

Testimony for Public Hearings
House Health and Social Services Committee
25 January 2016

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S.B. 23 An Act relating to opioid overdose drugs and to immunity for prescribing, providing, or administering opioid overdose drugs

Good morning Health and Social Services Committee members. My name is Megan Ritter and I am an Alaskan physician and associate professor at the UAA WWAMI School of Medical Education. The Anchorage WWAMI program is the Alaska-based regional medical school for the University of Washington, School of Medicine. Future physicians of Alaska receive their training to provide healthcare for all Alaskan community members through this program. As such, the prescription drug and opiate overdose epidemic is of paramount concern to our students and myself.

We are asking for the removal of civil liability from any individual in a position to administer naloxone in cases of suspected opiate overdose. Although medical first responders currently stock this life-saving antidote, non-medical first responders (municipal police officers and state troopers) are often the first to arrive on scene and thus better positioned to first administer naloxone and reverse the deadly effects of opiate overdose.

Removal of civil liability would also allow healthcare providers and addiction treatment programs to provide naloxone to patients, family members and caregivers. Currently, patients that present emergently with accidental opiate overdose are treated and released without a provision to allow access to naloxone. Through discussions with families and loved ones of overdose patients, training and access to naloxone would be greatly appreciated and is clearly indicated. Administration at time of overdose discovery allows for maximal chance of recovery.

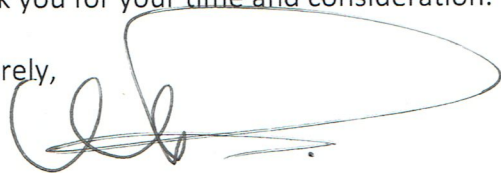
We just attended the funeral Thursday of a beautiful and brilliant 21 year old Dean's List UAA student who died from an accidental overdose. At his service, his mom cried "It was just one

mistake. It's not fair, everyone should get one mistake." The overdose epidemic is not confined to the indigent and impoverished. Naloxone allows for a second chance and to learn from mistakes. When given the chance, substance users have recovered and become valuable contributing members of our community with a unique ability to educate and assist others in the grips of this disease.

Passing SB 23 is an important step towards addressing the overdose epidemic gripping our state and nation. We cannot act swiftly enough to mitigate these untimely and tragic deaths.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Megan Ritter, M.D., Associate Professor UAA WWAMI School of Medical Education

Caroline Wilson

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