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Michigan lawmakers prioritize tobacco industry over Michigan youth with bills expanding access to tobacco and vaping products

Bills allow for home delivery, lower prices and lax retailer penalties for selling to minors

Lansing, Mich. – Michigan lawmakers are protecting the tobacco industry instead of Michigan youth by advancing legislation that expands access to tobacco and vaping products, the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance warned today.

Founded in 2019, the Alliance includes nearly 70 public health and community organizations working to pass comprehensive legislation proven to protect Michigan youth from the dangers of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Legislation that advanced quickly today by the House Regulatory Reform Committee raises the age for tobacco sales without including a meaningful enforcement mechanism to ensure retailers comply. Additionally, Michigan has one of the highest rates of illegal sales to young people in the nation and the largest number of FDA-issued “no sales” orders. According to the FDA, since January 2021, Michigan’s violation rate for underage sales is 42 percent, more than double the allowed rate to continue receiving federal funding.

“While we support bringing Michigan’s age of sale in line with federal law, this legislation is a missed opportunity to truly impact Michigan’s youth tobacco epidemic,” said Shannon Quinby, Eastern Regional Director for Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation/Tobacco 21. “With no plan to reduce the alarmingly high number of retailer violations for sales to youth, these bills will not serve their purpose and Michigan’s federal SAMHSA funding remains at risk.”

House Bills 6108 and 6109 are tie-barred to Senate legislation (Senate Bill 720) that allows tobacco products to be ordered for home delivery, which will directly increase youth access to tobacco products. Senate Bill 720 also lowers the state tax on some tobacco products making them more affordable for kids. Cheap tobacco does not benefit anyone except the tobacco industry.

“Our shared priority should be keeping highly addictive tobacco products out of the hands of our kids, not increasing accessibility and lowering the cost of them,” said Paul Steiner, executive director of Tobacco Free Michigan. “Michigan lawmakers are heading down a dangerous path and our kids will be the ones who will suffer the consequences. We strongly urge Michigan lawmakers and Governor

Whitmer to reject these bills and show Michigan kids that their health matters more than tobacco industry profits.”

Members of the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance include:

- Allegiance Health
- Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities
- American Cancer Society - Cancer Action Network
- American Heart Association
- American Indian Veterans of Michigan
- American Lung Association
- Arbor Circle
- Ascension Michigan
- Beaumont Teen Health Center
- BreatheWell Newaygo County
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- CARE of Southeastern Michigan
- Cherry Health
- Community Mental Health Association of Michigan
- Genesee Health Plan
- Genesee County Medical Society
- Genesee County Prevention Coalition
- Henry Ford Health System
- Hurley Medical Center
- Ingham County Medical Society
- March of Dimes
- Mercy Health
- McLaren Health Care
- Michigan’s Children
- Michigan Academy of Family Physicians
- Michigan Association of Local Public Health
- Michigan Black Caucus Foundation
- Michigan Catholic Conference
- Michigan Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- Michigan Chapter of American College of Cardiology
- Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
- Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners
- Michigan Health and Hospital Association
- Michigan League for Public Policy/Kids’ Count
- Michigan Nurses Association
- Michigan Osteopathic Association
- Michigan Public Health Coalition
- Michigan Society of Hematology and Oncology
- Michigan State Medical Society
- Michigan State University – College of Human Medicine
- Michigan State University Extension
- Michigan Thoracic Society
- Newaygo County Great Start Collaborative
- Parents Against Vaping
- Prevention Network Michigan
- Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation
- Sacred Heart Center
- Saint Joseph Mercy Health System
- School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan
- South Eastern Michigan Indians
- Spectrum Health
- Tobacco Free Michigan
- Trinity Health
- Washtenaw County Medical Society

For more information on the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance, visit keepmikiidstobaccofree.com.

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