

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

House Bill 298

“An Act relating to the posting of warning signs for alcoholic beverages.”

Sponsor Statement

The Alcoholic Beverages and Cancer Act will inform Alaskans that alcohol use can cause cancer, including colon and breast cancers. There has been a broad scientific consensus for decades that the consumption of alcohol significantly increases the risk of several types of cancer. This relationship between alcohol and cancer was first documented by the World Health Organization in 1987. Alcohol-related cancers affect tens of thousands of Americans each year. Alcohol is noted to be the third-highest modifiable risk factor for cancer in women, and the fourth-highest modifiable risk factor for cancer in men. However, despite this long-standing scientific consensus, there has not been an accompanying change in public perception about the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

Public perception about alcohol consumption is skewed – some surveys from the National Institutes of Health even indicate that 10% of adults believe alcohol consumption decreases risk for cancer, even though for some types of cancer, even small amounts of alcohol can increase risk.

House Bill 298 addresses this gap in public health knowledge by changing the text on one of the required warning signs at the point-of-sale for alcohol. The new sign states: “Alcohol use can cause cancer, including breast and colon cancers.” This has precedent in some US states, as well as in other countries around the world. South Korea requires cancer warning labels on alcoholic drink containers, and Ireland passed legislation in 2023 requiring cancer and liver disease warning labels on alcoholic drink packaging.

This legislation does not restrict Alaskans’ ability to buy or consume alcohol but provides an easy, low-cost way for Alaskans to make informed decisions about alcohol consumption prior to purchase. House Bill 298 is an effective and simple bill that will improve public health awareness. I urge your support.