



Representative Beth Kerttula

Alaska State Legislature District 3

Sponsor Statement
House Bill 443
Teachers and Nurses Housing Loan Program

Alaska, like the rest of the United States, is currently facing a critical shortage in nurses. In addition to a growing need for nurses, more than 50% of nurses working today will be reaching retirement age in the next 15 years. There have been many ideas to attract qualified nurses to Alaska, including expanding the nursing school at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, student loan forgiveness and housing loan programs.

Last year, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 25, which allowed the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) to offer housing loans to teachers and nurses without requiring a down payment. Under current law, the program can be offered to Registered Nurses (RNs), who are licensed under 08.68.230(a), but not Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), who are licensed under section (b) of the same statute. House Bill 443 would correct this inequity.

There are 7,847 RNs in Alaska who are currently eligible for this program. In contrast, there are only 834 LPNs, and according to Department of Labor projections, the need for LPNs will grow by about 30 per year. While there is demand for both types of nurses in Alaska, LPNs make less money than RNs - it seems counterintuitive to exclude them from this program. I would appreciate your support for House Bill 443.