



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

March 8, 2023

The Honorable David Wilson
Alaska State Senate

RE: Support for Senate Bills 74 and 75

Dear Senator Wilson,

I am writing on behalf of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District's support for Senate Bills 74 and 75. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District employs physical therapists, speech pathologists and audiologists to provide therapy to students whose Individual Education Plans call for these services. The State of Alaska has a shortage of practitioners and candidates for both physical therapy, speech language pathology and audiologists for the level of services needed both in the medical and educational settings. Most of our recruitment efforts for these positions are out of state as there is little to no preparation or licensure programs within the State of Alaska. However, despite our recruitment efforts, each year the District has great difficulty in filling these positions. Subsequently, these therapy areas make up a good portion of our "hard to fill positions" category.

In the past the District has been able to hire independent contractors to support our needs when employees were not available but that has become increasingly difficult recently. The support provided by these bills to assist applicants in being able to practice in Alaska more expediently would be of benefit to any employer who provides this service, including school districts. Specifically, the provisions of Senate Bills 74 and 75 will serve to streamline the process for licensure, which in turn will assist in our recruiting activities.

On behalf of the Mat-Su Borough School District, I thank you for sponsoring Senate Bills 74 and 75 and for your overall commitment to education. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Respectfully,

Randy Trani, Ed.D.
Superintendent



March 22, 2023

The Honorable David Wilson
Alaska State Senate

Dear Senator Wilson,

I am writing on behalf of the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership to express our support for Senate Bills 74 and Senate Bill 75. Our program, Help Me Grow Alaska (HMG-AK), connects families and children to resources and services they need as close to home as possible.

Over the last several years, families have contacted HMG-AK needing to be connected to a range of services, many of which fall under the scope of SB 74 and SB 75, to include speech-language pathology, pediatric physical therapy, and pediatric occupational therapy. Currently, there are high waitlists for these services due to a shortage of providers in these fields. The administrative burden and extended lengths of time it takes for Alaska licensure is one of the greatest barriers to expanding Alaska's workforce and to providing access to these services through telemedicine to our communities off the road system.

According to our data, in 2022 we served over 900 children with close to 300 of those specifically expressing a need for speech, physical therapy and occupational therapy services. In 2023 thus far, we have served 340 families with 114 of those needing connection to these services.

Passage of SB 74 and SB 75 would increase access to care and increase the number of clinicians in our state, thus decreasing the number of waitlists for services that Alaska's children and families desperately need.

Thank you for sponsoring SB 74 and SB 75 and for you overall commitment to children and families in Alaska.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tamar Ben-Yosef".

Tamar Ben-Yosef
Executive Director
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
907-903-6770
tamar@a2p2.com