
Subject:

FW: Please distribute to assembly members

From: Sarah [<mailto:sarahspencerak@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2016 5:45 PM

To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk <G_Notify_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>

Subject: Please distribute to assembly members

Urgent request: KPB assembly vote on July 25th could eliminate Dr. Spencer's ability to work at the Ninilchik clinic.

I am writing you to encourage you not to move the hospital service area boundary further south.

I am the physician at Ninilchik community clinic and a well respected member of this local community.

Most local residents aren't aware of is the direct and severe impact that this proposal may have on the availability of medical services in Ninilchik.

Many of my patients may not realize that I am actually an employee of South Peninsula Hospital, not the Ninilchik Community Clinic. NTC contracts with SPH to provide many services for them, including lab oversight, xray, ultrasound and my services as a physician. If the SPH services area line is moved south of the Ninilchik clinic, then SPH will no longer be able to provide services to the Ninilchik clinic and I won't be able to work here anymore. This would be devastating both to me personally and to all my patients in town who I have worked so hard to build a relationship with over the past 2 ½ years.

Before I moved here, NTC had been trying for years to recruit a physician on their own without success. They asked SPH to help them find a physician to provide care locally and SPH was able to recruit me from Valdez. I love working in Ninilchik and had been planning to work here for many years to come. Sadly, this proposal may end the years of incredible support that SPH has been providing to the Ninilchik clinic. In the past 2 years Ninilchik Clinic has taken care of over 1,100 individual patients, including over 600 from Ninilchik and 50 from clam gulch. We are not just a native clinic; we accept medicare, medicaid and most private insurance. I know many of our local residents depend on our clinic for their primary care needs, as I am the only doctor working between Homer and Soldotna. Additionally I am the only physician south of Soldotna to provide specialty treatment for addiction, an area of desperate need.

Ninilchik cannot afford to loose their only physician. Recruiting physicians to work in rural Alaskan towns in this current age of nationwide shortage of primary care physicians is an almost insurmountable challenge. Additionally, frequent turnover of physicians is harmful for continuity of care and destroys the sense of trust that has been developed in the community for their local doctors.

Hospitals are sometimes hesitant to invest in primary care as it is not a moneymaking venture, especially in a small town like Ninilchik. However, as South Peninsula hospital so clearly understands, our investments in primary care is what helps to keep people healthy and to reduces trips to the emergency room and hospital. Local access to primary care is critical for the health and well-being of Ninilchik in residents.

Please do what is best for the healthcare needs of this rural town and keep the hospital service area line north of the Ninilchik clinic.

Thank you for your consideration and feel free to email me or call me

907-299-7460

Dr. Sarah Spencer D.O.