



March 2, 2021

Members of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Sent via email

Dear Senators Costello, Holland, Gray-Jackson, Revak and Stevens,

On behalf of the Mat-Su Health Foundation and its Board of Directors, I am writing to express support for SB 9: Alcoholic Beverage Control.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its profits from that partnership back into the community in order to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su. Along with community partners we conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment, which included data analysis, public polling and 24 community forums. Alcohol and substance abuse was ranked as the number one health issue in Mat-Su. In follow up research, we asked our local police captains, what is the number one substance problem? Their response was “alcohol, alcohol, alcohol.” The number one reason Mat-Su residents visit our local hospital’s emergency department for behavioral health needs is alcohol-related disorders. Alcohol is a major factor in many crimes committed in Alaska, including domestic violence and child maltreatment. Having a well-regulated alcohol industry that understands and follows the laws is part of the solution.

Revisions to Alaska’s alcohol laws can help correct some of these problems. Title 4 is recognized to be in many ways outdated, confusing or otherwise ineffective in carrying out the intent of the statutes. Much of the chapter has not been updated since 1980. Over time, incremental updates and changing trends have reduced the effectiveness of Title 4. The systematic redraft of Title 4 which is SB 9 will help the ABC Board carry out its mission, and it will benefit organizations and individuals whose work, community or business is affected by alcoholic beverage laws and regulations. The Mat-Su Health Foundation is particularly interested in the public health aspects of SB 9:

- SB 9 preserves limits on the density of alcohol outlets, and this directly correlates with negative health and safety impacts.
- SB 9 fairly regulates all alcohol purchases shipped directly to consumers through internet sales.
- SB 9 helps prevent youth access to alcohol, while not criminalizing youth who make one mistake.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation supports the significant multi-year effort of the stakeholder group that has been involved in SB 9. Almost nine years of work has gone into crafting this legislation. It made it as far as being scheduled for a floor vote before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted everything. Now the time is right once again, and we look forward to the passage of SB 9 for the benefit all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

President and Chief Executive Officer