

Alaska Legislature

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House Bill 125 Sponsor Statement

For over 50 years, families have relied upon cough and cold medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM) to treat their coughs. Today, more than 100 over the counter cough and cold products contain DXM. When used correctly, DXM-containing medicines are safe and effective, but when abused can produce dangerous side effects. According to a 2013 National Institute of Drug Abuse study, four percent of teenagers – 8th graders through 12th graders - have intentionally taken exceedingly large amounts of cough medicine containing DXM to get high. At high doses, e.g. 8 to 50 times the maximum labeled dose, DXM can produce hallucinations, confusion, blurred vision, nausea, excessive fatigue, and loss of motor control.

To help address this problem and combat the number of teens who abuse DXM, House Bill 125 prohibits the sale of DXM to those under 18 years of age without a prescription. This simple step, asking for proof of age prior to sale, would maintain access to effective, over the counter cough medicines for Americans who use them to treat cough symptoms associated with colds and the flu, while limiting access to the small but significant number of adolescents who might abuse them. The penalty for those who sell to minors would be a \$150 for the first violation, and \$250 for the second and any future violation. Alaskans take substance abuse issues very seriously, and the abuse of DXM should be no exception.