

PRESS RELEASE

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Association of Ohio Health Commissioners

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Statement on Legislative Veto Override

The Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC) and the Ohio Public Health Association (OPHA) are disappointed by last week's Senate override of Governor DeWine's veto concerning local tobacco ordinances. Governor DeWine has steadfastly worked to fight the tobacco epidemic and his veto was good public health policy. Protecting Ohio's youth, communities of color, and the disadvantaged from tobacco products, flavored vaping and nicotine is not a partisan issue, nor should it be a contentious one. Public health professionals struggle daily to help our citizens overcome the severe consequences of tobacco addiction, oftentimes stemming from individuals who became addicted as children.

The legislature can and should create a statewide framework to regulate tobacco and nicotine, especially when it comes to flavored products that target youth. Smokefree Ohio and Tobacco 21 are two examples of popular and successful statewide programs that have served Ohioans well, but enforcement has been put at risk by the elimination of local regulatory authority. AOHC and OPHA stand ready to work with the legislature and all interested parties to create reasonable regulations that replicate the success of these two programs.

FACTS ABOUT OHIO TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USAGE:

- **Annual health care costs in Ohio directly caused by smoking** **\$5.64 billion¹**
- **Medicaid costs caused by smoking in Ohio** **\$1.72 billion²**
- **State and federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures by household** **\$793³**

¹ Strategic Plan for a Tobacco Free Ohio

² Strategic Plan for a Tobacco Free Ohio

³ Strategic Plan for a Tobacco Free Ohio

- **Among all youth in Ohio, about one in six (16.4%) currently use at least one type of tobacco product, compared with 9.3% nationally.⁴**
- **The prevalence of e-cigarette use among middle school students (9.0%) and high school students (20.0%) in Ohio is higher than the prevalence in the US (2.8% and 11.3%, respectively)**
- **Among Ohio youth who use any tobacco product, 42.6% reported using flavored tobacco, and 95.6% reported using e-cigarettes.**
- **In 141 of 786 (17.9%) tobacco vendor compliance checks in 2023, retailers were in violation of selling to a minor.⁵**

⁴ 2021 Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey

⁵ Ohio Department of Health Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Grant