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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

March 9, 2017

The Honorable Bryce Edgmon
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Edgmon:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to an extension of my February 14, 2017 Declaration of Disaster Emergency.

This administration has been working as a coordinated team to identify the extent of drug abuse and overdose dangers facing our state. In recent years, opioid abuse has rapidly expanded across the state. This is a dangerous trend that affects our communities and the lives of many Alaskans. Drug overdose deaths are a serious public health concern, which warrants the designation of a public health disaster emergency. This emergency exists statewide and affects all levels of society.

Therefore, on February 14, 2017, I made a declaration of disaster emergency under AS 26.23.020 that authorized the Commissioner and the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Services to coordinate a response. This response includes establishing a statewide overdose response program and a statewide medical standing order allowing local and regional overdose response programs, healthcare officials, first responders, and the general public to have the ability to directly dispense and administer the lifesaving drug naloxone. Since the declaration, we have made significant progress in the distribution of resources to combat this epidemic, including kits containing opioid overdose drugs. By extending the declaration of emergency under AS 26.23.020, we continue to assure dispensation of opioid overdose resources under a statewide standing medical order.

This is only one part in fighting this battle and we must continue to seek all available tools to address this epidemic. Therefore, I submit this bill to extend the declaration of disaster emergency issued February 14, 2017 until February 14, 2018.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Walker".

Bill Walker
Governor