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House Bill 149 Multi-State Licensure Compact

Sponsor Statement

Alaska faces a debilitating healthcare workforce shortage. The combination of growth and turnover creates a need for over 7,500 new healthcare workers each year. There are currently more than 1,500 registered nurse vacancies in the state, and that number is projected to grow to more than 5,000 by 2030.

Our processing time for nurse licensure are at an all time high due to a significant increase in workload coupled with staffing vacancies and turnover over the last few years. This has occurred at the same time as Alaska's hospitals and health care facilities have record high vacancy rates.

The solution? The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The NLC is currently enacted in 39 U.S. jurisdictions with pending legislation in another nine states. The NLC allows registered nurses and licensed practical/vocational nurses to have one multistate license, with the privilege to practice in their home state and other NLC states without obtaining additional licenses. To obtain a multistate license under the NLC, a nurse must meet specific qualifications outlined in the NLC language that must be adopted into law by all participating (or "party") states. These requirements are more stringent than Alaska's, ensuring that joining the NLC will not lower the standard of care in the state.

Passing HB 149 will allow our hospitals and health care facilities to hire much-needed nurses significantly quicker, while fully retaining Alaska's state sovereignty. Nurses are required to abide by all nursing laws within the state in which they are practicing. The Alaska Board of Nursing retains full jurisdictional authority, including the ability to revoke a nurse's multistate licensure privilege to practice in Alaska. Existing Alaska-licensed nurses will have the option to convert their licenses to multistate licenses or retain a single-state license. Regulatory costs will be separated for single-state and multistate nurses under AS 08.01.065 to ensure licensing, investigative, or other regulatory costs for multistate nurses or nurses holding multistate licensure privilege in Alaska do not affect the licensing fees for single-state nurses.

The NLC will make Alaska a more friendly nursing environment, help our existing nurses avoid burnout due to vacancies, assist our nursing schools in accessing more nursing instructors, allow facilities to fill vacancies more quickly, encourage graduates who want to travel to come back to Alaska, make it easier for out-of-state nurses to make Alaska their permanent home, and provide increased access to care for all Alaskans.