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April 4, 2013

The Honorable Peter Micciche  
State Senator, District O  
State Capitol, Room 125  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB 87 (Micciche) – Support

Dear Senator Micciche:

The American Heart Association (AHA) is pleased to support SB 87. As you know, this bill will require all newborns to be screened for critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) prior to discharge from the hospital.

CCHD can range in severity from simple holes in the heart or murmurs to severe malformations, such as the complete absence of one or more chambers or valves. Some CCHD can cause severe and life-threatening symptoms that require intervention within the first days of life and directly correspond with extensive and expensive treatment.

Congenital heart defects are the leading birth defects affecting newborns in the United States, but early detection using pulse oximetry and prompt treatment can make all the difference. In fact, new research suggests wider use of pulse oximetry screening could help identify more than 90 percent of heart defects.

Pulse oximetry is a non-invasive test that measures the amount of oxygen in the baby's blood, as well as pulse rate. It is relatively quick, costs are minimal, and it has been proven to be effective in detecting CCHD. Many hospitals have begun screening every newborn. However, we need to ensure that all babies are afforded the same opportunity and that there is consistency in how the test is administered across hospitals.

The AHA supports SB 87 because requiring pulse oximetry screening for all newborn babies will save lives and will substantially reduce the long-term economic impact of CCHD. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

*Jamie Morgan*  
Jamie Morgan  
Senior Government Relations Director

Cc: Members of the State Senate