

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 2, 2025

1:33 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair  
Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
Senator Forrest Dunbar

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Robert Yundt

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 170

"An Act relating to gaming; relating to bingo; relating to pull-tabs and electronic pull- tab systems; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 89

"An Act relating to physician assistants; relating to collaborative agreements between physicians and physician assistants; relating to the practice of medicine; relating to health care providers; and relating to provisions regarding physician assistants in contracts between certain health care providers and health care insurers."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 99

"An Act relating to private professional conservators; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 136

"An Act relating to the privacy of firearm transactions; relating to discrimination against firearm retailers by financial institutions and payment networks; relating to the disclosure of financial records by financial institutions and

payment networks; and amending Rules 65 and 82, Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 170

SHORT TITLE: GAMING; ELECTRONIC PULL-TABS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BJORKMAN

04/11/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/11/25	(S)	L&C, FIN
04/16/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/16/25	(S)	Heard & Held
04/16/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/28/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/28/25	(S)	Heard & Held
04/28/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/02/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 89

SHORT TITLE: PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) TOBIN

02/07/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/07/25	(S)	HSS, L&C
02/18/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/18/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/18/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
02/27/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/27/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/27/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/04/25	(S)	HSS AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/04/25	(S)	Moved SB 89 Out of Committee
03/04/25	(S)	MINUTE(HSS)
03/05/25	(S)	HSS RPT 5DP
03/05/25	(S)	DP: DUNBAR, CLAMAN, GIESSEL, TOBIN, HUGHES
03/14/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/14/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/14/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/16/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/16/25	(S)	Heard & Held
04/16/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/02/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 99

SHORT TITLE: CPA AS PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATORS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MYERS

02/14/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/14/25	(S)	L&C, FIN
03/17/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/17/25	(S)	Heard & Held
03/17/25	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
05/02/25	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

BILL BRESLO, President  
Diamond Game Enterprises (Diamond Game)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

JOHN POWERS, Owner  
Tudor Bingo Center  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

JON WEAVER, Owner  
Pilot Games  
Minnetonka, Minnesota

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

MARC DOWNING, Chief Counsel  
Grover Gaming  
Greenville, North Carolina

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

JULIE OTTO, Manager  
Easy Street Pull Tabs  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

MATT FISCHER, Owner  
Alaska Wholesale LLC  
Kasilof, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 170.

MACKENZIE POPE, Staff  
Senator Loki Tobin  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a brief recap of SB 89.

JANICE SHEUFELT  
representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

KRISTIN MITCHELL, M.D., President  
Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA)  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

JAN DENAPOLI, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

KATHERINE VAN ATTA, representing self  
Naknek, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

KATHERINE SCHNEIDER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

TAYLOR SHARMAN, representing self  
Portland, Oregon

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

RILEY BENNETT-VOCKNER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

MOLLY SOUTHWORTH, M.D., representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

HELEN ADAMS, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

KELSEY CAIN, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

LEIGH COOPER, D.O., representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

JENNIFER FAYETTE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

JACQUELYN SERRANO, M.D., representing self  
Nome, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to SB 89.

DANIELS REYNOLDS, M.D., representing self  
Lees Summit, Missouri

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 89.

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, District Q  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of SB 99.

LAURA BONNER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 99.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:33:04 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Merrick, Gray-Jackson, Dunbar and Chair Bjorkman.

#### **SB 170-GAMING; ELECTRONIC PULL-TABS**

[1:34:07 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 170 "An Act relating to gaming; relating to bingo; relating to pull-tabs and electronic pull- tab systems; and providing for an effective date."

[1:34:23 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN speaking as sponsor provided a brief recap of SB 170 and stated that the bill modernizes charitable gaming laws to maximize benefits for charities and nonprofits through e-tabs and electronic gaming. He said SB 170 engages stakeholders to support gaming businesses and the organizations they fund—such as youth sports, senior centers, and veterans' groups—recognizing their vital community work and reducing the need to seek state funding.

[1:35:32 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN announced invited testimony on SB 170.

[1:35:43 PM](#)

BILL BRESLO, President, Diamond Game Enterprises (Diamond Game), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 170 and moved to slide 1-4. He stated that several gaming businesses under Diamond Game's umbrella have supplied charitable gaming products in Alaska for decades, including paper pull tabs, vending machines, and electronic pull tabs. He noted that Diamond Game, founded in 1994, specializes in device-based gaming and is part of Pollard Banknote Limited, a family-owned company since 1907. He said their approach emphasizes long-term, sustainable markets by working with local stakeholders, regulators, and lawmakers to introduce the right products responsibly. Drawing on experience in lottery, casino, and tribal gaming, he cautioned against expanding too quickly, which has caused market failures elsewhere. He added that in Alaska, manufacturers should either all be allowed or all be prohibited from owning distributors, emphasizing consistent regulations without grandfathering exceptions.

[1:39:38 PM](#)

MR. BRESLO moved to slide 5-6 and said that a committee formed after last session examined electronic pull tabs, focusing on whether they should be offered through slot-style cabinets or handheld tablets. The debate centered on ensuring a level playing field and avoiding the appearance of mini-casinos across the state. He said similar discussions in other markets supported the committee's conclusions and noted that choosing between cabinets and tablets is a "false choice," as cabinets typically dominate the market and quickly reach capacity limits.

[1:41:07 PM](#)

At ease.

[1:42:10 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting.

[1:42:26 PM](#)

MR. BRESLO continued with slide 6 and stated that the company produces cabinet-style machines and values their role in the business, but noted that when both cabinets and tablets are allowed, cabinets tend to dominate the market. He added that locations often reach the machine caps quickly, as some

manufacturers install the maximum number allowed to block competitors rather than based on actual performance needs.

[1:43:34 PM](#)

MR. BRESLO moved to slide 7 and said Minnesota's experience shows that tablet-based electronic pull tabs strengthen charitable gaming rather than replace paper pull tabs. Since tablets were introduced in 2013, paper pull tab sales have doubled to over \$2 billion, while electronic pull tabs reached \$2.7 billion in 2024.

[1:44:14 PM](#)

MR. BRESLO moved to slides 8-9 and stated that in contrast, cabinet-style machines have reduced paper sales, as seen in Idaho where sales fell 50 percent after cabinets were introduced, and similar trends occurred in North Dakota, Ohio, and Virginia. He explained that tablets are cheaper to produce, ship, and maintain, providing greater savings for charities, while cabinets are more costly and tend to dominate locations. He also said revenue comparisons between the two are misleading because cabinets in other states have higher payout rates, making tablets potentially more profitable when adjusted for differences. He noted that tablets have performed well even in markets with slot machines, such as Minnesota's tribal casinos, showing they can compete effectively.

[1:47:40 PM](#)

MR. BRESLO moved to slides 10-11 and noted that tablets have performed well even in markets with slot machines, such as Minnesota's tribal casinos, showing they can compete effectively. He said the success of Minnesota's tablet-based model is hard to dispute and believes it would work well in Alaska, adding that while the company could provide cabinets if authorized, tablets offer a more effective approach.

[1:48:26 PM](#)

JOHN POWERS, Owner, Tudor Bingo Center, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 170 and stated that he has worked in charitable gaming since 1994 and now owns his business. He expressed concern with Section 31, AS 05.15.186(f) on electronic pull tab costs. He opposed allowing manufacturers and distributors to receive up to 35 percent of proceeds when charities get only 30 percent, arguing they should not earn more than the nonprofits. He noted that Minnesota recently reduced its cap from 30 percent to 25 percent and that all parties there remain profitable, suggesting Alaska should adopt the same 25 percent limit.

[1:50:49 PM](#)

JON WEAVER, Owner, Pilot Games, Minnetonka, Minnesota, testified by invitation on SB 170 and stated that Pilot Games is the largest charitable gaming company focused solely on electronic pull tabs and is independently owned. Founded in Minnesota in 2014, it is the state's oldest electronic pull tab operator and has experienced steady growth over 11 years. He thanked the committee for considering electronic pull tabs in Alaska, describing them as easy to regulate, track, and account for. He said the company provides real-time reporting tools for charities and the state, allowing effective oversight even in large or remote areas, ensuring strong accountability and regulation.

[1:53:10 PM](#)

MR. WEAVER continued with his testimony of SB 170 and stated that he supports electronic pull tabs, noting his company began in Minnesota in 2014 when the product was struggling because distributors feared it would hurt paper pull tab sales. He designed games to complement, not compete with, paper pull tabs, emphasizing that electronic versions should expand participation and increase funds for charities. Over 11 years, his company has helped raise hundreds of millions of dollars for local nonprofits, while tax revenue from electronic pull tabs helped Minnesota pay off bonds for the Vikings' U.S. Bank Stadium 20 years early. He added that tablets also support local bars and veterans' clubs, especially after COVID-19, by providing social, community-based gaming rather than casino-style play. He said tablets better suit the atmosphere of local venues and offered to share his company's experience in charitable gaming, noting it has twice been named U.S. Gaming Company of the Year.

[1:57:28 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN asked if a 30 percent manufacturer cap on ideal net, excluding taxes, work for Pilot Games in Alaska.

[1:57:41 PM](#)

MR. WEAVER replied that a 30 percent cap would be workable for Pilot Games, but 25 percent is not sustainable even in Minnesota. Developing new games costs about \$350,000 and requires major investment in technology, security, and reliability, supported by a staff of over 100 and offices in multiple states. He noted that Minnesota's 25 percent rate was reduced at the request of tribes, not charities or the state, and his company's rate had been 31 percent. He added that operating at 25 percent caused losses in early 2025, and without

1,800 sites and strong ties to Minnesota charities, continuing business there would be difficult.

2:00:08 PM

MARC DOWNING, Chief Counsel, Grover Gaming, Greenville, North Carolina, testified by invitation on SB 170 and read the following:

[Original punctuation provided.]

My name is Marc Downing, and I am Chief Counsel of Grover Gaming, Inc. Grover Gaming is a software development company headquartered in North Carolina. Grover Gaming is the nation's leader in electronic charitable gaming. Our products have netted our charitable partners over \$860 million nationwide—in New Hampshire, North Dakota, Kentucky, Ohio, and Virginia.

2:00:38 PM

MR. DOWNING continued with his testimony of SB 170:

We believe electronic pull tabs would be a boon to Alaska charities and the local communities they serve. In every state that has modernized its charitable gaming to allow electronic pull tabs, charities have seen a tremendous increase in their fundraising. With this new revenue, charities have been able to reinvest in themselves by renovating and updating their posts and lodges, offer new services to their members and, most importantly, invest more in their charitable causes in their local communities. Additionally, participating charities have seen their membership increase, tapping into younger demographics. The modernization of charitable gaming has brought about positive, palpable change to charities and local communities in other states, and the same would happen in Alaska.

The only change we encourage you to make is authorizing consoles in addition to tablets in order to provide flexibility to the charities. We are cognizant of not having the appearance of mini casinos as that is not the intent of charitable gaming. Therefore, one solution is to authorize consoles in members-only locations, but then only tablets in establishments open to the public. Nevertheless, I encourage you to support SB 170.

[2:03:08 PM](#)

JULIE OTTO, Manager, Easy Street Pull Tabs, Kenai, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 170, providing the following testimony:

[Original punctuation provided.]

[2:03:39 PM](#)

MS. OTTO continued with her testimony of SB 170:

**Where does the money go, how does it affect us, what would we do without it?**

People often ask, where does the money from charitable gambling go? Well, the money from our pull tab store, EZ Street Pull Tabs in Kenai, AK goes to support the operating costs of the Ninilchik Senior Center. The center has been around since 1983 and has come upon hard times more than once. We rely of grant dollars from the Borough and the State as well fundraising money we raise ourselves. Having the pull tab store has made a world of difference for us and the needs of the center. If we didn't have charitable gaming to support our operations, we would rely a lot more on grants, which we all know are not guaranteed.

Paper costs, along with everything else keep going up, If our e-tabs follow the MN model and we could double our net, why wouldn't we?? Without them our profits could start going the other way as costs continue to rise

**Next generation of pull tab players likes electronics**

We have had the pull tab store for 5 years now. We have a pretty loyal clientele however they are aging out. The next generation is more familiar with technology as compared to paper in whatever they do. Pull tabs are no different. We need to stay with the times and offer that next generation a new form of entertainment so hopefully we can maintain the money coming in through charitable gambling. E-tabs will do that.

**Available space**

Smaller store. Tablets will do well as far as our space. Our pull tab store doesn't have a lot of extra room to add a bunch of cabinets or the counter space

to add an electronic gaming area. Having tablets only allows the smaller pull tab store only (no bar or big gaming area) to compete effectively against other venues.

**Limits on payouts:**

SP 170 kept the cap on payouts for pull tabs at \$2M. I would like to see that raised more than 10 percent (since it hasn't been raised since 2015) as all this money helps out the non-profits and they can always use more money. In light of not increasing that one, the payout of \$4M on e-tabs seems like a great opportunity to increase a non-profits bottom line.

[2:06:33 PM](#)

MATT FISCHER, Owner Alaska Wholesale LLC, Kasilof, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 170 and moved to slide 2, Who we Are. He said he has operated his distribution business for four years, continuing the company his father started in the 1990s. As Alaska's only remaining full-time resident distributor, he said the charitable gaming industry cannot survive on paper pull tabs alone due to rising costs and supply shortages, making modernization essential for its future.

[2:07:39 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 3, Alaska Gaming It's About the Nonprofits. He said Alaska's gaming industry is unique because, unlike other states, it includes operators and pull-tab stores, which makes adopting new systems more complex. While stakeholders compare roles, he supports the Minnesota model, noting its \$75 million increase in net revenue and emphasizing that net gains, not gross figures, reflect true growth since most gross revenue is paid out in prizes.

[2:08:36 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 4, How Permits Can be Run, and explained that Alaska has several gaming models: self-directed sites like senior centers that run their own pull-tab stores, multi-beneficiary setups with several permittees, and for-profit operators who raise money for nonprofits. He clarified that the 30 percent nonprofit share is a minimum, not a fixed amount—operators can give more. Similarly, vendors can keep up to 30 percent but may choose less, as these percentages serve as flexible guardrails rather than rigid limits.

[2:10:14 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 5, Paper Pull-Tabs, and explained how revenue from an 82 percent payout pull-tab game is divided. Of each dollar, \$0.18 remains after player winnings. From that, about 30 percent goes to manufacturers and distributors, and 36 percent to operators when used. Bingo halls typically have lower payout rates, while pull-tab stores prefer higher ones but have had to reduce payouts due to rising paper costs.

[2:11:22 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 6, Issues Facing Nonprofits and Charitable Gaming, and said Alaska nonprofits face growing challenges, including illegal online pull-tab games on Facebook and unlicensed gaming stores that cut legitimate proceeds in half. SB 170 aims to give authorities power to act against these operations. Meanwhile, nonprofits struggle with rising costs for rent and supplies while ticket prices remain fixed.

[2:12:33 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 7, Key Points From Alaska Industry Talks, and said he spoke with a few Alaskans that are concerned about a potential manufacturer monopoly, rising e-tab costs, and money leaving the state. Bars worry tips could decline with electronic play, and some fear the games move too fast, though he noted they are actually slower than paper. He added that Alaska's permit limits, based on prizes, encourage low payout games that drive players away.

[2:14:03 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 8, Key Points From Alaska Industry Talks, and said many prefer having the rules in statute rather than regulation, noting that most of SB 170 is modeled after Minnesota law, which has already been tested. He added that some reporting requirements go unused and should be removed to save time.

[2:14:41 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 9, 100 Percent of Nothing, is Nothing, and said reducing bar shares isn't practical, noting that without incentives, bars won't offer pull tabs. Paper pull tabs already hurt service and reviews, and with electronic games, bars risk losing tips. He encouraged profit-sharing to keep them engaged, emphasizing that "100 percent of nothing is nothing."

[2:15:26 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 10, The Minnesota Model, and explained that the Minnesota model, recently adjusted from an 88

percent to an 85 percent payout, includes strong regulations requiring manufacturers to sell to all distributors, prohibits gifts, and bars manufacturers from also acting as distributors to maintain fair competition.

[2:16:06 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 11, Minnesota Compared to Alaska Games, and said he favors the Minnesota model because, while Minnesota pull-tab revenue rose 267 percent over the same period, Alaska's increased only 12.1 percent, even as inflation climbed 33 percent, showing Alaska's gaming industry is falling behind.

[2:16:33 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 13, Opposition to This Bill, and said opposition fears about job losses are valid, but adopting the Minnesota model could generate \$75 million from e-tabs, supporting roughly 800 jobs. Without SB 170, additional revenue is lost, causing pull-tab stores and nonprofits to struggle or close, as paper pull tabs alone are no longer sufficient to sustain them.

[2:17:35 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 14, Pull Tabs as Entertainment, Payout Percentage Matters and referenced a bar chart. He explained that higher payout percentages increase the number of plays per \$100 spent, for example, 85 percent payout equals 650 clicks, while 90 percent approaches 900-990 clicks, allowing players to "replay" winnings. He emphasized that electronic pull tabs are meant to provide entertainment, and higher payouts extend playtime, keeping participants satisfied.

[2:18:19 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 16 and showed a picture of the typical bar setup in Minnesota and stated that a tablet stand can hold 10 tablets.

[2:18:43 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 18, Pull-tab Store Death Spiral, and stated that pull-tab stores are stuck in a cycle of lowering payouts to boost profits, which drives away customers and eventually forces them out of business.

[2:19:06 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 19 and stated that raising the \$4 million prize cap increases player winnings, and keeps the players coming back to play.

[2:19:32 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 21, a comparison of paper and electronic tabs showing that after a 3 percent tax deduction, distributors and manufacturers earn 27 percent. The only scenario where they make more than permittees is when working with an operator.

[2:20:22 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 24, Why an Electronic Gaming Bill in 2025, and stated that SB 170 establishes guardrails, while specific details like vendor payment schedules will be handled through regulations. He said it makes most sense to adapt to the Minnesota model, with monthly deposits being more practical than weekly ones.

[2:20:56 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 25, Why so Many Changes in Statute, and stated that lessons from Minnesota and North Dakota show the importance of strong regulations, noting North Dakota's unregulated payouts led to problems. Removing key elements from the model could undermine the system, which is why Alaska favors Minnesota's proven approach.

[2:21:46 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 29 and stated that one of the biggest concerns is the limited number of manufacturers, noting his company is one of only three distributors remaining.

[2:21:55 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 30 and argued manufacturers should not be distributors, citing a past case where dual licensing enabled cheating. He said keeping manufacturers, distributors, and permittees separate ensures accountability and consistent reporting to the state.

[2:22:35 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 32 and referenced a chart. He emphasized keeping provisions to prevent kickbacks, noting that some companies lure permittees with upfront payments that ultimately reduce profits. Many permit holders lack time to analyze long-term impacts, so he urged keeping anti-kickback provisions in SB 170, following Minnesota's regulatory model.

[2:23:45 PM](#)

MR. FISCHER moved to slide 37 and referenced a chart. He described Alaska's current gaming distribution as dominated by

one company, Arrow, which owns both major point-of-sale systems and several manufacturers. He said this consolidation limits competition, allows access to competitors' sales data, and threatens smaller distributors. He urged maintaining separation between manufacturers and distributors, similar to Minnesota's model, and said he supports fair competition that benefits nonprofits.

[2:25:49 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 170 in committee.

[2:25:54 PM](#)

At ease.

### **SB 89-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

[2:27:11 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 89 "An Act relating to physician assistants; relating to collaborative agreements between physicians and physician assistants; relating to the practice of medicine; relating to health care providers; and relating to provisions regarding physician assistants in contracts between certain health care providers and health care insurers."

[2:27:41 PM](#)

MACKENZIE POPE, Staff, Senator Loki Tobin, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented a brief recap of SB 89. She stated that as previously heard, SB 89 would modernize Alaska's physician assistant statutes and update the collaborative agreement structure governing their profession.

[2:28:27 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 89.

[2:29:05 PM](#)

JANICE SHEUFELT, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89 and said she has supervised many physician assistants (PAs) that value their work but believes patient safety depends on PAs continuing to practice in collaboration with physicians. She expressed concern that SB 89 would allow inexperienced PAs to practice independently, potentially reducing access to primary care and leading to unintended consequences similar to those seen with independent nurse practitioners.

[2:31:41 PM](#)

KRISTIN MITCHELL, M.D., President, Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA), Soldotna, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89. She said no physician group supports PA independence and stressed the importance of physician-led, team-based care. Studies showing comparable outcomes involved collaboration, not solo practice. ASMA attributes access issues to physician shortages, not PA rules, and favors revising, not removing, collaboration. If independence advances, ASMA urges strict limits, added supervision, and clear title rules.

[2:34:43 PM](#)

JAN DENAPOLI, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. She said rural care suffers from restrictive collaboration rules that hinder PAs despite their medical-model training. Unlike Nurse Practitioners (NPs), PAs face limits that block them from serving underserved areas. SB 89 would let PAs practice more independently, expanding rural healthcare access.

[2:37:13 PM](#)

KATHERINE VAN ATTA, representing self, Naknek, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. She explained that current PA collaboration rules are impractical in remote Alaska. When PAs apply for licensure, they must submit a collaborative plan listing two physicians. PAs are then required to submit a Periodic Record of Assessment requiring a four-hour face-to-face meeting that disrupt physician schedules. Nurse practitioners face no such restrictions despite similar training. SB 89 would create parity with NPs and improve rural healthcare access.

[2:39:30 PM](#)

KATHERINE SCHNEIDER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. She has worked as a PA in Alaska since 2002, often as the sole provider, consulting physicians as needed. SB 89 would not change PA practice or scope but reduce administrative burdens. She urged support to help recruit and retain qualified providers in underserved areas.

[2:41:25 PM](#)

TAYLOR SHARMAN, representing self, Portland, Oregon, testified in support of SB 89. She said SB 89 grants independent licensure, not practice, keeping collaboration and oversight. New graduates remain under agreements supervised by the medical board. She highlighted Alaska's healthcare gaps and PAs' vital role in rural areas. SB 89 lets PAs fully use their training while ensuring patient safety.

[2:43:47 PM](#)

RILEY BENNETT-VOCKNER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. She said she often serves as the sole provider in remote communities and said SB 89 enables independent licensure, not practice. PAs already collaborate effectively and know when to seek specialized care. Current rules add administrative burdens without improving outcomes, hindering rural staffing. She said independent licensure would ease these barriers and help retain experienced providers to address shortages.

[2:46:27 PM](#)

MOLLY SOUTHWORTH, M.D., representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89. She supported SB 89's amendments and shared research showing Alaska's shift from primary care to specialty care. From 2002-2021, specialists grew 13 times faster than general physicians, and PAs in primary care fell from 47 percent to 43 percent. She said low pay, administrative burdens, and burnout—not licensing—drive this trend. She urged lawmakers to pursue broader solutions like the AMPA HQ proposal to expand access to quality care.

[2:49:22 PM](#)

HELEN ADAMS, M.D., representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89. She acknowledged Alaska's limited healthcare access and PA administrative burdens. She said SB 89 doesn't reflect ASMA's 2024 workgroup efforts and supports ASMA's amendments, including 10,000 hours for independent licensure. She emphasized clear surgical practice rules and warned of possible patient confusion over professional titles.

[2:51:36 PM](#)

KELSEY CAIN, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. PA training has advanced, but outdated laws still require unnecessary collaboration. SB 89 keeps teamwork central while modernizing oversight. SB 89 seeks parity with nurse practitioners to expand access to care. PAs already serve across Alaska, often in remote areas with few physicians. SB 89 ensures sustainable, effective healthcare for Alaskans.

[2:53:54 PM](#)

LEIGH COOPER, D.O., representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89. She stated that as a former critical care nurse with 20,000 hours of experience that didn't go towards hours needed for medical training. She completed over 11,000 hours of medical training to become a physician. Alaska

requires at least two years of residency for independent practice and three for board certification. This rigorous process ensures high-quality care. She argued physician assistants lack equivalent training for equal licensure.

[2:56:16 PM](#)

JENNIFER FAYETTE, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 89. She said the bill modernizes outdated PA supervision laws to improve workforce efficiency and healthcare access. SB 89 cuts red tape, reduces clinic costs, and supports rural care. Similar reforms in other states expanded access without compromising safety. Alaska should do the same to strengthen the healthcare system.

[2:58:40 PM](#)

JACQUELYN SERRANO, M.D., representing self, Nome, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 89. She acknowledged the valuable work of PAs, but expressed concern that inexperienced PAs could be unprepared in rural settings. She argued PAs should meet a 10,000-hour experience standard and opposed unsupervised practice without oversight.

[3:00:07 PM](#)

DANIELS REYNOLDS, M.D., representing self, Lees Summit, MO, testified in support of SB 89. He praised Alaska's physician assistants as highly trained professionals who provide excellent care and improve health outcomes. He argued that opposition from physician organizations is financially motivated and emphasized that expanding PA roles would increase access, affordability, and quality of care across the state.

[3:02:04 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 89 in committee.

### **SB 99-CPA AS PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATORS**

[3:02:10 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 99 "An Act relating to private professional conservators; and providing for an effective date."

[3:02:42 PM](#)

SENATOR ROBERT MYERS, District Q, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 99. He said the bill would create a second licensing path for private professional conservators, allowing licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPAs) to qualify

without completing the full national guardianship certification, much of which is unrelated to conservatorship duties.

[3:03:35 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN opened public testimony on SB 99.

[3:03:59 PM](#)

LAURA BONNER, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 99. She shared her experience as a guardian and co-guardian for her daughter with a disability, noting her understanding of the distinct roles of guardians and conservators. She said SB 99 would allow CPAs to be licensed as conservators without needing guardianship certification, expanding resources for those needing professional conservator services.

[3:05:31 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN closed public testimony on SB 99.

[3:06:21 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN solicited a motion.

[3:06:23 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON moved to adopt Amendment 1, work order 34-LS0527\A.2.

34-LS0527\A.2  
Gunther  
4/7/25

**A M E N D M E N T 1**

OFFERED IN THE SENATE

BY SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON

TO: SB 99

Page 1, line 1, following "**conservators;**":

Insert "**amending Rule 17(e), Alaska Rules of Probate Procedure;**"

Page 4, following line 7:

Insert new bill sections to read:

"\* **Sec. 6.** AS 13.26.465(g) is amended to read:

(g) In addition to any other requirement of this section, [WHEN APPOINTING A RELATIVE OR

FRIEND OF THE PROTECTED PERSON AS THE CONSERVATOR OF THE PROTECTED PERSON,] the court shall require that a [THE] proposed conservator complete one hour of mandatory education on the basics of conservatorship before the appointment or within 30 days after the appointment if the proposed conservator is a

(1) relative or friend of the protected person; or

(2) private professional conservator who obtained a private professional conservator license by satisfying the licensure requirement provided under AS 08.26.030(4)(B) and has not previously completed the mandatory education required by the court under this subsection. [IF THE PERSON IS APPOINTED BASED ON THE PERSON'S AGREEMENT TO COMPLETE THE MANDATORY EDUCATION AND THE PERSON FAILS TO COMPLETE THE MANDATORY EDUCATION WITHIN THE 30 DAYS, THE COURT SHALL REMOVE THE CONSERVATOR AND APPOINT A SUCCESSOR.]

\* **Sec. 7.** AS 13.26.465 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

(h) If a person is appointed as a conservator based on the person's agreement to complete the mandatory education within 30 days under (g) of this section and the person fails to complete the mandatory education within 30 days, the court shall remove the conservator and appoint a successor.

\* **Sec. 8.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

DIRECT COURT RULE AMENDMENT. Rule 17(e), Alaska Rules of Probate Procedure, is amended to read:

(e) **Mandatory Education.** A person required to complete one hour of mandatory education on the basics of conservatorship under AS 13.26.465(g) [RELATIVE OR FRIEND OF THE PROTECTED PERSON WHO IS APPOINTED AS A CONSERVATOR] must complete the [ONE HOUR OF] mandatory education [ON THE BASICS OF CONSERVATORSHIP] before [THE] appointment or within 30 days after [THE] appointment as provided by AS 13.26.465(g)."

Renumber the following bill section accordingly.

[3:06:29 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN objected for purposes of discussion.

[3:06:34 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON read the explanation of Amendment 1:

[Original punctuation provided.]

[3:06:33 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON continued with explanation of Amendment 1:

The court system pointed out that they offer free training online for family and friends who are appointed as non-professional conservators.

This short 1-hour training course covers the basics of the laws surrounding conservators in the state of Alaska.

This amendment would simply require that private professional conservators who are licensed through the CPA take this short training upon appointment with their first client.

CPA's already have training to be competent conservators, but this training would ensure they know the specific laws governing conservators.

This one-time, free training would make sure that all private conservators understand what laws apply to their practice.

In closing, this amendment protects the person who needs a conservator, and the bill sponsor is in support of this bill.

[3:07:36 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS said the idea originated from the court system, which later informed them about the available training. He said the training is a valuable addition to SB 99, as fiduciary principles are already well understood in the CPA community. He expressed support for the amendment.

[3:08:05 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN removed his objection.

[3:08:08 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN found no further objection and Amendment 1 was adopted.

[3:08:18 PM](#)

CHAIR BJORKMAN held SB 99, as amended, in committee.

[3:09:56 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Bjorkman adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 3:09 p.m.