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January 22, 2025

Letter of Support: HB27

Representative Mina,

The Executive Team of the **Alaska Stroke Coalition** are writing to express our **wholehearted endorsement** of House Bill 27. This is critical legislation which aims to incorporate Stroke and Heart Attack into the currently established statewide system of care for major emergencies, ensuring that Alaskans receive *timely* and *effective* assistance during these life-threatening medical emergencies.

#### **Our Call to Action:**

Rep. Mina, we thank you for championing HB 27 and join you in advocating for its passage. The State of Alaska is in a unique position as our governing body to bring the voices and interests of the diverse pool of stakeholders in AK healthcare together to the table and work with them towards a common goal. We encourage our legislative body to embrace this opportunity; passage of this bill will make a profound impact on the health outcomes of our state. Let's work together to ensure that Alaskans facing major emergencies receive the care they deserve, in emergent fashion.

#### **Why do we support HB 27?**

1. **Streamlined Communication & Coordination:** Alaska is unique due to its expansive geography, mercurial weather, and diverse population distribution. By streamlining care pathways, communication, and coordination among emergency responders, clinics, and hospitals, we can significantly reduce the time between diagnosis and treatment. Every

minute counts in these critical situations, and this bill will help save lives and reduce disability.

2. **Standardized Treatment Guidelines, Education, & Training:** The proposed expansion of the Office of Emergency Medical Services to include strokes and severe heart attacks is a game-changer. Standardized guidelines & protocols for hospitals, clinics, as well as ambulance and first responder services will ensure that all Alaskans receive consistent, high-quality care. This standardization, when aligned with national best practice guidelines, will empower our front line heroes to act swiftly and effectively.
3. **Data Driven Change:** Supporting the collection and analysis of performance data around stroke and cardiac arrest will help map out a course of action to improve adherence to the best practice standards, benchmark our performance against national trends, and guide our care system optimization efforts.
4. **Improved Survival Rates:** HB 27 addresses the urgent need for a comprehensive statewide approach to cardiac and stroke emergencies. The lives saved through the successes of the trauma program could be doubled with the inclusion of cardiac and stroke as time sensitive emergencies.
5. **Community Well-Being:** When a trauma, cardiac, or stroke patient returns home as a functional member of the community, it benefits us all. HB 27 isn't just about saving lives; it's about reducing disability through timely treatment and preserving the quality of life for survivors and their families. Most people don't die from stroke, but they are permanently disabled. By supporting this bill, we invest in the well-being of our fellow Alaskans.

#### **Stroke & Healthcare Burden:**

The CDC defines 'stroke' as "damage to the brain from interruption of its blood supply" and declares it a "medical emergency". Strokes are a medical emergency, every minute 1.9 million neurons die without oxygen and permanent brain cell death occurs within 4-6 minutes. Early recognition and treatment are necessary for preventing or limiting long term disability and/or death. Even the smallest delays in care can have huge consequences for the person experiencing a stroke. Treatment delays of just 15 minutes can mean the difference between leaving the hospital capable of independent living or permanent reliance on others for the activities of daily life. A third of the patients who experience stroke are under the age of 65 and most of these patients can never return to work, resulting in both a loss of income potential and a significant reliance on medical resources for support. In a state like Alaska where our demographics skew younger, this has a profound impact.

## **Call To ACTION**

Data drives change, without data we don't know how we are performing and applying current US Stroke measures. Our most recent report on stroke care in Alaska was published in 2019 referencing 2016 data. We must track data to truly know where we stand and how we compare with other States as well as within regions in Alaska. We can only do this if/when we recognize strokes for the devastating risks they are, address as a life threatening emergency and communicate as a medical emergency. By recognizing as an emergency, we can update standards and compliance with current standards, impact, and improve care our residents and those that seek treatment for Strokes deserve.

Our Mission at **Alaska Stroke Coalition** is to *improve stroke care across the state by promoting collaboration, education and innovation. Through our partnership with healthcare providers, stroke survivors and community stakeholders, we aim to reduce the impact of stroke on individuals and families by enhancing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Our ultimate goal is to achieve the best possible outcomes for stroke patients and improve the overall quality of life in Alaska.*

With this in mind HB 27 is crucial to improving stroke care for all Alaskans.

Thank you for your dedication to public service, and we appreciate your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lucy He, Dr. Robert Lada, Kevin Myrick RN, Amber Simonetti RN, Kelly Isaacs RN

**Executive Team, Alaska Stroke Coalition**

January 28, 2025

Office of Representative Genevieve Mina  
House District 19  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 42  
Juneau Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Mina,

I am writing today in support of House Bill 27 an "An Act relating to medical care for major emergencies." I am a registered nurse who lives and works in Juneau providing care to Alaskans since 1999. During my over 25-year career I have worked in emergency departments but mostly have provided critical care during air medical transport. I am a member of the Alaska Trauma System Review Committee, the Alaska Stroke Coalition and the Alaska Office of EMS Medical Director's Advisory Committee.

Trauma, stroke, and myocardial infarctions remain leading causes of death and disability for Alaskans. Combined with primary prevention and public health effort's, timely access to appropriate care reduces the burden of illness and injury. Stroke occurs most commonly as the result of a blocked blood vessel and less frequently from bleeding in the brain. During this time precious cells are dying, and they cannot be regenerated. Opening the blood vessels of the heart or brain when a clot forms is time critical, lifesaving and prevents permanent disability. A system of care approach and treatment in centers with experience and verification of the specialty skill set these patients deserve improves patient outcome and reduces disability. In Alaska we have not yet standardized care for stroke to allow for all patients to get access to the care they need.

The "hub and spoke system" of rural clinics with support from our regional facilities and specialty centers in Alaska and beyond is the backbone of our trauma system of care. We can and should expand this capability to other time sensitive medical emergencies. I support HB 27 without reservation. Please contact me if I can help with questions or offer additional support for this important bill.

Respectfully,

  
Rick Janik BSN, RN, CFRN, EMT  
PO Box 22502  
Juneau Alaska 99801

## **Representative Genevieve Mina**

State Capitol Room 416

Juneau, AK 99801

[representative.genevieve.mina@akleg.gov](mailto:representative.genevieve.mina@akleg.gov)

**DATE:** February 5, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Strong Support for House Bill 27 – Major Medical Emergencies

Dear Representative Mina,

My name is Brian Webb, and I am writing to you as a 46-year paramedic and critical care flight paramedic in Alaska. Today, I submit this letter as an Alaska EMS clinician in full support of House Bill 27.

As a paramedic, my foremost duty is to provide the highest quality prehospital care to my patients. And in our ultra-rural state, time-sensitive medical emergencies require a well-coordinated, statewide system to ensure that patients receive the right care at the right facility—when every second counts.

Since the passage of House Bill 168 in 2010, which established trauma centers and a trauma care fund, Alaska EMS has been better equipped to make critical transport decisions. This has enhanced our training and skills, and enabled us to deliver trauma patients to the most appropriate facility, optimizing outcomes. However, a crucial gap remains in our system—one that HB 27 seeks to address. That gap is in the treatment of major medical emergencies, particularly heart attacks and strokes, which continue to be the third and fifth leading causes of death in Alaska.

Just as trauma care operates under the “golden hour” principle, cardiac and cerebrovascular emergencies are similarly constrained by time. When a heart attack or stroke occurs, the clock starts ticking, and every minute can mean the difference between life and death, recovery or permanent disability. HB 27 aims to apply the same principles that have transformed trauma care into these equally critical conditions by formally defining major medical emergencies to include heart attacks and strokes.

While I cannot speak about the voluntary designation of receiving facilities as cardiac and stroke centers, I can unequivocally state that the impact on EMS and critical care transport will be overwhelmingly positive. Just as HB 168 provided the resources and training necessary to improve trauma care, HB 27 will ensure that EMS providers have the tools, education, and protocols needed to deliver these patients to the most appropriate facility in the best possible

condition. This legislation has the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality rates for these time-sensitive emergencies.

With the expansion of the medical emergencies scope of the Alaska Trauma Service within the Department of Health, HB 27 will enhance training programs for ambulance services and first responders. Standardizing protocols enhance our ability for treating these patients and effectively communicating the urgency of their condition to local hospitals and clinics will mirror the successful trauma care improvements established in 2010.

Passing HB 27 will empower Alaska EMS providers to give our patients the best possible chance of returning home, functional and intact, after experiencing these critical time-sensitive medical emergencies.

I urge the legislature to enact HB 27.

Sincerely,

**Brian L. Webb, FF2, Paramedic, NRP, FP-C, CCEMT-P, TP-C, COSS**  
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