



March 1, 2024

Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senate Bill 89 – Age for Tobacco/Nicotine/E-Cigarette; Tax E-Cigarette

President Stevens,

The Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) offers our support for Senate Bill 89, which would align state law with federal statute by raising the minimum age for all tobacco products from 19 to 21 and establish a sales tax for electronic smoking products, consistent with taxes on other tobacco products in the state. ACT supports policies that promote the health and wellbeing of Alaska's children, including policies targeted at reducing underage use of tobacco products.

According to KIDS Count 2022, the use of electronic cigarette products among high school students is increasing, even while the use of other substances, including other tobacco products and alcohol, is declining. The inaccurate perception among youth that vaping is safer than smoking, combined with the lack of taxes on e-cigarette products, and marketing targeted towards a younger audience, all contribute to this higher rate of use.

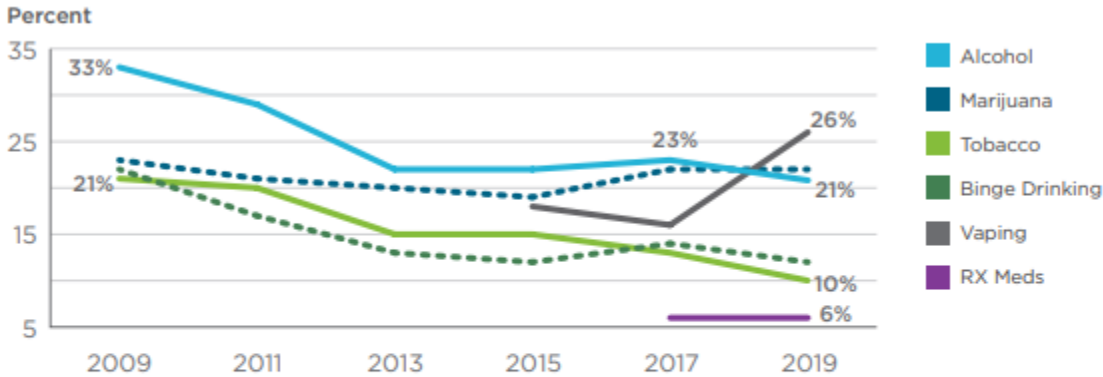


Figure 23. Substance Use in Past Month Among High School Students, Percent (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019)

*Source: Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Retrieved from: KIDS COUNT Data Center
 Note: Statewide data are for traditional high school students; data for regions are for traditional, alternative, and correctional high school students. The 2021 Alaska Youth Risk Survey was canceled due to the challenges Alaska school districts were facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The next Alaska YRBS is scheduled for the 2022-2023 school year.*

Research has demonstrated that increased prices on e-cigarette products through taxes results in a lower rate of use among youth. Limiting access to youth through higher cost is a policy choice that is currently used in Alaska for other substances.

Alaska Children’s Trust fully supports Senate Bill 89 because aligning state law with federal statute and taxing electronic smoking products consistent with other tobacco products are policies that have been demonstrated to decrease underage use of electronic cigarettes, increasing youth health and wellbeing. Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. Storrs
 President & CEO
 Alaska Children’s Trust