

Cyndie Martel

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>
Sent: Monday, September 8, 2025 4:20 PM
To: CouncilAll
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Nicotine Addiction Prevention Policy

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

I am the Regional Tobacco Prevention Program Coordinator for seven communities in Eastern Massachusetts.

I've been inspecting tobacco retail stores and conducting youth compliance checks for fourteen years now.

I've watched the evolution from pink and purple foil-wrapped, \$.79, flavored cigarillos that look like candy, to Juul devices that look like flash drives, to nicotine pouches, (high in nicotine content, made with nicotine salts for a quicker jolt to the brain, very cheap and very discrete), to the latest vape devices that look just like highlighters, and pens that actually write **and** vape! And there are even newer ones – a teddy bear, a toy guitar, a CD that plays music while you vape. Oh, and you can vape and play Mario Bros. on the same device.

I was at a national tobacco conference recently and learned that there are now vapes that track your use. The device captures information on when, how often, how much you puff, and the nicotine content of your device. The data is sent back to the manufacturer. They tell us these devices are to help smokers quit. They are blatantly re-branding themselves as harm reduction product providers. When they peddle a device that is soft, squishy, looks like a teddy bear, and comes in pink, baby blue, and rainbow colors, does anyone really believe that they are adopting a business model that will put them out of business? And do any of us think that a middle age or older adult who is trying to quit smoking is going to be drawn to a pick teddy bear vape. We know exactly who will be attracted to these child-friendly designs.

One product innovation after another. We have nicotine-dipped toothpicks. Nicotine lollipops. Nicotine gummies. Nicotine coffee. What's next?

Tobacco prevention organizations and Public Health professionals have advocated for policies to reduce youth access to these products for decades.

We've done so much here in Massachusetts – cigar minimum price, flavor ban, T-21, pharmacy ban, permit cap. And now we're working on Nicotine Free Generation. California has also been a leader in tobacco prevention. But year after year, new products. Band-aid after band-aid is not enough.

I won't dwell on the harms caused by nicotine addiction. We all know. Health issues. Financial burden. Even career opportunities lost due to a nicotine habit. And the impact on our young people – students who should be focusing on learning are watching the time, waiting to dash out of class to go to the student bathroom to vape. Because they need to, because they are addicted.

It's time to remove these poisons from our store shelves. It's time to adopt a strategy that actually moves us towards a generation of young people who will never experience tobacco. Just as we now have a generation of young people who have never been in a restaurant, movie theater, school, or hospital; or ridden on a bus, subway, train, or plane where someone is smoking. We can and we need to do more to protect our citizens, especially our young people.

I'm proud to say, Massachusetts along with California is a leader in tobacco and nicotine addiction prevention. Other states look to us to see what we're doing.

I am excited you are considering a tobacco ban. Together we can make a difference that will save lives and reduce the financial burden caused by nicotine use.

Sincerely,

Maureen Buzby
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