

Recommending Tobacco Prevention and Control Program and Policy Work in Alaska

WHEREAS, Tobacco use remains a leading cause of preventable death in Alaska causing 600 deaths each year;¹ and

WHEREAS, Tobacco use causes serious health consequences, including heart disease, lung disease, and cancer;² and

WHEREAS, Smoking is estimated to cost Alaska \$509 million in direct health care costs, including \$100.2 million in Medicaid costs, and also cost Alaska \$521.3 million in lost productivity each year;¹ and

WHEREAS, Tobacco and nicotine use can negatively impact an individual's mental health by increasing the chances for anxiety and depression, and tobacco impacts the effectiveness of prescribed medications;³ and

WHEREAS, Secondhand tobacco smoke exposure is another leading cause of preventable death and causes disease in healthy nonsmokers, including heart disease, stroke, lung disease, and cancer;² and

WHEREAS, The use of electronic cigarettes has skyrocketed among youth and these products are not FDA approved cessation devices;² and

WHEREAS, E-cigarettes can vary in the amount of nicotine present, they often contain nicotine at much higher levels than cigarettes, and nicotine exposure during adolescence and young adulthood can affect the developing brain and may have lasting effects on cognitive function, decision-making, and impulse control;⁴ and

WHEREAS, Tobacco companies spend an estimated \$16.4 million annually on advertising and marketing campaigns in Alaska;¹ and

WHEREAS, Much of this industry marketing targets youth who are 3 times more sensitive to tobacco advertising than adults and industry documents reveal the tobacco industry has designed and packaged its products to appeal to youth;⁵ and

WHEREAS, Tobacco use is significantly higher across key demographics, including people who are pregnant, Alaska Native people, youth, people with lower-incomes and people with a mental or behavioral health condition which contributes to disparities in health outcomes and challenges in public health interventions;⁶ and

WHEREAS, Raising tobacco taxes have been shown to reduce smoking rates, discourage smoking initiation, encourage cessation among current smokers, and prevent tobacco-related diseases, ultimately leading to long-term public health benefits;⁷ and

WHEREAS, Taxation of e-cigarettes at an equivalent rate to cigarettes is consistent with the evidence-based tobacco control, which aims to reduce the consumption of products that harm health, and has been shown to be a key measure in reducing tobacco use, preventing initiation, and supporting cessation efforts;⁷ and

WHEREAS, Funding for Alaska’s comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control program is essential to ensure that local communities have access to effective educational resources, outreach initiatives, and prevention efforts that can directly address Alaska’s different population groups, especially those who are at higher risk of tobacco and nicotine addiction;⁹ and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of tobacco users start before age 21, and Alaska cannot sanction retailers for violations of the federal age 21 for sale of tobacco without a conforming change in Alaska state statute; and

WHEREAS, Penalizing children has not been proven to be an effective strategy for reducing youth smoking, and these penalties inappropriately shift the blame away from the tobacco industry and retailers to youth;¹⁰ and

WHEREAS, Maintaining and strengthening Alaska’s Clean Indoor Air laws will continue to protect vulnerable populations, enhance the quality of life for all Alaskans, and promote a healthier, smoke-free environment in public places, workplaces, and indoor areas; and

WHEREAS, Flavored tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco, are specifically designed to appeal to youth and young adults, contributing to the initiation of tobacco use and addiction among vulnerable populations, with studies showing that flavored e-cigarettes are a key factor in the rise of youth vaping in the United States;⁸

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association recommends that the State of Alaska prioritize evidence-based policies to reduce the harmful health impacts of tobacco, including the following policy interventions:

- Protect and increase funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs
- Institute and increase taxes on tobacco, nicotine, and synthetic nicotine products including cigarettes and e-cigarettes to discourage youth initiation, encourage current users to quit and ensure tax parity among products
- Defend and strengthen Alaska’s Clean Indoor Air laws
- Work to restrict the sale of all flavored tobacco products
- Raise the legal age of sale for tobacco products to age 21

- Remove penalties for youth use and possession of tobacco products

References:

- ¹ Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. [Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, FY2023 Annual Report](#) (2023).
- ² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking](#) .(2020)
- ³ National Institute of Drug Abuse [WHATS Chest Disease Conference - American Lung Association](#). (2018)
- ⁴ Surgeon General Report. [Health Effects of E-Cigarette Use Among U.S. Youth and Young Adults - E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults - NCBI Bookshelf](#) (2016)
- ⁵ National Library of Medicine. [Tobacco Advertising Features That May Contribute to Product Appeal Among US Adolescents and Young Adults - PMC](#) (2020)
- ⁶ Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program “[Alaska Tobacco Facts 2023](#)” (2023).
- ⁷ Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids. [INCREASING TOBACCO PRICES REDUCES TEEN SMOKING \(AND THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY KNOWS IT\)](#) (2024)
- ⁸ National Institute of Health. [Flavored Tobacco Product Use among Youth and Young Adults: What if Flavors Didn’t Exist?](#) (2018)
- ⁹ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. [Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs — 2014. | CDC](#) (2014)
- ¹⁰ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [PUP Laws Inappropriately Shift the Blame Away from the Tobacco Industry and Retailers to Kids Youth Access Laws Should Emphasize](#) (2018)

Fiscal Impact:

This resolution should have no fiscal impact on ALPHA.

Public Health Impact:

This resolution supports policies to improve public health through reducing youth tobacco initiation, supporting tobacco cessation, and protecting the public from secondhand smoke and aerosol exposure.