

HB

153

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI  
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HB153  
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March 5, 2003

The Honorable Pete Kott  
Speaker of the House  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 208  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Kott:

Under the authority of article III, section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill to provide greater flexibility to the Department of Health and Social Services to implement cost containment strategies for the Medicaid program.

Under current law, if funds appropriated to the Medicaid program are insufficient for a given fiscal year, the department is directed to eliminate optional Medicaid services based on a priority list that is woefully out-of-date. The existing list is not an effective management tool and if used, would needlessly result in the denial of necessary and cost-effective services to Alaskans in need of health care.

The proposed bill would replace this obsolescent language with authority for the department to undertake cost containment based on three key principles.

First, the department must pursue all other reasonable cost containment measures before eliminating any eligibility groups or services.

Second, the department should aggressively pursue strategies to maximize federal financial participation in the Medicaid program.

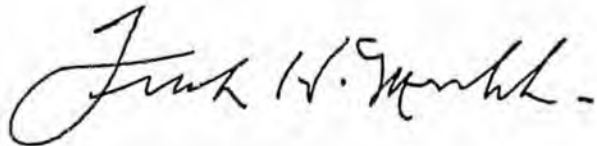
Third, cost containment decisions should be made in a manner that best reflect the needs and interests of eligible Medicaid recipients.

The Honorable Pete Kott  
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The imperative of slowing the growth of state funding for Medicaid while at the same time maintaining health care coverage for needy Alaskans is an issue that can no longer be avoided. Passage of this legislation will give the department additional tools to meet this challenge.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Frank H. Murkowski".

Frank H. Murkowski  
Governor

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

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March 6, 2003

Honorable Peggy Wilson  
Chair  
House Health, Education, and Social Services Committee  
Alaska State Capitol; Rm. 106  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Wilson,

The Department of Health and Social Services respectfully requests a hearing in the House Health, Education, and Social Services Committee on House Bill 153, "An Act repealing the statute that sets priorities for the Department of Health and Social Services to apply to administration of the medical assistance program when there are insufficient funds allocated in the state budget for that program; authorizing the department to make cost containment decisions that may include decisions about eligibility of persons and availability of services under the medical assistance program; and providing for an effective date."

This bill will provide greater flexibility to the Department of Health and Social Services to implement cost containment strategies for the Medicaid program.

Under current law, if insufficient funds are allocated to fully-fund the Medicaid program, the department is directed to eliminate optional Medicaid services based on a priority list that is out-of-date. The existing list is not an effective management tool and, if used, would needlessly result in the denial of necessary and cost-effective services to Alaskans in need of health care.

The proposed bill would replace this obsolescent language with broad general authority for the department to undertake cost containment based on three key principles.

First, the department must pursue all other reasonable cost containment measures before eliminating any eligibility groups or services.

Second, the department should aggressively pursue strategies to maximize federal financial participation in the Medicaid program.

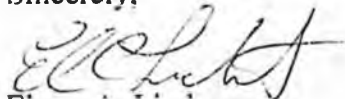
Honorable Peggy Wilson  
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Third, cost containment decisions should be made in a manner that best reflect the needs and interests of eligible Medicaid recipients.

A fiscal note should be on file with the committee.

Your favorable consideration of this request would be appreciated.

Sincerely,



Elmer A. Lindstrom  
Special Assistant to the Commissioner

Cc: Mike Tibbles, Legislative Director  
Office of the Governor

Virginia Stonkus, Acting Director  
Division of Medical Assistance