

# Alaska State Medical Association

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March 11, 2024

The Honorable Jesse Sumner, Chair  
House Labor and Commerce Committee  
State Capitol, Room 421  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Delivered via email: [Representative.Jesse.Sumner@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Jesse.Sumner@akleg.gov)

Re: House Bill 285 "An Act relating to insurance; relating to mammograms; and providing for an effective date."

Dear Chair Sumner:

I am writing on behalf of the Alaska State Medical Association to express our strong support for House Bill 285. This legislation addresses a critical issue affecting women's health in Alaska: the cost and coverage of diagnostic breast imaging.

In Alaska, breast cancer stands as the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women.

Early detection through screening mammograms can significantly improve outcomes, but the cost-sharing requirements for diagnostic imaging following an abnormal mammogram can pose a significant barrier to timely and necessary care.

A study published by the Radiology Society of North America found that these costs exclude some 21% of patients who need supplemental testing following an abnormal mammogram. This exclusion not only increases the likelihood that cancers are not treated early but also exacerbates healthcare access disparities, particularly for lower- and middle-income patients.

The findings from the study "Understanding Cost & Coverage Issues with Diagnostic Breast Imaging" further support the need for HB 285. Patients, insurance professionals, and healthcare providers all recognize the stress and confusion caused by the high costs of diagnostic imaging.

Many women are forced to delay or forego recommended tests due to financial concerns, which can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. HB 285 seeks to address these issues by providing greater access to care, ensuring prompt diagnosis of breast cancer, and reducing the overall cost to patients and the healthcare system. By eliminating cost-sharing

requirements for diagnostic breast imaging, this legislation will help remove a significant barrier to care for Alaskan women.

In conclusion, the Alaska State Medical Association urges the Alaska Legislature to support and pass House Bill 285. This important legislation will improve access to essential healthcare services, leading to better outcomes for women in Alaska.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pam Ventgen".

Pam Ventgen, Executive Director  
Alaska State Medical Association