

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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North to the Future

Senator Cathy Giessel
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Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 37: Renewal of the Alaska Vaccine Assessment Program

Senate Bill 37 reauthorizes the statewide immunization program in the Department of Health and Social Services, which is scheduled for repeal January 1, 2021. Established in 2014, via Senate Bill 169, the program monitors, purchases and distributes all childhood vaccines and select adult vaccines to providers, making access to vaccines universal for all Alaskans. By 2018, the program covered more than 333,000 Alaskans, 45% of the total population. Next to clean drinking water and good nutrition, vaccines have saved more lives than any other public health intervention.

The statewide immunization program is fully funded by the state Vaccine Assessment Account through assessments (upfront fees) from health plans and insurers. There are no undesignated general funds needed for this program. The state leverages its buying power to purchase vaccines in bulk using the fees collected from healthcare payers. The state distributes that vaccine to providers who then administer them at no charge, improving health and wellbeing while lowering overall vaccine costs by 20 -30%.

Through the statewide immunization program, Alaska continues to demonstrate leadership in creating innovative solutions for difficult public health issues. Out of the 11 universal vaccine purchase programs in the United States, Alaska is the only state to allow providers to receive state-supplied vaccine for uninsured adults, enabling greater vaccine access for Alaska adults.

Alaska's immunization program is an example of a successful public-private partnership that ensures Alaskans a healthier future at the lowest possible cost. The department reduces vaccine - preventable diseases, and providers have improved health outcomes for their patients and easier vaccine stock management. The insurers pay less to vaccinate individuals; we all save more money in the long run due to decreased medical costs from vaccine-preventable diseases.

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