

**Advisory Board on Alcoholism  
and Drug Abuse**



**Alaska Mental Health Board**

**ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD**  
**ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE**  
431 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 200  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
(907) 465-8920

March 17, 2015

Senator Johnny Ellis  
Alaska State Capitol Room  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for SB 23 – Immunity for Opioid Overdose Drugs

Dear Senator Ellis,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) appreciates your leadership in ensuring that Alaskans experiencing substance use disorders have access to treatment and services. We appreciate that Senate Bill 23 continues those efforts by protecting physicians, emergency responders, and family members who act to prevent deaths through use of Naloxone and/or other medications that counter the effects of opioid overdose.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, deaths due to drug overdose have risen steadily over the past twenty years. “Every day, 120 people die as a result of drug overdose, and another 6,748 are treated in emergency departments for the misuse or abuse of drugs.” The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics reports that, since 2010, 512 people died due to poisoning (the category into which drug overdoses appear). The CDC reports that “nearly 9 out of 10 poisoning deaths are caused by drugs.”

ABADA has received public comment in support of increased access to Naloxone and similar medications to prevent overdose deaths. We have also received queries from medical providers about the extent to which they can prescribe these medications under Alaska law and codes professional ethics. There being no clear guidance from the State Medical Board on these issues, we believe that the express policy and protections in Senate Bill 23 are necessary and appropriate.

We appreciate your tireless efforts on behalf of Alaskans experiencing behavioral health disorders and their families – and for all our communities affected by these issues.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhardt  
Executive Director

cc: Bob Coghill, Chairman ABADA