



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of  
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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February 26, 2016

Senator Peter Micciche  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: Support for SB 98, Prescription without Physical Exam

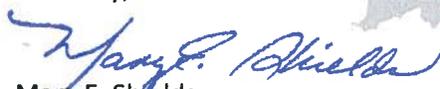
Dear Senator Micciche:

The Alaska Commission on Aging is pleased to provide this letter of support for SB 98 authored by you to address the shortage of health care providers in Alaska by encouraging the appropriate use of telehealth and telemedicine. SB 98 clarifies the requirement for the delivery of telemedicine health care services by providers who are licensed in Alaska by the Alaska Medical Board but are not required to be physically present in order to provide medical care to consenting patients.

Alaska is facing a serious healthcare shortage of healthcare providers, especially doctors, that is expected to intensify as the senior population continues to grow, more people living to an older age with chronic health care conditions, and large numbers of healthcare providers begin to retire. Access to primary health care ranked as the #1 priority concern for older Alaskans, according to 48% of the 2,280 respondents age 55 years and older who responded to the Alaska Senior Survey that was conducted in preparation for the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services, FY2016-2019. The lack of providers is more acutely felt in rural and remote regions of the state as well as for specialty services such as geriatric or dementia health care services for seniors in addition to behavioral health care. Providers who reside out of state but are licensed to practice in Alaska can contribute to our workforce supply. In addition, Alaska has the highest healthcare costs in the nation. Transportation contributes significantly to those high health care costs, particularly in rural and remote areas of the state. SB 98 encourages the appropriate use of telehealth and telemedicine to improve access to health care by increasing the pool of approved health care professionals and reducing transportation costs.

Thank you for your leadership on SB 98.

Sincerely,

  
Mary E. Shields  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

  
Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director