

April 13, 2022

Chairman Kreiss-Tomkins
Vice-Chair Claman
House State Affairs Committee

Re: Opposition to SB156, An Act relating to COVID-19 immunization rights; relating to objection to the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine; relating to COVID-19 vaccination status and eligibility for health care insurance; and providing for an effective date

Dear Chairman Kreiss-Tomkins, Vice-Chair Claman, and members of the House State Affairs Committee,

The Alaska Chamber (the Chamber) writes in opposition to SB156.

The Alaska Chamber was founded in 1953 and is Alaska's largest statewide business advocacy organization. Our mission is to promote a healthy business environment in Alaska. The Chamber has more than 700 members and represents businesses of all sizes and industries from across the state.

Alaska businesses have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep their doors open and employees safe. The Alaska Legislature should not impede the progress that's been made as we look forward to a healthy, post-pandemic economy. Throughout this ordeal, Chamber membership has consistently and steadfastly opposed legislative efforts to impose new regulations that interfere with private business owners' ability to run their businesses. In our view, the current form of SB156, however well intentioned, does just that.

The Chamber strongly and publicly opposed the proposed vaccination mandates announced by the Biden Administration in September 2021. Our opposition then, as now, stemmed from concern about the precedent it would set to justify any manner of expanded regulation on the private sector. That mandate, fortunately struck down by the courts, compelled certain behavior by business owners. In the case of SB156, the legislature is also prescribing or prohibiting certain behaviors of private business owners, albeit in the reverse. Each situation is equally unsavory to our membership because of the anti-free enterprise nature of the legislation. We believe no one knows better how to operate a business than business owners themselves, especially when it comes to sensitive matters like personal health care decisions.

To be clear, the Chamber is focused only on and in opposition to the elements of SB156 that apply to the private sector. Should the proposed government mandates on the private sector be removed from the bill, the Chamber would withdraw its opposition.

If SB156 is brought to a vote in its current form, we respectfully ask you to vote no.

Sincerely,



Kati Capozzi
President & CEO



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