



February 20, 2023

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy  
Governor, State of Alaska  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

RE: House Bill 59/Senate Bill 58

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

Thank you for introducing House Bill 59 (HB59) and Senate Bill 58 (SB58). These bills will ensure mothers and their newborns have access to health care by extending postpartum coverage in Medicaid from just two months to a full year.

Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in new mothers in the United States. Despite steep declines in global maternal mortality rates over the past two decades, United States maternal mortality rates have more than doubled to an estimated 700 deaths per year since data collection began in 1987. In 2021, Alaska's overall pregnancy associated death rate exceeded the previous 5-year average by 109% and among deaths in 2015-2019, 73% occurred more than 6 weeks post-delivery.

The death of a new mother represents not only the loss of a woman's life, but has a lasting impact on her new baby, her family, and her community. Instances of maternal morbidity have lasting health consequences and result in avoidable medical expenses. Action is needed to improve health outcomes for mothers which in turn improves outcomes for babies.

The AHA recently released a policy statement, Call to Action: Maternal Health and Saving Mothers, issued in the Association's flagship journal Circulation. This statement sets a new policy agenda to ensure healthy pregnancies, healthy births and healthy moms. Extending postpartum coverage in Medicaid is a key recommendation.

HB59 and SB58 will ensure expectant parents have access to care during pregnancy and for the first full year after giving birth, providing them and their babies the best possible start in life. The AHA believes that this policy will address disparities and improve maternal and child health outcomes. We hope all legislators vote in support of HB59 and SB58 and again thank you for introducing these bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Morgan".

Jamie Morgan  
Sr. Regional Lead, State Government Relations

Cc: Alaska State Legislature