



# Representative Ivy Spohnholz

## House Health & Social Services Committee Co-Chair

*Serving House District 16: College Gate, Russian Jack, Nunaka Valley, & Reflection Lake  
Committee Member: Resources, Energy, & Legislative Budget & Audit*

### Sponsor Statement

#### House Bill 89: Opioid Addiction Risk Disclosure Bill

*“An Act relating to the prescription of opioids; relating to the practice of dentistry; relating to the practice of medicine; relating to the practice of podiatry; relating to the practice of osteopathy; relating to the practice of nursing; relating to the practice of optometry; relating to the practice of pharmacy.”*

According to the Department of Health and Social Services, 91 Americans die every day due to opioid use. In 2017, the opioid epidemic claimed 70,000 lives, which is more than the number of people who died annually at the height of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Nearly 14,000 Americans died from opioid overdose in 2014. Alaska’s per capita death rate is almost twice the national average, with 774 Alaskans dead from opioid overdose between 2009-2015. While opioids are often needed to address acute physical pain, data shows that opioids can also have incredibly powerful addictive effects. Studies have shown that a statistically significant amount of heroin users started as opioid drug users. These addictions tear families apart, destroy a person’s ability to hold a job, and decimate lives. Addiction treatment is costly and hard on families, as well as expensive for consumers and the state. Ultimately, lives are lost every day to opioid overdose. Something must be done to prevent addiction from taking a hold in Alaskan’s lives.

It is easier to prevent addiction than to cure it. Prevention efforts will preserve families, save money spent on law enforcement, addiction treatment corrections, and our court systems. HB 89 is a low-cost tool to prevent expensive addiction before it starts.

HB 89 aims to address the opioid addiction crisis that Alaska currently faces by ensuring that patients are advised of the potential addictive risks of these prescription drugs multiple times before they ever receive an opioid prescription. It is important to note that this bill does not create opportunities for new civil lawsuits against providers, thus protecting the patient-provider relationship. At its core, HB 89 is a patient information bill. It requires prescribers to let patients know about the potentially addictive qualities of opioids when they are prescribed and that they can lead to abuse and addiction of this dangerous drug. HB 89 also requires the DHSS to prepare a very short handout with some facts on the dangers of opioid addiction and heroin use. Additionally, it requires that providers’ boards regulate habitual violations of prescribing physicians that occur without good cause. Exceptions to this legislation’s requirements include medical services where opioids may be necessary such as for opioid addiction treatment, palliative care, and hospice care. Please feel free to contact our office with any questions.

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