

April 6, 2023

House Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 124
Juneau, AK 99801
House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Chair Sumner and Committee Members,

I ask you to support HB 149 and Alaska joining the nurse licensure compact (NLC). Alaska is facing workforce challenges that negatively impact healthcare in our community, and Alaska's licensing process, which takes 3 to 4 months for local and relocating nurses, is unacceptable.

Nurses are vital for ensuring access to healthcare, and in Alaska, we are on track to lead the nation with the most significant shortfall of nurses in the coming years. Alaska cannot produce enough nurse graduates to fill the gaping hole in demand, and Alaskan students are leaving Alaska to earn their nursing degrees. When it is hard for those new nurses to get an Alaska nursing license, we make it easier for them to stay where they are instead of returning home where we need them.

Fairbanks is a military town, and nurses of all educational and professional experiences move to Alaska as part of a military assignment. Over 39 U.S. states and districts use the NLC to allow nurses to operate under a single license. When Alaska joins the NLC, we will create opportunities for military spouses and dependents to fill our facilities' lingering unfilled nursing positions quickly.

Foundation Health Partners cannot fill job openings for all job types, Nurse openings can be the most challenging, and when we have unfilled positions, our organization must use traveling staffing agencies. Travelers are in the game for money and experiences, and while Alaska is a "bucket list" location for many Americans, travelers will tell their staffing agency that they are not interested in Alaska, even though we must pay some of the highest billing rates in the nation because they have heard how bad the licensing process is.

It is time to modernize and consider what the rest of the country is doing. Joining the nurse licensure compact allows us to align with best practices nationwide. We should no longer be a state ten years behind the others in technology and procedures.

I urge you to pass HB 149 in the interest of those who want to move to Alaska to make a new home, move to Alaska because it is already home, and in the interests of those who wish to receive healthcare at home, not in another state, away from friends and family.

Respectfully,

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