

**The Honorable Representative  
David Talerico, Chairman  
House Health & Social Services Committee**

Dear Representative Talerico:

I am writing you to express my complete support for HB238 and in hopes that you and your esteemed colleagues on the HSS Committee will also support this long overdue legislation.

Since 2009, I have been encouraging our local and state policy makers to pass legislation to protect Alaska's non-smokers from breathing secondhand smoke in all Alaskan workplaces. I am by no means asking you to ban smoking as many would have you believe.

When I go to my favorite lounge for dinner with my wife, I have a cigarette but I don't light up.

As I walk into the grocery store, I have a cigarette but I don't light up.

AND,

On more than one occasion when I took my wife to the CPH Emergency room suffering from an acute attack of asthma specifically diagnosed as caused by 2<sup>nd</sup> hand cigarette smoke WE had a cigarette but we didn't light up. Hopefully you can relate to the stress and fear experienced by myself and my wife during this time. Watching someone struggle to breathe and being totally incapable of helping in any way is not something I would wish on anyone. The fear in her eyes is something I do not wish to experience ever again.

I have all these cigarettes and the last time I purchased a pack of cigarettes was (1967) when they cost 25 cents. My wife is a non-smoker as well. It all comes from 2<sup>nd</sup> hand cigarette smoke, which is known to cause at least 3,000 new lung cancer deaths each year and is thought to cause approximately 46,000 heart disease related deaths each year as well.

This is where we hear the only excuse smokers have for polluting their lungs and the immediate environment, "They have the right to." My response to the above would be, "yes, they have the right to smoke," but when my wife and I enter any public place we are not imposing in ANY way on the rights of smoker's but they are imposing their health choices on us and everyone else present.

Regardless of what some misinformed people are saying it is an absolute fact that cigarette smoking and 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smoke are killing our citizens. If you accept that fact then I say it is insanity not to require smokers to "take it outside" when they frequent public places in our state, something that many communities and states have already achieved without the claimed

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adverse economic impacts purported by smokers. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

Finally, a lady I know was recently at a hearing similar to this and a smoking rights advocate stood up and said he was against what he portrayed as a “smoking ban” bill then before the Senate. He said, “What’s next, are you going to want a ban on me buying a “Twinkie” at the grocery store?” Her response was, “sir, you eating a Twinkie will not make my butt larger but you smoking in my presence will definitely make my medical bills larger.”

House Bill 238 and Senate Bill 1, will protect everyone’s right to breathe smoke and aerosol-free air on the job. Not only will these two pieces of legislation save lives, but they will also save more than \$60 to \$70 million dollars each year spent on Medicaid expenditures attributed to smoking and its adverse effects on our citizens.

E-cigarettes and other electronic smoking devices (vapes) should remain in this “take it outside” legislation, as there is simply no need to subject non-smokers to their hazardous secondhand emissions.

As a business owner, it is my responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for my employees and clients. Let us do the healthy thing for all Alaskans including, tobacco smokers and E-cigarette smokers and pass HB238. Then encourage the Senate to quickly and finally ratify SB1.



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**The above information is the opinion of the speaker only and has not been reviewed or edited by any person or group.**