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Representative Bart LeBon
State Capital Room 415
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Representative LeBon,

My name is Mercedes Pinto, DVM (Alaska license VETV504) and I am writing to ask for your **support of House Bill 91**, which will exempt veterinarians from Alaska's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). I am currently the veterinarian contracted to provide veterinary services to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Animal Shelter, which is in District 1. I assume you are familiar with the bullet points provided by the Alaska State Veterinary Medical Association in **support of House Bill 91**, and I would like to provide personal insight.

As you may know, the veterinary field is in a period of crisis, and Alaska's veterinarians are no exception. As a society we are struggling with a shortage of veterinarians and veterinary care. As a profession we are struggling with increasing patient burdens, crippling debt, long hours, low pay, lack of emergency facilities, inadequate support staff, compassion fatigue, professional burnout, high suicide rates, and increasingly, with abusive clients. Aside from the fact that Alaska's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program does an extremely poor job of utilizing veterinary controlled drug information, and that veterinary participation has not been shown to have any impact on protecting the public from opioid exposure, it adds an inordinate amount of time, financial, and emotional burden to veterinarians, their staff, and their clients. I am truly concerned that the added burden is enough to prevent veterinarians from working in Alaska. Personally, I can tell you the PDMP is a definite reason that I do not plan to return to private practice.

Are you aware that the PDMP expects veterinarians to access private, personal information about owners, and analyze and interpret their opioid risk every time, before we prescribe a controlled medication for their pet? As veterinarians we are not trained on the PDMP computer system, not trained in HIPAA, and not trained on what a morphine milligram equivalent is, much less how it relates to human opioid addiction.

As a shelter veterinarian I work with pets who either do not have owners, or who as strays, do not have owners I can contact, much less collect the information I would need to look them up in the PDMP database. This means that every single time I have a patient who needs a controlled medication prescribed (like the sweet stray who was run over and has 2 broken legs, or the lovely lab who was relinquished but needs seizure medication) I am in violation of the PDMP, and there is no way for me to resolve this. I am not only concerned about my violation, but that the State Board of Veterinary Examiners is expected to investigate me for this unresolvable violation, and to pay for this investigation by further raising our licensing fees, which are already the highest in the nation.

Please **vote yes on House Bill 91** to exempt veterinarians from the PDMP.

Sincerely,

Mercedes Pinto, DVM