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Alaska Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

March 12, 2025

The Honorable Jesse Bjorkman
Chair
Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Beltz 105
120 4th St
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: AKSAM's Support for HB49/SB24, Tobacco/Nicotine/E-Cig Age; E-Cig Tax

Dear Chair Bjorkman:

On behalf of the Alaska Society of Addiction Medicine (AKSAM), the leading medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in Alaska who treat addiction, we write today to express our support for HB49/SB24. This important legislation would strengthen youth tobacco prevention efforts, including raising the minimum purchasing age to 21. These provisions of HB49/SB24 are evidence-based measures that will ultimately reduce youth tobacco use.

AKSAM supports an approach to tobacco prevention that aims to reduce youth use of harmful products and safeguard public health. The provisions included within HB49/SB24 meet these aims. Indeed, while overall tobacco usage is declining, national estimates indicate that e-cigarettes were the most used tobacco product among middle and high school aged students in 2024.¹ As addiction specialists, we know the impact that tobacco use at early ages can have on future dependency. Additionally, we know that e-cigarettes are aggressively marketed to the youth

¹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2025). *Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey*.
<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>

demographic.² As such, we must counter by pursuing policy measures that reduce the likelihood of youth introduction to products like e-cigarettes.

Despite some favorable national trends, Alaska is unfortunately ranked highly among U.S. states in regard to higher-than-average youth smoking and tobacco usage rates.³ In turn, we must disincentivize youth usage of tobacco products by raising the age for purchase and possession to 21. It is in Alaska's best interest to put our best foot forward in protecting the health of our youth and investing in their future success. HB49/SB24 would take concrete steps in the right direction to discourage youth tobacco product use.

For the reasons stated above, we support HB49/SB24 and urge all members of the committee to support its advancement. Thank you for your consideration of our prospective. Please contact our leadership should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Betty K. Anderson".

Betty K. Anderson, MD
Vice President, Alaska Society of Addiction Medicine

CC: The Honorable Kelly Merrick
The Honorable Elvi Gray-Jackson
The Honorable Forrest Dunbar
The Honorable Robert Yundt

² Addiction Prevention Coalition. (2021). *Marketing to The Youth of America: How E-Cigarette Companies Target Young People*. APCBham.

<https://apcbham.org/marketing-to-the-youth-of-america-how-e-cigarette-companies-target-young-people/>

³

American Lung Association. (2024). *Tobacco trends brief: Rates by State*. Tobacco Trends Brief: Rates By State | American Lung Association. <https://www.lung.org/research/trends-in-lung-disease/tobacco-trends-brief/rates-by-state>