

Fact Sheet

Protect Child Health in Alaska

HB 236 COULD SAVE LIVES AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR ALASKA



The Problem



- **Youth are at risk.** A new study by Hall et al. found that nearly 1 in 10 adolescents have used ineffective and potentially harmful over-the-counter diet pills and similar products misused for weight loss in their lifetimes. Prevalence of use among adolescents was 2.0% in the past week, 4.4% in the past month, 6.2% in the past year, and 8.9% in their lifetime. ⁽¹⁾
- **Dangerous products.** Weight-loss and muscle-building dietary supplements carry serious risks, including organ failure, heart attack, stroke, testicular cancer, and even death. ⁽²⁻⁵⁾ Too often they contain illegal steroids, pharmaceutical drugs, or heavy metals. ⁽⁶⁾ The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly cautions against teens using over-the-counter diet pills ⁽⁷⁾ or muscle-building supplements ⁽⁸⁾ for any reason.
- **Weak federal regulation.** Supplements are taken off shelves by the Food and Drug Administration only after reports of serious injury. ⁽⁹⁾ In 2015, attorneys general of 14 states joined in a [letter](#) to Congress seeking a federal investigation into dietary supplements, ⁽¹⁰⁾ but still no federal action has been taken. Alaska's youth need greater protection now.



Urgent Action Needed by Alaska Lawmakers



- **Protect young people from the dangers of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements.** If signed into law, **HB 236** would ban the sale of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements to minors under 18 years old, as already done for other dangerous products such as tobacco and pseudoephedrine. New York State has already passed a similar law, which took effect in April 2024.

Two Studies by Brandeis Economists Estimate Very Low, One-time Implementation Cost but Millions in Savings From Protective Effects



- **A study examining similar legislation from Massachusetts aimed to evaluate the value of implementing a state-level ban on sale of over-the-counter diet pills and muscle-building supplements to minors.**
 - The study gathered data through key informant interviews and public data on state websites.
 - The study considered minimum, best, and maximum values for state personnel time and salaries needed for all key provisions of the legislation.
- **The study found one-time implementation opportunity cost** estimated to be **only \$47,536**, which is less than a starting salary of a state administrative staff position. ⁽¹¹⁾
- **A second study estimated the cost-effectiveness of similar legislation in Massachusetts and likely effects on health equity.**
 - They found similar legislation would prevent **57,034 eating disorder cases** and **more than 46,000 other adverse medical events** over 30 years.
 - Also it would yield **annual healthcare savings of \$14 million** and **societal savings of \$30 million**.
- Health equity analysis showed results were **as beneficial or even more so for Latine & Black youth compared to their White counterparts.** ⁽¹²⁾

Given the bill's strong potential to provide urgently needed protection for youth and the estimated low cost of implementation, we urge your support for HB 236.

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Protect the Health of Alaska's Children

References

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Given the bill's strong potential to provide urgently needed protection for youth and the demonstrated low cost of implementation, we urge your support for HB 236.