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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 344

Version N

HB 344 aims to strengthen the existing Prescription Drug Database into a more effective tool that dispensers and providers can use to combat the growing epidemic of opioid abuse. HB 344 would require all practitioners that *administer, prescribe or dispense* controlled substances to be registered with the prescription drug database, ensuring they have access to this important patient information. The bill also requires a limit of 7 days for initial opioid prescriptions. It would also require dispensers to update the database weekly, and would require all practitioners to check the database for their specific patient before *prescribing, dispensing, or administering* a schedule II, III, or IV controlled substance. The bill will allow an authorized employee or agent to access or submit to the database on the provider's behalf, removing some of the administrative burden from the provider or pharmacist. Furthermore, an electronic alert system will notify pharmacists or a practitioner if their patient has passed the recommended threshold for prescription dosage or frequency. The board of pharmacy has established this threshold as obtaining a controlled substance from five prescribers and five pharmacies in a three month period. Without checking the database or receiving these alerts, health care providers would be unaware of this concerning usage pattern in their patient. Finally, following the recommendations of the Controlled Substance Advisory Committee, access to the database is also granted to specific individuals responsible for reviewing Medicaid drug utilization.

Our existing statute requires that licensed and registered pharmacists submit information regarding controlled substances that they have dispensed on a monthly basis, leaving a significant time gap in prescription data. There is no current requirement that prescribers or dispensers check the database before they prescribe or dispense an opioid. If used appropriately, the database can inform practitioners if their patient is receiving unusually high dosages or multiple prescriptions. However, only approximately 13.5% of prescribers and 40% of dispensers are registered with the database today. The remaining practitioners do not have immediate access to this important information. By strengthening this tool and requiring engagement from all providers, HB 344 can help reduce overutilization of prescription drugs and lower the number of Alaskans that risk becoming addicted