
Tobacco Free Mass

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Dear Members of the Health Policy Commission:

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable premature death and chronic disease in the state. Nearly 9,000 people die from tobacco-related disease each year and Massachusetts spends over \$4.3 billion dollars a year treating tobacco-related diseases and another \$1 billion in lost productivity.^{1,2} Each pack of cigarettes sold costs the state an estimated \$15.33 in direct healthcare costs and \$6.08 in lost productivity.³

The tobacco industry is notoriously strategic at developing, marketing, and pricing new, kid-friendly products to ensure that they hook a new generation onto tobacco and nicotine to ensure loyal customers and future profits. According to the 2012 Surgeon General's report, nearly all tobacco use begins during youth and the likelihood of someone starting to smoke after the age of 26 is 1 in 100.^{4,5} This is why Big Tobacco spends \$10 billion a year targeting the young and why they are pushing other tobacco products, such as dissolvable tobacco pouches, little cigars, and e-cigarettes onto young people. They use colorful packaging resembling candy, added flavors such as grape and cherry, and sell their products at extremely discounted prices. Advertisements for electronic cigarettes are found in places where conventional cigarettes have been banned since 1990 (e.g., TV, radio, and sports events) and use celebrities and cartoons to hawk their products.⁶

Because the tobacco industry continuously launches new products to circumvent regulation, the state finds itself playing catch up to the industry's tactics to manipulate loopholes. Tobacco industry's manipulative actions are impacting our momentum and are cutting into the gains we have made in reducing tobacco use rates over the years. Ten-year trends indicate that Massachusetts youth use cigars at increasing rates and use cigars more than cigarettes.⁷ Also, nationally youth use of e-cigarettes has doubled from 2011 to 2012.⁸ We can reduce the use of the most deadly products on the planet – cigarettes and other tobacco products – and the burden of tobacco-related death, disease and related healthcare costs, but it is imperative that we redouble our efforts and make substantial re-investments in the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP). States that make such investments see returns on investment as high as 50:1.⁹ The CDC recommends that Massachusetts spend \$90 million a year in tobacco control, prevention, and cessation programming.¹⁰ Yet, the state's FY14 budget for MTCP is \$3.9 million – only 4% of CDC's recommendation and less than 0.5% of the total \$1 billion the state generates from Masters Settlement Agreement and tobacco taxes.

We strongly encourage your Commission to recommend that the state:

- 1) Dramatically increase MTCP's funding so that we can work to prevent the use of other tobacco products by youth;
- 2) Aggressively pursue all actions to reduce the use of tobacco and non-FDA approved nicotine containing products; and
- 3) Ensure comprehensive and evidence-based cessation programs are covered by all insurers.


It is important that we act now and act collectively if we are to prevent another generation of tobacco and nicotine addiction. With local, state, and private investment in tobacco cessation, control, and prevention we will see many more lives saved and healthcare costs further reduced. Thank you for your support.

If we can be of any assistance in answering any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 508-270-4652. Or for additional information please see our website www.tobaccofreemass.net.

Sincerely,



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