



Alaska State Medical Board
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Alaska State Medical Board & Natalie Norberg, Executive Administrator

Alaska State Medical Board,

My name is Jennifer Fayette, and I am a life-long Alaskan, born and raised. I am also a PA in Anchorage and the current President of AKAPA. I am addressing you all today as a concerned resident of Alaska, a practicing PA, and representative for our AKAPA constituents.

I attended the special meeting of the AK State Medical Board on February 2, 2023. I have also attended countless working group meetings over the last 2 years regarding modernization of the PA profession in our state, these have been attended by board members Dr. Wein and PA Bigelow-Hood.

I must raise concern for the medical board's proposed changes to regulations in Article 5 for PAs. The concerns are the setting back of a profession that has proven its place on the medical team for over 50 years and further limiting Alaskan's access to care. The proposed changes are not only harmful to our practice and profession but will aid in further limiting access to care for many of my family, friends, and current patients. As a lifelong Alaskan this is horrifying. This is the exact opposite of what the Modernizing of the PA Profession movement is intending to do for healthcare and will directly hurt Alaskans. The national shortage of providers and access to care, especially in rural communities are the driving force and our current medical board is proposing regulations that will prevent practitioners from providing care to the Alaskans who need it most.

After listening to the meeting on the 2nd, I feel that part of the problem comes from board members not having a solid idea of the PA profession, or firsthand experience of working directly with PAs. The multiple reference to PAs as "Assistants to Doctors" regarding authorities delegated and settings of service, makes me question if board members understand the difference between a medical assistant and a PA in the clinic setting and in their training. PAs treat patients. They collaborate with physicians when needed, but have been given the training to diagnose, manage, and treat many different health concerns/conditions/injuries. They have access to collaborating physicians but are practicing medicine actively. They have work reviewed by collaborating physicians as required by their practice plans and the state. They do not merely "assist" in patient care. I understand the title is misleading for what we have done since the first graduating class in 1973 from Duke University, but I urge board members to review accredited PA programs and their curriculum, to fully understand their training, and speak to physicians and surgeons that are utilizing them successfully in their practices. I have already received multiple communications from physicians and their PAs that are concerned with these proposed changes.

Several of the proposed regulations will result in making it harder for PAs to treat their patients or even practice in areas where the highest health care provider is currently a Health Aide due to vacant jobs that cannot be filled. The reality is that doctors and nurse practitioners are not filling these positions, even with the monetary incentives the board stated should bring them. The unspoken message presented by the board at this meeting was that, in the name of "patient safety", having no provider for Alaskan's living remote is better than a PA with nationally certified education/training and access to a collaborating partner by phone. (Please consider – PA programs require on average 2 years of paid medical experience prior to even applying for school). You are proposing regulations that state until a PA has completed 2 years of general medical practice just prior to opportunity (or 3-5 years as suggested by another board member), they should not practice remote at all. In a time when providers in rural areas are most needed, this sends the wrong message.



Again, I urge all members of the medical board to understand the magnitude of these changes. The decisions you make today will directly impact Alaskans and their access to care. My friends, my family members, my patients. They deserve your time to investigate the profession before you dive into the regulations and make changes out of fear of “independent practice/rogue PAs” that I have heard Dr. Wein state at almost every meeting I have attended over the last year and a half. Our regulations should reflect our training and proven performance, just as all the regulations of our partners on the medical team. No one practices medicine independently – we work as a team to provide the best possible care to our patients. I appreciate your time and am completely open to communication with anyone on the medical board or in the public that would like to discuss this further. Please just reach out. AKAPA has a full presentation on PAs that we are more than willing to present to anyone interested.

Thank you for your time.

Jenny Fayette, PA-C
Board President, Alaska Academy of PAs