

HB

480

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date Referred to Committee: February 9, 1996

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 3/12/96

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered:

HB 480

HOUSE BILL NO. 480

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

"An Act relating to physician assistants, including the treatment of their services under group health insurance policies."

recommends it be replaced with the following committee substitute CS HB 480 (HES) [] the same title [x] a new title

[] additional referral to _____ Committee

[] attached amendment(s)

ADOPTS: _____ Letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept)

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date)

[] fiscal note(s) _____

[] fiscal note(s) _____

[x] zero fiscal note(s) CED, H+SS

[] zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS	DP	DNP	NR	AM
<i>John L. Davis</i>			✓	
<i>John K. Kelly</i>			✓	
<i>Carla Bunker</i>	✓			
<i>John W. ...</i>	✓			
<i>William ...</i>			✓	
<i>William Robertson</i>	✓			
<i>Tom ...</i>	✓			

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE *Carla Bunker*

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 480(HES)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

NINETEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES THERRIAULT, Kelly

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to physician assistants."

2 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

3 * Section 1. AS 08.64.107 is amended to read:

4 Sec 08.64.107. REGULATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND
5 INTENSIVE CARE PARAMEDICS. The board shall adopt regulations regarding the
6 licensure [REGISTRATION] of physician assistants and registration of mobile
7 intensive care paramedics, and the medical services that they may perform, including
8 the

- 9 (1) [THE] educational and other qualifications; [,]
10 (2) [THE] application and registration procedures; [,]
11 (3) [THE] scope of activities authorized; [,] and
12 (4) [THE] responsibilities of the supervising or training physician.

13 * Sec. 2. AS 18.08.089(a) is amended to read:

14 (a) A mobile intensive care paramedic or physician assistant registered or
15 licensed under AS 08.64.107 or an emergency medical technician certified under this

1 chapter may make a determination and pronouncement of death of a person under the
2 following circumstances:

3 (1) the paramedic or emergency medical technician is an active member
4 of an emergency medical service certified under this chapter;

5 (2) neither a physician licensed under AS 08.64 nor a physician exempt
6 from licensure under AS 08.64 is immediately available for consultation by radio or
7 telephone communications;

8 (3) the paramedic, physician assistant, or emergency medical technician
9 has determined, based on acceptable medical standards, that the person has sustained
10 irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions.

11 * Sec. 3. AS 18.15.310(a) is amended to read:

12 (a) The withdrawal of blood for a test under AS 18.15.300 - 18.15.320 shall
13 be performed in a medically approved manner. Only a physician or physician
14 assistant licensed under AS 08.64, [PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT REGISTERED
15 UNDER AS 08.64,] registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, or certified emergency
16 medical technician may withdraw blood specimens for the purposes of AS 18.15.300 -
17 18.15.320.

Alaska State Legislature

REPRESENTATIVE
GENE THERRIAULT
P.O. Box 55326
North Pole, Alaska 99705
(907) 488-0862

House District 33



While in Juneau
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182
(907) 465-4797

House Representatives

House Bill 480

"An Act relating to physician assistants, including the treatment of their services under group health insurance policies."

Sponsor:

Representative Gene Therriault

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gene Therriault".

Sponsor Statement

This legislation is intended to clarify the process that is currently in place for granting physician assistants the authority to practice in the state, and to prohibit unfair insurance discrimination against physician assistants.

The bill would change current language in AS 08.64.107, dealing with the regulations for physician assistants, from "The board shall adopt regulations regarding the registration of physician assistants . . ." to "The board shall adopt regulations regarding the licensure of physician assistants. . ." This would more accurately reflect the actual requirements a physician assistant must meet before he or she can practice in the state under AS 08.64.170. Under AS 08.64.170, a physician assistant must be licensed to practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician. Because state regulations require this credentialed process that is in essence licensure, references in state statute should be changed to more accurately reflect the high standards that must be met to practice as a physician assistant in Alaska.

In addition, this bill would prohibit unfair discrimination against physician assistants under group health insurance policies. It states that if an insurance policy covers the type of services that a physician assistant is licensed to perform, then the policy must cover those services when they are performed by a physician assistant, and may not discriminate against physician assistants by excluding their services, while covering other providers who perform the same services.

Sectional Analysis

House Bill 480, "An Act relating to physicians assistants, including the treatment of their services under group health insurance policies."

- Section 1** Changes current language in AS 08.64.107 regarding regulations for physician's assistants from "The board shall adopt regulations regarding the registration of physician assistants. . ." to "The board shall adopt regulations regarding the licensure of physician assistants . . ."
- Section 2** Makes amendments necessary for consistency with changes in Section 1.
- Section 3** Makes amendments necessary for consistency with changes in Section 1.
- Section 4** Provides that if an insurance policy covers the type of services that a physician assistant is licensed to perform, then the policy must cover those services when they are performed by a physician assistant and may not discriminate against physician assistants by excluding their services, while covering other providers who perform the same services.

VIA FACSIMILE

January 31, 1996

Rep. Gene Therriault
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

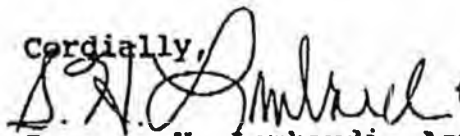
Dear Rep. Therriault:

As Acting Chair of the State Medical Board I write to express support for the Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants request for a change to the AS 08.64.107. At issue is a discrepancy in the language which, according to the Department of Law can only be remedied by a statutory change.

The details of this change are outlined in the January 29, 1996 letter to you from Ms. Jeanne Clark, President of the Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants. At the last meeting of the State Medical Board, on November 30, 1995, the Board moved, without objection, to support this change in the wording of AS 08.64.107 from "registration" to "licensure".

Please feel free to contact either myself or our Executive Director, Leslie Haywood if you need further support or information.

Cordially,



Suzanne H. Lombardi, Acting Chair
State Medical Board

ALASKA ACADEMY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Date: January 29, 1996

From: Jeanne Clark, PA-C
President AkAPA

To: Rep. Gene Therriault
State Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Rep. Therriault,

This letter is a follow up to my request last week on the Interior teleconference for sponsorship of legislation. I did discuss the issues with your aide, Sara Fisher today.

On behalf of my organization, with the support of the Medical Board, I am asking for legislation to change Alaska statute **AS 08.64.107. Regulation of physician assistants**. The section deals with adoption of regulations and registration for physician assistants. Under this statute PAs are registered but then under statute **AS 08.64.170** physician assistants are licensed to practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician.

The Medical Board regulation 12 AAC 40.400 Physician Assistant registration does follow the statute in registration of PAs. But what is required to be "registered" is really a credentialed process, in essence, licensure.

The Medical Board requested that the Division of Occupational Licensure research this issue with the Department of Law to determine if regulatory changes alone could clarify the language. But their ruling was that it had to be a statute change.

I have enclosed a copy of the current statutes and regulations regarding PA registration. Also included is a review paper from the American Academy of Physician Assistants explaining and comparing licensure and registration.

The reason for requesting the change in wording of the statute is to clarify the current process of granting PAs authority to practice in the state. Physicians and nurses are "licensed" to practice and the language regarding PA should reflect the high standards that have to be met to practice as a physician assistant in Alaska.

Many areas of health law refer to "licensed practitioners". Adopting a licensure system makes it easier to include PAs in relevant provider language. Some managed care companies will restrict covered services to those provided by "licensed providers". Even though it can be argued that our current system of registration is equivalent to licensure, this nomenclature discrepancy can create problems.

Some laws and policies restrict the ordering of tests or therapies to "licensed providers". There are many routine health care tasks that PAs are delegated to order. Some agencies will not accept if the PA is not licensed.

Many states are recognizing the changes in the health care system, and changing to licensure for PAs. Currently, PAs are licensed in 20 states, certified in 21, and registered in 9. The legislatures of Wisconsin, Nebraska and South Dakota will consider PA licensure bills this session.

The timing to get this legislation passed this session is that December will be the next biannual registration process. We would like to have the language clarified to be effective for that process.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please call me if you have any additional questions and to let me know of your decision. I have ask our lobbyist, Jack Heesch to call to meet with you to answer any additional questions.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Clark, PA-C

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 480

Revision Date: _____
 Title: An Act relating to physician assistants, including
the treatment of their services under group health ins. policies
 Sponsor: Rep. Theriault
 Requestor: House HESS

Department: Commerce and Economic Development
 BRU: Occupational Licensing
 Component: Operations

COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 1844

Expenditures/Revenues

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES						
---------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 General Fund						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other 1091 Designated PR						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY 98) cost: \$ 0.0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HB 480 amends AS 08.64 to reference "licensure" of physician assistants and "registration" of mobile intensive care paramedics. New funds are not required to implement this bill.

Prepared by: Jennifer Strickler, Administrative Officer
 Division: Occupational Licensing
 Approved by Commissioner: William L. Hensley
 Agency: Commerce and Economic Development

Phone: 465-2144
 Date: March 4, 1996
 Date: 3/4/96

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STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. Hb 480

Revision Date: 02/28/96 Dept. Affected: Health and Social Services
 Title: An Act relating to Physician Assistants BRU: State Health Services
 Component: Maternal, Child, & Family Hlth
 Sponsor: Representative Therriault COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 290
 Requestor: House HESS See also (SN#): _____

Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGES IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (please specify)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY96) cost: \$0.0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH
 Division: Public Health
 Approved by Com: Karen Perdue, Commissioner
 Agency: Department of Health & Social Services

Phone: 465-3090
 Date: 02/28/96
 Date: 2/28/96

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FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1996 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 480

Revision Date: _____
Title: Physician Assistants

Department: Commerce and Economic Development
BRU: Insurance
Component: Operations

Sponsor: Rep. Theriault
Requestor: H HESS Committee

COMPONENT SERIAL NO. _____ #354

Expenditures/Revenues

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES						
--------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

FUND SOURCE

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 General Fund						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY 96) cost: \$ 0.0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

No fiscal impact.

Prepared by: Joan Brown, Administrative Officer *[Signature]* Phone: 465-2597
 Division: Insurance Date: 2/13/96
 Approved by Commissioner: William L. Hensley *[Signature]* Date: 2-13-96
 Agency: Commerce and Economic Development

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AETNA Health Plans
P.O. Box 21645
Seattle, WA 98111

JACK -
I have a
total of 5 of
these
mixed JAF/
State
employees

January 11, 1995

Orthopaedic Triage of Fairbanks
1919 Lathrop St., #202
Fairbanks, AK 99701

re: [redacted]
State of Alaska

SSN: 468-40-3118

Dear Mr. Weber:

We have reviewed your letter of November 28, 1994,
regarding the treatment that you performed for
Robert Boutang.

Based on the information provided, we will not be
able to pay benefits for your claims. Our reason
for this determination is based on your credentials.
The State of Alaska Group Medical Plan does not
consider a physician's assistant a payable provider.

In order to receive reimbursement for your services
you would need to be employed by a medical doctor,
and the payment would then be made to that doctor under
his tax identification number.

We are sorry our determination could not be more favorable.
If you have any other questions, please contact this
office at the address shown above or call 1-800-426-3211.

Sincerely,

Joanna Williams
Customer Service Representative
Seattle Claim Department
Aetna Life Insurance Company

cc: R. Boutang



4300 B Street, Suite 205
Anchorage, AK 99503-2781
907-561-0011

November 9, 1994

Karolyn Bowyer
1679 Taroka Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Plan Sponsor: University of Alaska
Employee : [REDACTED]
SSN : [REDACTED]
Dependent : Jeffrey

Dear Karolyn:

We are writing in response to your request for written notification of the denial on Jeffrey's claim, date of service September 12, 1994, in the amount of \$132 dollars.

These expenses are not covered because this provider, M. Weber, P.A., is not recognized under the plan definition of a physician.

The charges in question are being billed directly by M. Weber, P.A., and a physician assistant billing on his own behalf is not covered.

Sincerely,

Sandra Kent

Sandra Kent
Anchorage Member Services
Aetna Health Insurance Company



August 16, 1994

*AAPA
REIMBURSEMENT
ISSUE*

Healy Clinic
248 Parks Hwy
Usibellispur Rd.
Healy, AK 99743-0062

Re:

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your inquiry regarding our denial of services provided by John Winklmann, P.A.

As stated in the 1994 brochure, covered providers are: "A licensed doctor of medicine (M.D.) or a licensed doctor of osteopathy (D.O.). Other covered providers who may render services without the supervision of an M.D. but for which the Plan provides benefits include a chiropractor, nurse midwife, nurse anesthetist, dentist, optometrist, qualified clinical social worker, qualified clinical psychologist, podiatrist, speech, physical and occupational therapist, nurse practitioner/clinical specialist and nursing school administered clinic. For purposes of this FEHB brochure, the term "doctor" includes all of these providers when the services are performed within the scope of their license or certification. Within States designated as medically underserved areas, any licensed medical practitioner is covered. For 1994, the States designated as medically underserved are: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi New Mexico, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming."

According to the information submitted, John Winklmann has a degree in Physician Assistant which does not fall within the guidelines of a covered provider. The services rendered by John Winklmann were correctly denied.

Our brochure also states if the member does not agree with this benefit determination, the member is entitled to a review of the claim by the Office of Personnel Management. The brochure provides specific

instructions on claim appeal.

If you have any questions, please contact our office.

**EXPLANATION OF NOTES THAT
WERE SENT TO THE CLAIMANT**

METLIFE PROVIDES FASTER, MORE EFFICIENT CLAIM PROCESSING FOR ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED CLAIMS. THEREFORE WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUBMIT CLAIMS ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH NEIC. FOR CLAIMS THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED ON PAPER, THE USE OF SCANNABLE CLAIM FORMS FACILITATES MORE EFFICIENT CLAIM PROCESSING.

- 160 - The charges for services performed on this date have been combined and benefits have been determined based on the primary procedure.
- 250 - This provider of service is not considered eligible under your group medical plan. Therefore, this expense is being declined according to the plan provisions.

NOTE:

THE GROUP-NO, CLAIM-NO AND PATIENT'S NAME SHOULD BE FURNISHED WHEN REFERENCING A PARTICULAR CLAIM. IF THERE IS A NEED TO RETURN A PAYMENT ON A SPECIFIC CLAIM, A PERSONAL CHECK IN THE AMOUNT OF THAT PAYMENT SHOULD ACCOMPANY YOUR INQUIRY. TO EXPEDITE FUTURE CLAIMS, PLEASE ALWAYS PROVIDE THE INSURED'S NAME, SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, EMPLOYER NAME, GROUP NUMBER AND PATIENT NAME.

PROVIDER ADDRESS:

THIS CLAIM WAS PROCESSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF YOUR EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN.

IN THE EVENT A CLAIM HAS BEEN DENIED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, YOU CAN REQUEST A REVIEW OF YOUR CLAIM. THIS REQUEST FOR REVIEW SHOULD BE SENT TO GROUP CLAIMS REVIEW AT THE ADDRESS OF THE METROPOLITAN OFFICE WHICH PROCESSED THE CLAIM, WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER YOU RECEIVE NOTICE OF DENIAL OF THE CLAIM. WHEN REQUESTING A REVIEW, PLEASE STATE THE REASON YOU BELIEVE THE CLAIM WAS IMPROPERLY DENIED AND SUBMIT ANY DATA, QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS YOU DEEM APPROPRIATE.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE EVALUATED AND YOU WILL BE INFORMED OF THE DECISION IN A TIMELY MANNER.



SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BENEFITS



P.O. BOX 5001
ROLLING MEADOWS IL 60008

PROVIDER NAME: RICHARD J BURGER MD
PROVIDER I.D. #: 820089715
DATE OF STATEMENT: FEB 14, 1995
GROUP #: 0038800

SEND INQUIRIES TO ABOVE ADDRESS
OR CALL (800) 323-8520

SEARS GROUP MEDICAL PLAN

PAGE 1 OF 1

Employee Name Employee I.D. # Claim #	Patient's Name Patient Acct # Provider I.D. Assoc. or Disp #	Date(s) of Service	CPT Code OR Service	Total Expenses	Expenses Excluded	Notes (see over)	Copay- Deduct Amount	Benefit Paid
8013050751-99	CLARKE 101837	01/12/95	17100	101.00	101.00	268		
			TOTALS	101.00	101.00			.00
					PATIENT RESPONSIBILITY----			> 101.00
8013050751-99	CLARKE 101837	01/12/95	38415	.00	.00	186		
			TOTALS	.00	.00			.00
8013050751-99	CLARKE 101837	01/12/95	80018	39.30	39.30	268		
			TOTALS	39.30	39.30			.00
					PATIENT RESPONSIBILITY----			> 39.30

PLEASE SEE BACK FOR INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTRONIC CLAIM SUBMISSION.

PAGE TOTAL	.00
GRAND TOTAL	.00

* PAYMENT AMOUNT IS REDUCED BY COINSURANCE AMOUNTS, OTHER INSURANCE BENEFITS, MEDICARE BENEFITS, AND/OR BENEFITS PAID TO EMPLOYEE.

** WITHHOLD AMOUNT.

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONS, NOTES, AND INFORMATION REGARDING THE CLAIM SUBMISSION PROCESS.

LBN4F1 NY 8/93

SEARS GROUP MEDICAL PLAN - 0038800
METROPOLITAN LIFE INS. CO.
P.O. BOX 5001
ROLLING MEADOWS IL 60008

RICHARD J BURGER MD
2009 COWLES ST
FAIRBANKS AK 99701

JUST A LITTLE SUMMARY OF MY CALLS RE THIS ISSUE

Per Catherine Reardon-Occupational licensing

She said that "registered" to "licensed" is just a semantic change. The process for qualification is identical. (YOU MIGHT ASK HER FOR THE RECORD, IF THIS WILL IN ANY WAY AFFECT HOW A P.A. PRACTICES, WOULD P.A.'S STILL HAVE TO PRACTICE UNDER A PHYSICIAN?)

Re: Blue Cross federal issue:

According to yesterday's conversation with PA and Jack, the example of an insurer not paying was Blue Cross (the subcontractor) and the federal employee program. Under the national plan, they do not pay for PA services. According to Jody Ellis (#206-670-5657) at BC office, they are working with the federal Office of Personnel Management to create an amendment to cover PA's in Alaska. BC plans to cover PA's as soon as the amendment is made. They are working on it in D.C. this week. I have attempted to contact Joe Orange (#202-942-1298) with the Office of Personnel Management to get more details, but he has not returned my message.

T/C with Rod Wilson:

Has concerns about Section 4 of bill. He said there is lively debate about what a P.A. should bill for services he or she renders versus what a physician bills for the same service. Argument for having a P.A. bill the same as the physician is that the physician assumes more risk by having a P.A. work for the physician and service costs should be the same. Others argue that a P.A. should bill for a lesser amount than a physician because a P.A. has far less training than a physician.

T/C with Leslie Haywood, Executive Secretary of the State Medical Board:

Leslie said the Board has not taken a position on the entire bill; just the registered/licensed portion.

Upon questioning her, she informed me that there is no limit on the number of P.A.'s a physician can sponsor. Some collaborative plans in place may have up to 12 P.A.'s.

Conclusions drawn from the rest of the conversation with Leslie:

Neither physicians nor P.A.'s are required to carry malpractice insurance by law. Liability may ultimately lie with the collaborating physician. There are a great variety of ways in which P.A.'s practice in Alaska. There is at least one P.A. who owns a clinic and has a business

license and employs a physician. Emergency room physicians sponsor many P.A.'s in remote locations. There is a Native corporation which employs both physicians and P.A.'s.

The big question is: Are patients paying for services they, in fact, are receiving? If one goes to see a physician and sees a P.A. instead, but is billed for the same amount as if he or she had seen the physician, is that right? Should the billing amount for seeing a P.A. be less than it would be if the patient saw a physician?

Are we headed in the direction of having one physician at a facility...or even at a different location and having numerous P.A.'s available. Patients end up seeing P.A.'s, but paying as if they had received the services of a physician? This issue has not been clarified, but there are some P.A.'s billing the same price as that of a physician.

MAR 12 1996 REG

MP

ALEUTIANS EAST BOROUGH

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF

■ KING COVE ■ SAND POINT ■ AKUTAN ■ COLD BAY ■ FALSE PASS ■ NELSON LAGOON

March 8, 1996

The Honorable Cynthia Toohey
Representative
Alaska State Legislature
Room 104
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Rep. Toohey:

We are writing in support of House Bill 480 which is being referred to the Health, Education and Social Services Committee for review. The passing of this bill will allow physician assistants to provide services for which they have been trained.

Changing the designation of physician assistants from registered to licensed and including their services under group health insurance would enable the Aleutians East Borough to make use of the services of Margaret Eubank, whom the Borough has sponsored through her training years and who recently received her license as a Certified Physicians' Assistant. Margaret has always intended to come back to Sand Point and provide P.A. services in her home town and this, of course, was the intention of the Borough sponsorship. Margaret would be able to assume her position as a Certified P.A. in Sand Point under HB 480 and allow her to bill for services which are covered by group insurance policies. This would be a tremendous help to rural health care in Alaska.

We respectfully request your support in passing this very important house bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Juettner
Administrator

CLERK/PLANNER
P.O. BOX 349
SAND POINT, ALASKA 99661
(907) 383-2699
(907) 383-3496 FAX

BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR
1600 A STREET, SUITE 103
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-5146
(907) 274-7555
(907) 276-7569 FAX

FINANCE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 49
KING COVE, ALASKA 99612
(907) 497-2588
(907) 497-2386 FAX

Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants

HB 480: Reimbursement

HB 480 adds physician assistants to the "nondiscrimination" statute for group health insurance policies. This statute does not affect in any way the reimbursement rates paid to any provider group. A question about this bill has been raised in a committee hearing regarding differential reimbursement rates based on the providers training and education level. AS 21.36.090 paragraph (d) includes the following "provider" groups: physician, dentist, osteopath, optometrist, chiropractor, nurse midwife, advanced nurse practitioner, naturopath, physical therapist, occupational therapist, psychologist, psychological associate, licensed clinical social worker or certified direct-entry midwife. Several of these groups of providers provide overlapping services including the following:

- Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychological associates, licensed clinical social workers
- Orthopedic physicians, chiropractors, osteopaths, physical therapists
- Obstetrics/gynecology physicians, nurse midwives, certified direct-entry midwives
- Family practice and internal medicine physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants
- Ophthalmologists, optometrists

A discussion of differential reimbursement rates for these provider groups based on differing educational requirements should of necessity be applied to all of the above groups which provide overlapping services. We feel that such a discussion would be lively and interesting. However, our belief is that the best solution is to continue to allow insurance reimbursement rates to be established by market conditions.

Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants

HB 480

The Alaska Academy of Physician Assistants is requesting your support for HB 480. This bill changes PA registration to licensure, adds PAs to the "nondiscrimination" clause under group health insurance policies, and simply corrects two other statutes that refer to "registered" PAs by changing the designation to licensed, specifically regarding the drawing of blood and the pronouncement of death.

Section 1. The change from registration to licensure is supported by the Alaska State Medical Board and is considered by them to be only a semantic change. It does not change in any way our collaborative relationship with physicians. Our reason for requesting this change is that some federal employee insurance carriers have denied reimbursement for medical services provided by PAs in Alaska because PAs are not licensed in Alaska.

Section 4. Our request to be added to the "nondiscrimination" statute is an attempt to ensure that insurance carriers continue to reimburse for services provided by PAs. It does not require insurance companies to reimburse PAs directly, that is not the intention of this language. It also does not affect in any way the reimbursement rate paid to any provider covered under the statute. That remains a matter between the carrier, the provider, and the patient. It simply adds us to the list of provider classes whom the Alaska State Legislature has determined should not be denied reimbursement as a group. It does not in any way require insurance companies to contract with any individual PA, or group of PAs.

This bill does not in any substantive way change the way PAs currently practice in Alaska. We simply want to be sure PAs remain a viable provider group in Alaska by ensuring that group health insurance carriers continue to reimburse for our services. We would appreciate your support of HB 480.

John Riley
Chair, Legislative Affairs Committee