

Dear Representative Fields,

I am contacting you to inform you that I do **NOT** support House Bill 149 a bill to enact the MultiState Nurse Licensure Compact in Alaska. I am an Alaskan RN working in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit at Providence Medical Center in Anchorage. HB 149 is not the “right touch” legislation needed for Alaska.

I have been observing the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) since 2007. The nurse compact was designed for states that share borders. HB 149 is not going to solve the nursing shortage in Alaska and/or in the United States. States that have enacted the NLC agree that the compact does not resolve their nursing shortage. Employers need to retain nurses by improving working conditions so nurses feel safe and can practice the art of nursing that is patient focused. Previous BON were opposed to the NLC. Governor Dunleavy removed all previous BON members and appointed a BON in favor of the compact.

The Alaska Board of Nursing (BON) is the largest professional board in Alaska. The BON does not receive any funding from Alaska. Alaska nurses pay for all aspects related to licensing and this includes legal/investigative costs. If there is a complaint filed with the Alaska BON, the Alaska nurses pay for expensive investigative costs. The total investigation expenditure for 2020 was \$592,351, in 2021 was \$646,433 and for FY22 were \$756,211. All of these costs are paid by Alaskan licensed nurses. If Alaska would join the NLC, Alaska nurses would still pay for the investigation but the NLC nurse would not pay anything.

In recent years delays in nursing licensing has been experienced due to an increase in the volume of applications. The NLC is not going to correct the deficiencies that you have at the BON office. The nursing board staff is experiencing a lack of adequate staffing to process the increase volume of applications. I commend the nursing board staff for their diligence to properly license nurses to keep the public safe. People think Alaska is off the beaten path and will not know if they have a licensing issue. As a requirement to be a part of the NLC, nurses do not register with the state they are working in. Alaska would not have anyway of knowing who is working in Alaska as a nurse. At present nurses can be licensed in any state and work in the VA, tribal health or on military bases. These institutions will make sure the nurses are licensed. If a nurse has a license they can work anywhere. They may be the only nurse. Their employer may verify their licensure on hire but will they check after that? Citizens in rural areas deserve the same level of licensure as anyone in other institutions. Alaska BON would not know where a compact nurse is working in our state.

People who are for the compact fail to see that a large majority of nurses are mature in years and there is a great potential for nurses to get nursing jobs in other states which would increase Alaska's shortage.

The private company that administers the compact estimated over 5 years ago that the price of an Alaskan nursing license would increase by \$50. Alaska nurses already pay \$200 every 2 years for one of the highest licensing fees in the country.

Why would the Alaska legislature want to give up state sovereignty on any nursing issues? Nurse statutes and regulations are adapted to each state's unique nursing profession. Presently Alaska Statutes and regulation permit military nurses and military spouses to work on their present unencumbered license while they are waiting for their Alaska nursing license. Alaska nursing Statutes and regulations already provide an opportunity to obtain a temporary license until their license has been approved.

The NLC would impact Alaskan nurses competing for nursing jobs. We want to keep Alaskans in Alaska working. If the AK Board does not get more staffing and makes some changes Alaskans may lose out on a job to an outside RN. Is that what you want?

Presently there is an FBI investigation called the Nightingale operation which involves 7600 people who bought their nursing diplomas. 3 were identified with AK license. We could see more scams in the future because nurses are essential.

While AK has nurses licensed in any state working in tribal health systems, VA, and military bases with Alaska does not know who is working here Alaska knows these facilities have criteria to ensure the nurses are currently licensed. With the compact we do not know where these nurses are. If they are in a hospital they follow the hospital rules but they could be in a rural area where they are the only nurse. Their employer probably checked their license on hiring but who knows if anyone checks again. These rural citizens deserve the same safe licensing standards that the rest of the state requires.

How difficult would it be to get out if the compact of Alaska finds that the compact is not beneficial.

The fiscal notes attached to this bill is deceiving. NCSBN would pay the estimated \$43,000 to enact the compact but after that the compact costs \$6000 a year to belong. Nurses would be required to pay this present fee. In large states this isn't very much but in a smaller populated state this could be significant. Why is this private company, NCSBN, willing to pay \$43,000 to get Alaska to participate?

HB 149 is **NOT** the "right touch" legislation needed for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Beth Farnstrom, BSN, RN
Anchorage

Sent from my iPhone