



Tanana Chiefs Conference

March 23, 2016

To: House Health & Social Services Committee Members
Re: Tanana Chiefs Conference Concerns with House Bill 344 (HB344)

Dear House Health & Social Services Committee Members,

On behalf of Tanana Chiefs Conference, I would like to express our concerns with Alaska Senate Bill 74. While this bill addresses the critically important issue of reducing prescription drug abuse in Alaska through changes to the Prescriptions Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) we feel that there are several aspects of this bill that are onerous and will not further the achievement of this goal. We feel that the bill, as currently written, will unnecessarily increase administrative burdens on physicians and pharmacists with overly prescriptive bureaucratic requirements without decreasing the scourge of prescription opioid drug abuse.

In particular, we feel that the requirement in HB344 for both pharmacists and prescribers (or their licensed/ registered "agents") to check the PDMP database prior to prescribing and dispensing all controlled substances is overly burdensome for pharmacists and prescribers, and it would NOT help stem the tide of prescription drug abuse as it is intended. **For this reason, we would respectfully ask that the language in HB 344 Version N Section 19 (AS17.30.200(k)(4) be removed from the bill.** Our pharmacy has estimated that this regulation (if passed) would require them to spend an additional 3-5 hours per day of checking the PDMP database. This would be in addition to our medical providers also spending an equivalent or greater amount of time checking the PDMP database. This will undoubtedly increase waiting times at our already busy pharmacy and also decrease appointment availability for our over-booked medical providers. We feel that professional judgment should be allowed for when prescribers/pharmacists utilize the database. The PDMP database is only one tool pharmacists and physicians use when trying to rule out possible narcotic abuse. It should not and cannot be viewed as the ONLY tool that can be used to root out prescription drug abuse. Other tools used by medical professionals to combat prescription drug abuse include pain contracts, urine drug screens, prescription insurance claim results and pill audits.

Tanana Chiefs Conference is an Alaska Native non-profit organization charged with advancing Tribal self-determination and enhancing regional Native unity. We provide services while balancing traditional Athabascan and Alaska Native values with modern demands. We work toward meeting the health and social service needs of Tribal members and beneficiaries throughout our region. As you know, opioid abuse is a national epidemic from which Alaska and the Alaska Native Community are not immune. Tanana Chiefs Conference is committed to collaborating with legislators, community members and other partners to help stem the tide of prescription opioid abuse. We feel that smart legislation, such as HB 344, is an important step in the right direction. However, the above revisions are necessary to

make this legislation as effective as possible without micromanaging the practices of Medicine or Pharmacy with heavy-handed bureaucratic regulations. Our physician's and pharmacist's professional judgement should supersede the mandatory PDMP check requirement prior to prescribing and dispensing all controlled substance prescriptions.

Again, we appreciate your efforts and leadership on this critical issue. Should there be anything that I or Tanana Chiefs Conference can do to help improve upon this legislation, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Tanana Chiefs Conference

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Joseph", written in a cursive style.

Victor Joseph,
TCC President and CEO