



February 21, 2022

The Honorable Erin Tobin
South Dakota Senate

Re: Senate Bill 134 – Support

Dear Senator Tobin:

The Alliance for Connected Care (the Alliance) is an advocacy organization dedicated to facilitating the delivery of high-quality care using connected care technology. Our members are leading health care and technology companies from across the health care spectrum, representing insurers, health systems and technology innovators, and our Advisory Board includes more than 40 patient and provider groups.

We are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 134, which would modernize Physician Assistant (PA) practice and remove the outdated collaborative agreement with a physician in order to put all advanced practice providers on equal footing. The bill would allow experienced PAs to collaborate with, consult with, or refer to the appropriate member of the health care team. This important legislation would help increase patient access to health care services for all South Dakotans, especially as rural and medically underserved communities across the state are facing a serious health care provider shortage impeding their access to care.

The Alliance believes that PAs should be able to perform at the top of their licenses in order to expand access and eliminate barriers to health care. As a telehealth advocacy organization, the Alliance believes PAs are an essential component to expanding access to care through the use of telehealth. This is especially important for patients who live in rural or underserved communities or in provider shortage areas and therefore may not have access to services they need where they reside. PAs have also been critical to expanding access to care and filling gaps in the health care workforce throughout the pandemic.

Senate Bill 134 will increase access to care, increase flexibility for PAs to partner with other health care providers in South Dakota, and allow medical practices to structure the health care team in the way that works best for their patients. The bill will also ensure that all PAs continue to collaborate with other health care providers as appropriate and maintain PA regulation by the South Dakota Board of Medical & Osteopathic Examiners.

The nearly 700 PAs in South Dakota are medical professionals who diagnose and treat illnesses, prescribe medications, and perform medical procedures and exams. PAs are trained at the master's degree level and often serve as a patient's main health care provider. While PAs practice in every area of health care, nearly 40 percent of South Dakota PAs practice in primary care or internal medicine. As such, removing these restrictions on PAs would increase consumer access to health care and address persisting barriers to care for vulnerable populations.

We hope the South Dakota Senate will support Senate Bill 134. Thank you for your consideration - we look forward to working with you on this important effort. Please contact Casey Osgood at 203-536-5865 or casey.osgood@connectwithcare.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Krista Drobac".

Krista Drobac
Executive Director
Alliance for Connected Care