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House District 35 – West Fairbanks

House Bill 17 – Version A Sponsor Statement

*“An Act relating to insurance coverage for contraceptives and related services;
relating to medical assistance coverage for contraceptives and related services;
and providing for an effective date.”*

Women in Alaska, especially rural Alaskans, face many obstacles in accessing reproductive health care and prescription contraceptives for a variety of reasons. Travel limitations can create barriers regarding consistent access to reproductive health care. Additionally, a significant number of women in Alaska work on fishing boats or on the North Slope, limiting access to reproductive health care and prescription contraceptives. Busy work schedules and family life can also be problematic in traveling to healthcare facilities or pharmacies necessary for providing these services.

House Bill 17 mandates coverage by healthcare insurers, including Medicaid, for prescription contraceptives and related medical services, allowing up to a 12-month supply of prescription contraceptives. This bill is an important step in preventing unintended pregnancies by eliminating barriers associated with cost and availability. Studies show that providing a one-year supply of prescription contraceptives, including long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs), reduces unintended pregnancies by 30%. It also increases family planning options while reducing costs related to unintended pregnancies such as pregnancy tests, follow-up visits and other associated long-term costs.

Furthermore, it empowers victims of domestic or interpersonal violence whose abusers control access to contraceptives. It reduces the number of abortions performed. Women also use birth control to alleviate symptoms from certain medical conditions such as endometriosis and acne. With greater access and increased options to reproductive health care, Alaskan women will have the necessary support to improve family planning while decreasing health care costs.

My staff on this legislation is Cherie Bowman. She can be reached at (907)465-4976 or at cherie.bowman@akleg.gov.