



April 11, 2017

The Honorable Bill Walker
Governor of Alaska
PO BOX 11001
Juneau, Alaska 99801-0001

Dear Governor Walker,

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) strongly supports HB 159 and SB 79, Opioids; Prescriptions; Database; Licenses. MSHF shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its profits from that partnership back into the community to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su.

HB 159 and SB 79 support recommendations from the Alaska Opioid Policy Task Force and the MSHF's Behavioral Health Environmental Scan (BHES), which called for adoption of strict guidelines for the prescribing of narcotics. The BHES was commissioned by the foundation after a 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment found that all five of the top health goals articulated by the community during the research process were specifically related to behavioral health, including substance abuse.

We believe that this legislation will save lives. In Alaska in the past two years, first responders and emergency services personnel administered naloxone over 1,315 times for both confirmed and suspected narcotic overdoses, including many in the Mat-Su. Thirty-six people died from heroin in Alaska last year, and 83 from prescription opioids. The provisions of this legislation can help ensure that our statistics are better in the future. Limiting the amount of an opioid drug that can be prescribed, requiring training for prescribers, and fully utilizing the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program will help ensure that all Alaskans have the opportunity for a healthy life. Many people will occasionally need assistance dealing with pain, but when they do, it should be according to established best practices, with the long-term safety of the patient in mind. We believe that HB 159 and SB 79 contribute to this goal.

Thank you for introducing this important legislation!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Ripley".

Chief Executive Officer