

March 15, 2016

Representative Paul Seaton
State Capitol Room 102
Juneau, AK

Re: HB344

Representative Seaton

The Alaska Dental Society (ADS), representing the licensed dentists of Alaska, would like to provide input on HB344, version E.

The ADS shares the Legislature's concern about the effect of opioid drug abuse on Alaskan citizens and agrees changes should be made to the current system.

HB344 provides an enhancement to the prescription database system the ADS supports. We believe allowing staff to access the database and provide the history to prescribers will greatly improve utilization of the system. The current restriction allowing only prescribers to access the system makes widespread usage impractical and deters routine lookups.

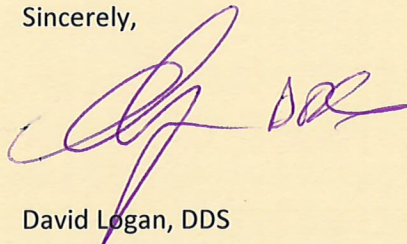
We are neutral regarding the mandatory lookup. The exceptions, as outlined, would largely exempt dentists from the requirement for most circumstances where they would prescribe narcotics. Increasing the exemption to 48 hours post-surgery, however, would encourage less "prophylactic" prescription of pain medication and more need based prescriptions. Post-surgery prescriptions, by their nature, will frequently find prescribers in locations where they will be unable to access the database. It is unclear whether 17.30.200(k) 4 provides an exception for those circumstances. Allowing staff to access the system will greatly enhance usage and would likely, by itself, accomplish the goal of this change.

In order for prescribers to reduce the number of immediate post-surgery prescriptions it will require re-education of the public. Patient's expectation is for pain medication following even minor surgery and it is unrealistic to believe counseling from prescribers will overcome this barrier. The Legislature, if the goal is reduce opioid prescriptions, will need to commit to a public awareness campaign to educate patients on reasonable expectations after minor surgery and acceptable alternatives to opioids. Patient belief in a pain medication plays an important role and without patient buy in reducing opioid prescriptions will be challenging.

The ADS does not support the “maximum dosage for opioid prescriptions” outlined in proposed 08.36.355. The wording of the proposed addition is confusing and accomplishes little beyond reiterating a record entry for prescriptions that is already considered the standard of care. The ADS suggests encouraging prescribers to utilize current best practices for prescribing and keeping that information current on the respective licensees’ professional board websites. The ADS would commit to an education effort to our members and placement on our website for this information as well.

We appreciate the committee considering these comments and look forward to working with the Legislature to help curb opioid drug abuse in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'DL', is written over the printed name and title of David Logan.

David Logan, DDS
Executive Director, Alaska Dental Society