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Senator Dunbar
Chair, Senate Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Dunbar and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carrie Urena, and I am a pharmacist practicing in Klawock AK which is a small rural community in southeast AK on the Prince of Wales Island. I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 147**.

As a pharmacist, I have completed extensive education and clinical training, earning my Doctor of Pharmacy degree and completing over 1,900 hours of hands-on patient care training. I went on to complete a PGY1 residency with Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and then began work in 2023 in a newly opened opioid treatment program in Klawock AK. Every day in my practice I see opportunities where our underserved community members could benefit from additional pharmacist services — but existing statutory barriers prevent this from happening.

Those who know me know I'm extremely passionate about the work I do, working with our rural populations suffering from opioid use disorder. Throughout my education and into my residency I placed a high emphasis on experiences and learning opportunities that would enhance my knowledge and ability to serve this patient population. Our Alaskan statistics tell the story of the immense need we have for greater access to care, particularly when addressing medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). At the end of 2023 when the majority of our nation saw a drop in opioid related deaths, here in AK our numbers continue to rise. Not only did we not see the decrease that so many other states saw, but we also actually had increased rates. It is clear that what we are currently doing is not enough. We simply don't have enough providers to cover the need for services. Our smaller, more rural communities continue to have little to no access to essential services such as MOUD. This is where pharmacists can begin to make a positive impact and really help bridge these gaps in care and services. The growing amount of evidence supporting pharmacists' involvement in MOUD continues to show improved patient outcomes. Our training and education make us uniquely qualified to help bridge the service gaps and improve access for MOUD. We are the medication experts with extensive knowledge about drugs, drug metabolism, drug interactions, and drug safety. We are taught how to assess and identify patients with sub- and supratherapeutic medication regimens. Our state continues to talk about increasing access for MOUD and the undeniable need for these services in our rural populations and we, as pharmacists, are here and more than capable of helping to make this happen. Our communities deserve to have access to these services. These increasing "rates" we continue to talk about and quote, were living breathing people that are no longer with us. Their

lives are lost forever. It's time to bring this immense pain and suffering our communities are feeling to stop. I know that I am eager to help bring healing to our communities, please let me use my education and training to bring some relief to the suffering our state is feeling right now.

SB 147 would allow me to practice at the top of my clinical ability, within a standard of care framework like other healthcare professionals. By streamlining patient access to pharmacist-provided services, this bill will improve health outcomes and reduce unnecessary burdens on physicians and emergency departments.

I am confident in my ability to provide safe, effective patient care, and I am committed to collaborating with other healthcare team members to ensure patients receive the best care possible.

I respectfully urge you to support SB 147 to expand access to high-quality healthcare services for Alaskans.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Carrie Urena
PharmD, BCPS
Klawock Opioid Treatment Program