



# ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

## ALPHA Resolution 6-2007

### Workforce Recruitment and Retention

**Sponsor:** Alaska Primary Care Association  
Regan Mattingly, State Affairs Coordinator

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**Whereas** the mission of the Alaska Primary Care Association is to improve access to primary care for all Alaskans by supporting Community Health Centers and safety net providers throughout the state; and

**Recognizing** that Alaska had a shortage of at least 375 Primary Care Physicians in 2006<sup>1</sup>; and

**Taking note** that Alaska's physician to population ratio is the 17<sup>th</sup> lowest in the nation<sup>2</sup>; and

**Recalling** that the entire State of Alaska has been designated either a Health Professional Shortage Area or a Medically Underserved Area<sup>3</sup>;

**Having considered** a nationwide shortage of qualified medical providers and the fiscal limitations of many small Alaskan clinics makes it difficult for Alaska to compete in the hiring market; and

**Reiterating** that geographic isolation, housing issues, quality of schools, personal and professional isolation, spousal discomfort or opinion, and lack of amenities may all contribute to the difficulty in attracting clinicians to rural and urban locations in Alaska; and

**Recalling** that the average recruitment cost in Alaska for a Physician is \$219,581 and \$35,058 for Midlevel providers such as nurse practitioners or physician assistants<sup>4</sup>; and

**Recognizing** there are currently at least 45 vacant primary healthcare positions in Alaska according to the National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network; and

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska Physicians Supply Task Force. "Securing an Adequate Number of Physicians for Alaska's Needs." August 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Alaska Center for Rural Health. *2007 Alaska Health Workforce Vacancy Study*. July 2007. [http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index\\_downloads/workforce\\_7-24-07\\_body-final.pdf](http://nursing.uaa.alaska.edu/acrh/index_downloads/workforce_7-24-07_body-final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Health Planning and Systems Development. Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. "Status of Recruitment Resources and Strategies II." June 2006.



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*Considering* that Alaska's Community Health Centers currently have at least 32 vacant primary healthcare provider positions including 11 Physicians and 17 Mid-Level providers; and *Taking note* that there is approximately a 35% shortage of Primary Care Physicians and approximately a 22% shortage of Mid-level providers at Community Health Centers<sup>5</sup>; and

*Recalling* that immediate costs for recruitment of staff for positions currently open in Alaska's Community Health Centers totals \$3,137,783; filling these positions will allow over 34,000 new patients to be served<sup>6</sup>.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska Public Health Association will promote and advocate for state leadership and adequate funding to improve health care provider recruitment and retention in the State of Alaska by promoting strategies such as:

- the creation of the Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program<sup>7</sup>;
- state fiscal assistance to sustain, at the very least, the current level of healthcare access in Alaska by ensuring the proper level of healthcare providers reside in healthcare facilities across the state;
- solutions to the health provider shortage that address the problem by filling current vacant positions, as well as helping to train new providers through programs such as WWAMI which will help alleviate the shortage in the future; and
- implementation of assistance program that utilizes loan repayments, housing assistance, signing bonuses, relocation assistance, and a recruitment cost reimbursement program;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution shall be the position of the Alaska Public Health Association until it is withdrawn or modified by a subsequent resolution.

**Fiscal & Public Health Statement:** This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to the Governor and key political leaders. This action will benefit public health by helping to increase the number of and retention of health care providers in Alaska.

Adopted by vote of the ALPHA general membership on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Primary Health Care. "Alaska Section 330 Grantees Uniform Data System (Provider Utilization)." 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Pat Carr, Health Planning & Systems Development Department of Health & Human Services, State of Alaska. "Health Care Professions Loan Repayment Program." September 11, 2007.