

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 25, 2024

3:08 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mike Prax, Chair  
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Vice Chair  
Representative CJ McCormick  
Representative Jesse Sumner  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Genevieve Mina

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Dan Saddler

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners

Erin Johnson, PhD - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 191

"An Act relating to medical care for major emergencies."

- MOVED HB 191 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 191

SHORT TITLE: MEDICAL MAJOR EMERGENCIES

SPONSOR(S) : REPRESENTATIVE(S) MINA

05/03/23	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/03/23	(H)	HSS, FIN
04/02/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106
04/02/24	(H)	Heard & Held
04/02/24	(H)	MINUTE(HSS)
04/25/24	(H)	HSS AT 3:00 PM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ERIN JOHNSON, PhD, Appointee  
Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners.

KATY GIORGIO, Staff  
Representative Genevieve Mina  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 191 on behalf of Representative Mina, prime sponsor.

PAM VENTGEN, Executive Director  
Alaska State Medical Association  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 191.

CHELSEA HUNT, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 191.

LUCY HE, MD  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 191.

JAMIE MORGAN, Government Relations Regional Lead  
American Heart Association  
Sacramento, California

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 191.

EUGENE "GENE" WISEMAN, Chief  
Section of Rural and Community Health Systems  
Division of Public Health  
Department of Health  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered committee questions related to HB 191.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:08:56 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX called the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:08 p.m. Representatives

Ruffridge, McCormick, Sumner, Fields, Mina, and Prax were present at the call to order.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :**  
**Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners**

[3:10:46 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the first order of business would be a confirmation hearing on the governor's appointee to the Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners.

[3:11:10 PM](#)

ERIN JOHNSON, PhD, Appointee to the Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners, Clinical Psychologist, provided her background as a clinical psychologist in mental health treatment and her history on the Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners (BPPE) and discussed why she sought a reappointment to the BPPE.

[3:12:10 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX asked Dr. Johnson if she had any specific issues or thoughts about the BPPE during her tenure on the board.

DR. JOHNSON replied that the BPPE has taken up certain issues like an interjurisdictional compact between psychologists in Alaska and said that a redevelopment of regulations surrounding the certification of mental health professionals in Alaska is another thing the BPPE has taken up during her tenure on the Board.

[3:15:34 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on the appointment of Dr. Erin Johnson to the Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners. After ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[3:16:44 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX stated that the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee and recommends that the following name be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Dr. Erin Johnson, Board of Psychiatrists and Psychological Examiners. He

said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[3:17:27 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 3:17 p.m.

**HB 191-MEDICAL MAJOR EMERGENCIES**

[3:18:54 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 191, "An Act relating to medical care for major emergencies."

[3:19:27 PM](#)

KATY GIORGIO, Staff, Representative Genevieve Mina, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Mina, prime sponsor, presented HB 191. She gave a brief re-introduction of HB 191 to the committee and asked Chair Prax for his will on the proposed legislation.

[3:19:51 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX opened public testimony on HB 191.

[3:20:19 PM](#)

PAM VENTGEN, Executive Director, Alaska State Medical Association, testified in support of HB 191. She said it is important that the Department of Health (DOH) tracks deaths caused by strokes and heart attacks in the same way that other trauma deaths are tracked.

[3:21:36 PM](#)

CHELSEA HUNT, representing self, testified in support of HB 191. She shared her experience as a stroke survivor and explained how the swift care she received during her stroke event likely saved her life. She urged the committee's support of HB 191.

[3:23:17 PM](#)

LUCY HE, MD, as a neurosurgeon, testified in support of HB 191. She explained that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Heart Association (AHA) has put out official guidelines for stroke care. She said that Alaska faces a geographic challenge in its ability to get proper care to stroke victims and listed a variety of statistics and figures related to stroke care in Alaska. She explained that HB 191 would play a critical role in easing the logistical stress of delivering stroke care to victims.

[3:27:29 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX shared his understanding that there were only two stroke care facilities in Alaska as of 2024.

DR. HE responded that Alaska and Montana are the only two remaining states that do not recognize a stroke as a time-sensitive emergency and explained that each hospital stores its own data individually, not as one cohesive entity.

[3:29:32 PM](#)

JAMIE MORGAN, Government Relations Regional Lead, American Heart Association, testified in support of HB 191. She said that the focused organization of data related to strokes and heart health events would be paramount in ensuring proper care is delivered to a victim in a timely manner.

[3:31:09 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 191.

[3:31:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked Eugene Wiseman what national systems of health measurement would be utilized if HB 191 were to become law.

EUGENE "GENE" WISEMAN, Chief, Section of Rural Community Health Systems, Division of Public Health, Department of Health, responded that DOH would form an advisory committee to guide the decisions regarding which system to utilize.

CHAIR PRAX asked Mr. Wiseman to elaborate on Alaska's current healthcare network.

MR. WISEMAN explained that Alaska currently has a few level four trauma centers and explained how DOH designates the levels of trauma care a facility might be able to provide.

CHAIR PRAX asked whether there are trauma facilities outside of Fairbanks and Anchorage.

MR. WISEMAN answered that there are some facilities outside of Fairbanks and Anchorage and explained that the level of care that may be provided varies greatly among the different facilities throughout the state.

[3:35:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA asked Dr. He for an outline of the traumatic healthcare facilities in Alaska and a vision of where the state is going with regard to the future of those facilities.

DR. HE answered that there are 13 critical access hospitals and 2 military hospitals in Alaska. She emphasized that DOH needs to move to improve healthcare equipment and screening capabilities throughout the state. She explained the process of trauma intervention and its time-sensitive nature.

CHAIR PRAX asked how many communities in Alaska are greater than a two-hour plane ride from a high-level trauma center.

DR. HE replied that the majority of communities in Alaska are more than a two-hour flight away from a high level trauma center and cited both Guardian and LifeFlight's statistics on the matter.

[3:41:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA thanked the committee and public testifiers for their words on the proposed legislation.

[3:42:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER asked whether Chair Prax had any intention to move the bill out of the committee.

[3:43:27 PM](#)

CHAIR PRAX, having determined there were no amendments, asked for the will of the committee.

3:43:47 PM

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE moved to report HB 191 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

CHAIR PRAX objected for the purpose of discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SUMNER clarified that he had no objection to the motion before the committee.

CHAIR PRAX removed his objection. There being no further objection, HB 191 was reported from the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee.

3:45:02 PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health and Social Services Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.