



April 3, 2017

Senator John Coghill, Jr.  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Coghill,

I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 15, E-Cigs, Sale to and Possession by Minors.

This legislation is extraordinarily timely; the e-cigarette and vaping industry has the potential to undue years of progress in the area of youth tobacco consumption. E-cigarette use among middle and high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014, according to data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products. Findings from the 2014 National Youth Tobacco Survey show that current e-cigarette use (use on at least 1 day in the past 30 days) among high school students increased from 4.5 percent in 2013 to 13.4 percent in 2014. Among middle school students, current e-cigarette use more than tripled from 1.1 percent in 2013 to 3.9 percent in 2014. Marketers use child friendly flavors, themes of rebellion, and celebrity endorsements to sell them – the same strategies that were long used to market traditional cigarettes to children.

Unfortunately, many adolescents perceive e-cigarettes as safer than traditional cigarettes and that they are a cessation tool. They are the opposite—they are a grooming tool, grooming kids to accept, like, and become dependent on smoking and nicotine. Recent research indicates that youth who try e-cigs are much more likely than other youth to progress to traditional cigarettes. A 2015 National Institutes of Health report showed that 9th graders who used e-cigs were over three times more likely to start using combustible tobacco products than those who didn't use e-cigs.

The vaping industry is protecting its business interests when it pushes the ideas that e-cigarettes are safer than traditional cigarettes, have little health risk to the user, and can actually help people quit smoking. There is no solid proof of this. Further, vape shop owners have claimed that they do not sell their products to minors, yet the Alaska Department of Health and Social Service's December 15, 2016 memo on the results of its Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) investigation proves otherwise. In that investigation there was a 26.1% sell rate of vaping fluid to minors. In addition, there was a 9.1% sell rate of e-cigarettes to minors, which is nearly double the tobacco sell rate.

The Mat-Su Health Foundation Board strongly supports SB 15. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the research cited here.

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Cc: Sen. Costello, Sen. Kelly, Sen. Meyer, Sen. Wielechowski, Sen. Stevens