



AK Lic # 2175103

NAICS 813212-Voluntary Health Organizations

510 (c)(3)

Public charity 509 (a)(2), IRS Exempt status

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April 24, 2024

Letter of Support: HB191

Representative Mina,

The Executive Team of the **Alaska Stroke Coalition** are writing to express our **wholehearted endorsement** of House Bill 191. This is critical legislation which aims to incorporate Stroke and Heart Attack into the currently established statewide system of care for major emergencies, ensuring that Alaskans receive *timely* and *effective* assistance during these life-threatening medical emergencies.

Our Call to Action:

Rep. Mina, we thank you for championing HB 191 and join you in advocating for its passage. The State of Alaska is in a unique position as our governing body to bring the voices and interests of the diverse pool of stakeholders in AK healthcare together to the table and work with them towards a common goal. We encourage our legislative body to embrace this opportunity; passage of this bill will make a profound impact on the health outcomes of our state. Let's work together to ensure that Alaskans facing major emergencies receive the care they deserve.

Why do we support HB 191?

1. **Streamlined Communication & Coordination:** Alaska is unique due to its expansive geography, mercurial weather, and diverse population distribution. By streamlining care pathways, communication, and coordination among emergency responders, clinics, and hospitals, we can significantly reduce the time between diagnosis and treatment. Every

minute counts in these critical situations, and this bill will help save lives and reduce disability.

2. **Standardized Treatment Guidelines, Education, & Training:** The proposed expansion of the Office of Emergency Medical Services to include strokes and severe heart attacks is a game-changer. Standardized guidelines & protocols for hospitals, clinics, as well as ambulance and first responder services will ensure that all Alaskans receive consistent, high-quality care. This standardization, when aligned with national best practice guidelines, will empower our frontline heroes to act swiftly and effectively.
3. **Data Driven Change:** Supporting the collection and analysis of performance data around stroke and cardiac arrest will help map out a course of action to improve adherence to the best practice standards, benchmark our performance against national trends, and guide our care system optimization efforts.
4. **Improved Survival Rates:** HB 191 addresses the urgent need for a comprehensive statewide approach to cardiac and stroke emergencies. The lives saved through the successes of the trauma program could be doubled with the inclusion of cardiac and stroke as time sensitive emergencies.
5. **Community Well-Being:** When a trauma, cardiac, or stroke patient returns home as a functional member of the community, it benefits us all. HB 191 isn't just about saving lives; it's about reducing disability through timely treatment and preserving the quality of life for survivors and their families. Most people don't die from stroke, but they are permanently disabled. By supporting this bill, we invest in the well-being of our fellow Alaskans.

Stroke & Healthcare Burden:

The CDC defines 'stroke' as "damage to the brain from interruption of its blood supply" and declares it a "medical emergency". Strokes are a medical emergency because with every minute 1.9 million neurons are deprived of oxygen and permanent brain cell death occurs within 4-6 minutes. Early recognition and treatment are necessary for preventing or limiting long term disability and/or death. Even the smallest delays in care can have huge consequences for the person experiencing a stroke. Treatment delays of just 15 minutes can mean the difference between leaving the hospital capable of independent living or permanent reliance on others for the activities of daily life. A third of the patients who experience stroke are under the age of 65 and most of these patients can never return to work, resulting in both a loss of income potential and a significant reliance on medical resources for support. In a state like Alaska where our demographics skew younger, this has a profound impact.

Our Mission at **Alaska Stroke Coalition** is to ***improve stroke care** across the state by **promoting collaboration, education and innovation**. Through our partnership with healthcare providers, stroke survivors and community stakeholders, we aim to reduce the impact of stroke on individuals and families by enhancing prevention, treatment and rehabilitation efforts. Our ultimate goal is to achieve the best possible outcomes for stroke patients and improve the overall quality of life in Alaska.*

With this in mind HB 191 is crucial to improving stroke care for all Alaskans.

Thank you for your dedication to public service, and we appreciate your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lucy He, Dr. Robert Lada, Kevin Myrick RN, Amber Simonetti RN, Kelly Isaacs RN
Executive Team, Alaska Stroke Coalition