



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO REGULATE E-CIGARETTES AS TOBACCO PRODUCTS

City of Chicago Action Begins National Conversation on Critical Public Health Issue

City Council today approved an ordinance that will regulate electronic cigarettes as “tobacco products” in the City of Chicago pending further regulations from the Food and Drug Administration. The new policy bans the distribution and sale of e-cigarettes to minors and moves e-cigarettes from in front of the counter to behind the counter in stores where they are sold, making it more difficult for youth to access. The ordinance also prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in restaurants, sports venues, and everywhere else cigarettes are banned and requires e-cigarette dealers to be licensed. Since the Mayor announced that he was joining with City Council members and community groups to support this ordinance, New York City and Los Angeles have taken up similar proposals.

“I applaud City Council in their efforts to ensure the health and safety of Chicago’s youth as we continue the fight against Big Tobacco,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “Regulating e-cigarettes will protect our children from getting hooked on their kid-friendly flavors and marketing. This ordinance stand up for our children while ensuring all residents have the right to clean air and healthy environment.

Regulating e-cigarettes is another step to curb youth smoking in Chicago. In December 2013, City Council expanded the prohibition of flavored tobacco products from 100 feet to 500 feet from a school. Flavored products are a key tool used by the tobacco industry to target youth. These ordinances will further reduce the opportunities for youth to begin smoking.

“Protecting our children is something that the entire city needs to do, together,” said Alderman Ed Burke of the 14th Ward. “When we identify industries that are targeting our children, we must act swiftly and decisively on behalf of our kids. That is exactly what we are doing here. This ordinance will save lives.”

“The passage of this ordinance not only applies smoking restrictions to electronic cigarettes, but also serves as a pathway to reduce the normalization of smoking that lures young people to using tobacco and/or e-cigarettes, and hook another generation on nicotine,” said Alderman Burns of the 4th Ward.

“Today’s vote by the City Council sends a strong message that Chicago will always put our children and our right to clean air first,” said Dr. Bechara Choucair, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. “We hope that our action will serve as an example to other cities looking for ways to ensure their youth remain healthy and tobacco free.”

Studies have shown that youth disproportionately use e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, use of e-cigarettes among middle and high school students doubled from 2011 to 2012. Additionally, e-cigarette users often smoke conventional cigarettes as 76.5% of e-cigarette users also smoke conventional cigarettes. There is also substantial evidence that flavored cigarettes are a “starter” product for youth who begin smoking. In fact, kids ages 12 to 17 smoke flavored cigarettes at a higher rate than any other age group.

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