



ALASKA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

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March 18, 2014

Re: Senate Bill 209

Dear Senator Micciche:

According to the CDC, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of illness, disability and death in the United States. The number of deaths (more than 400,000 annually) caused by tobacco use is greater than the combined number of deaths due to AIDS, alcohol, automobile accidents, murders, suicides, drugs and fires. But the harmful effects of smoking extend beyond the smoker. Secondhand smoke exposure causes serious disease and death, including heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults and sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory and ear infections, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks in children. Each year in the United States, exposure to secondhand smoke causes an estimated 3,000 lung cancer deaths and 46,000 heart disease deaths. The Surgeon General recommends eliminating smoking from all indoor areas to protect people from exposure. There is evidence that policies that prohibit smoking in all indoor areas lead to better health for nonsmokers and encourage smokers to quit. Jurisdictions that have implemented smoke-free policies have reported a decrease in hospitalizations for heart attacks. As of January 2014, 28 states have enacted statewide bans on smoking in all enclosed public places. While we note there are exceptions in many of these bans, as also exist in Senate Bill 209, and also that Senate Bill 209 includes so-called electronic cigarettes, the extent of harm from which is as yet undetermined, we support the goal of Senate Bill 209 to protect Alaskans from secondhand smoke and encourage them to become smoke-free.

Sincerely,

Marin Granholm, M.D.
President
Alaska Academy of Family Physicians