



April 18, 2024

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1.30.2024

RE: Support for Senate Bill 196, adding saliva to Alaska's "safe harbor" law with respect to drug and alcohol testing

Dear members of the 33rd Alaska Legislature,

We add our voice to the growing support for Senate Bill 196, which would update statutory language in Alaska's "safe harbor" law for drug and alcohol testing to allow for saliva testing. This update provides employers more flexibility while maintaining protections offered under Alaska Statute 23.10.630. As the voice for more than 600 businesses and organizations in Alaska's Interior—including our region's largest employers—we support regulatory updates that reduce burdens on businesses while prioritizing public and worker safety. This commonsense statutory update is in line with our values.

If the law is changed, companies that are happy with their current drug and alcohol testing program can keep that program. SB 196 offers a new option that is increasingly sought by private industry. Saliva testing offers multiple advantages when compared with urine or breath testing and it can help employers determine if alcohol, marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine and more are in an employee's system. Saliva testing involves a quick swab inside the mouth with a Q-tip. The Q-tip is put in a vial and provided to a testing lab. Results can be ready in minutes with a high level of accuracy. This method is less intrusive, and in some cases is more economical and more reliable. In addition, saliva testing offers an option to employers concerned about cheating on urine tests. Moreover, oral fluid testing is desired by employers seeking to determine if an employee is fit for immediate work. In many cases, a drug can be detected in saliva as early as one hour after a dose.

Saliva testing has been vetted and approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, which amended its regulated industry drug testing program to include saliva testing in 2023. We are the largest business member organization in Alaska's Interior, and we appreciate the Legislature's efforts to maintain a healthy business and economic climate in our state by reducing the burden on businesses while maintaining safety. Please vote "yes" on SB 196.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Johnson".

Jeremy Johnson
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Ward CPA".

Kelly Ward
Board Chair