

February 28, 2020

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 120. The bill's provisions for administration of crisis period medications are critical to the care and safety of patients and staff at Designated Evaluation and Treatment Centers such as the Alaska Psychiatric Institute.

Senate Bill 120 allows trained and licensed medical professionals to act under their existing scope of practice. Physician assistants and nurse practitioners routinely staff API in the absence of physicians. However, under current statute, only physicians may order crisis medications. As noted by the sponsor, the delay encountered while obtaining a physician's order can impact the outcome of a situation that rapidly escalates. Patient's experiencing psychosis or violent agitation can and have physically hurt themselves, other patients and staff. Thus, timely resolution in this kind of situation benefits everyone.

Before enrolling in my current advanced degree program toward becoming a psychiatric nurse practitioner I was a nurse at API. Medical professionals and staff in the hospital are accountable for upholding the quality of care and preserving the dignity and freedom of patients wherever possible. Continuity in an in-patient psychiatric setting is affected by each individual patient and the demographic makeup of a unit changes constantly. Care must be timely, efficient and effective so that unpredictable situations do not escalate and threaten everyone's safety.

Senate Bill 120 add an important and necessary tool for the safe, efficient and effective care in designated evaluation and treatment centers. I urge passage so all medical professionals can respond quickly in crisis care of patients.

Sincerely,

Marieke Heatwole, RN, PMHNP Class of 2020
5200 Huffman
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THE STATE
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR MICHAEL I. DUNLEAVY

**Department of
Health and Social Services**

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February 3, 2020

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

Dear Senator Giessel:

Thank you for sponsoring Senate Bill 120, the "Crisis Medication Bill." I believe that the original intent to only have psychiatrists give orders for a crisis period was during the time that Alaska Psychiatric Institute only employed psychiatrists. Over the last number of years, Alaska Psychiatric Institute has added nurse practitioners and physician assistants to its medical staff. Without having the nurse practitioner or physician assistant able to order the crisis period, covering the on-call schedule becomes difficult, considering how there must be a psychiatrist on call for the crisis period when a midlevel provider is on call.

Being the only psychiatrist employed by Alaska Psychiatric Institute puts me on call at least twenty days a month. Like physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants are also licensed independent practitioners; as such, they are qualified to order a crisis period and fully contribute to the on-call schedule at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute. Midlevel practitioners are intimately involved with patient services; accordingly, giving them the ability to order a crisis period greatly contributes to patient continuity of care.

Thank you again for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Alexander", followed by a long horizontal line.

Michael Alexander, MD
Director of Psychiatry