



March 21, 2016

Dear members of the Alaska Senate Finance Committee,

As a cardiologist practicing in Fairbanks, Alaska, and as an American Heart Association volunteer, I urge you to support House Bill 328.

The link between second-hand smoke (also called environmental tobacco smoke) and disease is well known, and the connection to cardiovascular-related disability and death is also clear. About 22,700 to 69,600 premature deaths from heart and blood vessel disease are caused by other people's smoke each year and between 38,000 and 129,000 heart attacks. Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Long-term exposure to secondhand smoke, in a home or in the workplace, is associated with a 25 to 30 percent increased risk for coronary heart disease in adult nonsmokers. Even short-term exposure can increase the risk of heart attacks among non-smokers.

In addition to treating patients who suffer from diseases caused by secondhand smoke exposure, I have also experienced the effects of being exposed to second-hand smoke. In November 2001, at the age of 39, I suffered a heart attack after spending several hours at a nightclub with friends. It was a culmination of many years of secondhand smoke exposure at bars, restaurants and other public places. I never smoked and had always lived a healthy lifestyle. As a cardiologist, I became a heart patient overnight and underwent open heart bypass surgery as a result of this environmental pollution.

In addition to reducing involuntary exposure to second-hand smoke, Bill 1 would also encourage smokers to quit. This is significant because cigarette smoking is so significant a risk factor for numerous diseases that the Surgeon General has called it "the leading preventable cause of disease and deaths in the United States." Cigarette smoking increases the risk of coronary heart disease, and when it acts with other factors, it greatly increases that risk. Smoking increases blood pressure, decreases exercise tolerance and increases the tendency for blood to clot. Smoking also increases the risk of recurrent coronary heart disease after bypass surgery. Smoking decreases HDL (good) cholesterol.

States that have passed smoke-free air laws have experienced a decline in smoking rates. Smoke-free air laws result in changes in the public norms regarding smoking, and can particularly influence children's views on smoking making them less likely to smoke.

House Bill 328 would positively affect Alaska residents' health, the state's healthcare costs, and would benefit businesses which would no longer be impacted by the various costs associated with indoor smoking. I strongly support House Bill 328 and hope that you will too.

Sincerely,

Paul C. Ho, M.D.
Past Chief of Cardiology
Hawaii Region Kaiser Permanente

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free of cardiovascular
diseases and stroke."*

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Please remember the American Heart Association in your will.

