



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of
Family and Community Services

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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April 5, 2023

The Honorable Mike Prax
Alaska Legislature
State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Prax,

On behalf of the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS), thank you for introducing HB149- the *Nurse Licensure Compact* (NLC). As you are aware, bringing Alaska into the NLC will improve the ability of both state agencies and private entities to hire licensed medical professionals from other states.

All DFCS' four divisions rely heavily on nurses to provide direct services to vulnerable Alaskans. 435 of our 1,847 PCNs (24%) are nursing positions that require the individual to be licensed. The NLC will enable the Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) the department hires from out-of-state to get to work immediately upon arrival in Alaska if they are from a compact state. Additionally, the reduction in workload for the team licensing nurses due to the compact will allow Alaskan nurses or nurses from non-compact states to get licensed more quickly as well. Both of these changes are a benefit to DFCS.

At the six Pioneer Homes, we rely on 255 Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs), 33 LPNs, and 53 RNs to care for Alaska's elders. When these positions are vacant it is detrimental to the care our elders receive and has a financial cost for training and overtime. The Alaska Psychiatric Institute has 77 positions that require licensed RNs; this is nearly one-quarter of the workforce at the hospital. Vacancies make it harder to ensure safe conditions for patients and staff as proper staff ratios are a big contributor to a safe environment.

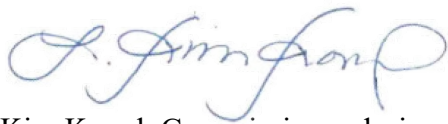
Even those divisions that might not be top of mind as employing nurses rely on having their nursing positions filled. Each of the six Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities employ nurses, from just one at the smaller facilities to five at McLaughlin. In total, DJJ has 13 positions that require licensed nurses. The Office of Children's Services has four nurse consultants, a position that requires licensed RNs.

There is broad support for the bill throughout the healthcare field. This is since NLC nurses must meet higher standards than those required to obtain an Alaska license, as well as the improvements for licensing times for both compact and non-compact nurses. Additionally, management of the scope of practice and discipline all continue to be administered by the Alaska Board of Nursing.

Alaska retains control of its nursing environment while making it easier for nurses from other states to come to Alaska and practice.

Thank you for your efforts on HB149; Alaska needs the Nurse Licensure Compact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Kovel", written in a cursive style.

Kim Kovel, Commissioner designee

cc: Laura Stidolph, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor
 Julie Sande, Commissioner, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic
 Development
 Jared C. Kosin, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alaska Hospital and Healthcare
 Association