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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 228 – Opioid Abuse Awareness and Prevention Curriculum

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Alaska is confronting an opioid and fentanyl crisis that continues to claim lives at alarming rates, exceeding national averages. Opioids, particularly fentanyl, are the leading cause of drug-related deaths and are increasingly found in Alaska. Young people are being exposed to these substances earlier, often without understanding the risks, and our friends, loved ones, and families across the state are paying the price.

This crisis has driven bipartisan action at the national level, with Alaska families playing a direct role in shaping federal policy. In 2022, Sandy Snodgrass, an Anchorage mother who lost her 22-year-old son, Bruce Snodgrass, to an accidental fentanyl overdose, worked alongside Alaska's congressional delegation to advance federal legislation known as *Bruce's Law*. Senator Lisa Murkowski shared Bruce's story on the United States Senate floor and urged her colleagues to support stronger fentanyl prevention and education efforts, recognizing that awareness and early intervention are essential to saving lives. The provisions from Bruce's Law were included in the SUPPORT Act and were signed into law last year.

SB 228 brings these national lessons home to Alaska by requiring the Department of Education and Early Development to develop an opioid abuse awareness and prevention curriculum for students in grades 6 through 12. School districts would be mandated to teach the curriculum every year during or close to Red Ribbon Week which is the last week in October. By ensuring students receive accurate, age-appropriate information about opioids and fentanyl during their school years, this bill aims to intervene before tragedy occurs.

SB 228 focuses on equipping young Alaskans, our future, with the knowledge to recognize danger, make informed decisions, and seek help early. It represents a proactive step to honor the lives already lost, support families, and reduce the likelihood that future generations of Alaskans will experience the same preventable loss that has already stolen so many of us.

Thank you.