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April 10, 2013

The Honorable Pete Higgins, Chair
House Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 424
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB 87 (Micciche) – Support

Dear Chair Higgins:

On behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA), I urge your support of 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.

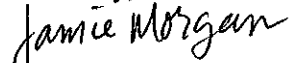
CCHD can range in severity from simple holes in the heart or murmurs to severe malformations, such as the complete absence of one or more chambers or valves. Some CCHD can cause severe and life-threatening symptoms that require intervention within the first days of life.

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. Please vote "aye" on this bill when it comes before you.

Sincerely,



Jamie Morgan
Senior Government Relations Director

Cc: Members of the House Health and Social Services Committee, Senator Micciche