



March 10, 2023

The Honorable Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Letter of Support for SB 89: Age for Nicotine/E-Cig; Tax E-Cig

Dear Senator Stevens,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska. The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services (A.S. 47.30.661, A.S. 44.29.100).

AMHB/ABADA is in full support of allowing the State of Alaska to enforce the Federal tobacco purchase age of twenty-one years old. Thank you for introducing this preventative legislation related to nicotine addiction in Alaska.

Nicotine is the number one cause of preventable death. Delaying the initiation of nicotine use decreases the likelihood that Alaskan youth will become addicted when they reach the legal age of purchase. A delay in nicotine initiation is particularly important for individuals with behavioral health conditions, who consume about 40% of all cigarettes smoked by adults, and who are more likely to become addicted than the general public([NSDUH, 2013](#)).

Products like e-cigarettes mask deterrents to combustible cigarette use because they taste and smell kid-friendly. Puff Bar, a disposable e-cigarette product that gained popularity following the FDA crackdown flavored e-cigarettes coming in closed pods, lists blue razz lemonade, cotton candy and mamba in their top 20 flavors. Marketing practices and ease of access have been effective even in youth with protective factors against addiction—parental monitoring, success in school, and adoption of conventional norms about drug use—and are driving up substance use and addiction rates at skyrocketing levels (Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program FY19 Annual Report).

In 2016, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) found that 34.6% of adults with a mental illness reported current use of tobacco, compared to 23.3% of adults without a mental illness. About 45.5% of adults who smoked cigarettes reported binge drinking in the past month, compared to 21.7% of adults who didn't smoke. This issue is compounded by the perception that cessation will impede other recovery efforts, per a National Institute of Health's National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism study.¹

¹ <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh293/208-212.htm>

SB 89 will raise the age for purchase of nicotine products, including candy-flavored products, and provide Alaskans with one more a protective measure against addiction.

Thank you for your introduction of this bill and your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Brenda Moore



Brenda Moore
AMHB Chair

Lee Breinig
ABADA Chair