety. Waiting for a psychiatrist who is not present on-site delays care, places patients in crisis at further risk and can endanger staff around them. Certified Nurse Practitioners are trained to quickly assess the crisis affecting a patient who is known to them and identify medications as well as behavioral health interventions that will ameliorate the crisis behaviors. Certified Nurse Practitioner who are on site and thus able to assess the patient's status will be able to modify the medication and behavioral health treatment plan more quickly over the next 24 hours to the patient's treatment condition. This can improve care for the patient and keep the patient and staff safe.

Access to behavioral health care and treatment is an important factor in improving and maintaining the overall health of all Alaskans. Utilizing the skills and knowledge of Certified Nurse Practitioners trained in behavioral health is one of the solutions to expanding the workforce to care for patients in court ordered inpatient psychiatric care.

Thank you for considering our comments regarding this bill.

Carrie Doyle DNP, APRN, ACNS-BC, CENP, CPHQ  
President  
Alaska APRN Alliance