

May 13, 2022

Senate Finance Committee
Senate.Finance@akleg.gov

Dear Senate Finance Committee:

UW Medicine strongly supports *HB 265, Health Care Services by Telehealth*. The legislation will allow physicians licensed in another state to conduct follow-up care via telehealth after conducting an in-person visit and establishing a patient-provider relationship.

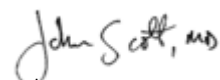
UW Medicine is an integrated health system located within King County, including UW Medical Center, Harborview Medical Center, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center and the UW School of Medicine. We serve Alaska's residents at many of our facilities and transport critically ill and injured individuals from southeast Alaska with the help of our medical transport service, Airlift Northwest. After receiving care, our patients return to Alaska. Telehealth reduces the cost burden for individuals and families by allowing them to continue to receive appropriate follow-up from their treating physicians without needing to travel back and forth between Alaska and Seattle. Timely access to specialty care also ensures quicker diagnosis and return to health.

Under current law, our physicians must become licensed in Alaska to provide telehealth services to Alaskans, which is time-consuming and costly and reduces access to care for Alaskans. The COVID-19 public health emergency broadened the scope and availability of telehealth services. Between July 2020 and June 2021, a waiver allowed UW Medicine clinicians to see Alaskan patients without a license. During that time, 2,769 telemedicine consultations took place between UW Medicine clinicians and Alaskans. Only 475 telemedicine consultations took place in the nine months after the waiver ended. As the end of the public health emergency approaches, HB 265 would provide a permanent solution, facilitating access to out-of-state telehealth services for Alaska residents.

If HB 265 passes, a reciprocal process exists in Washington state. In 2018, the Washington Medical Commission approved a policy allowing physicians licensed outside of Washington state to conduct telemedicine visits with existing patients now located in Washington state.

We hope your committee will continue to advance this bill to allow UW Medicine to optimize care for Alaskan residents.

Sincerely,



John Scott, M.D., M.Sc., FIDSA
Medical Director, Digital Health
Professor, Medicine, Allergy and Infectious Diseases
UW Medicine

John D. Scott, M.D., M.Sc., FIDSA
Medical Director, UW Digital Health
Professor, Allergy and Infectious Diseases
Liver Clinic

325 Ninth Ave, Box 359938
Harborview Medical Center
Seattle, WA 98104

OFFICE 206.744.3393
FAX 206.744.5515
WEB uwmedicine.org