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**CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO REDUCE YOUTH SMOKING AND CRACK DOWN ON ILLEGAL TOBACCO SALES**

*Reforms Raise Purchasing Age from 18 to 21, Tax on Harmful Smokeless Tobacco Products, Provide Additional Resources to Combat Illegal Tobacco Sales*

Today the City Council approved a series of reforms introduced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel to curb tobacco use among youth. The ordinance includes a tax on cigars and smokeless tobacco products and an increase in the age requirement to purchase both cigarettes and other smokeless products from 18 to 21 years of age. Additionally, the ordinance empowers City enforcement staff with more tools and resources to combat the illegal sale of tobacco.

These reforms will build on previous efforts to reduce youth smoking, and because studies show that youth are the most price sensitive consumers for tobacco products, this reform will also expand taxation on tobacco to smokeless tobacco, small cigars, and other products that are just as harmful as cigarettes. This expanded tax on smokeless tobacco products is expected to generate roughly \$6 million in revenue, which will then be invested to implement a universal summer orientation program for all incoming CPS freshmen and to support additional enforcement efforts.

"Youth smoking is now at a record low in Chicago, thanks to a series of reforms put in place to crack down on marketing tactics employed by big tobacco companies," said Mayor Emanuel. "These reforms introduced today will help today's youth develop healthy lifestyles and refrain from the harmful effects of a tobacco habit."

Recognizing that 90 percent of smokers start the habit before the age of 21, and that the 18-20 age range is a critical time for new smokers, these reforms seek to protect young people who are more vulnerable to nicotine addiction. Currently, products like cigars, cigarillos, and smokeless tobacco are taxed less than cigarettes, making these alternate products more attractive. Furthermore, the tobacco industry has focused heavily on marketing these types of products toward youth.

The Mayor's reforms will accomplish the following:

- **Raise the Tobacco Purchase Age to 21:** Raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products protects young adults from starting a lifelong habit. Cities such as New York, Boston, Cleveland, Kansas City and Evanston have already made the change to the purchase age.

- **Tax Tobacco Products Beyond Cigarettes:** Chicago taxes cigarettes and e-cigarettes, but does not tax other products, such as cigars and chewing tobacco, which pose similar serious health risks, especially for young users. The ordinance will tax these products at a fixed rate to account for not only the health risks associated with these harmful products, and to reduce the availability of these products to youth. The revised ordinance approved today also integrates two additional measures to protect businesses. To accommodate small businesses that do not cater to youth, the revised ordinance will exempt new taxation on existing inventory, applying the floor only to new inventory.

City Council has approved the following measures to protect youth:

- 20 cents per cigar;
  - 1.80 per ounce for smokeless and smoking tobacco;
  - 60 cents per ounce for pipe tobacco.
- **Strengthen Enforcement Against Illegal Tobacco Sales:** Since ordinance introduction, the Emanuel Administration has worked closely with aldermen to strengthen the ordinance. Mayor Emanuel has directed additional resources to enhance the City's Tobacco Units—a joint effort between the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) and the Chicago Police Department—in order to more aggressively intervene in businesses selling tobacco products illegally. So far these efforts have paid off, with the enforcement teams identifying 212 violations, resulting in the seizure of 830 packs of unstamped cigarettes from delinquent businesses. The ordinance also calls on the City to provide aldermen with regular reports about activity in their wards, and enacts increased fines for repeat offenders of illegal tobacco sales.

Most of the revenue generated by the tax will support a universal freshman orientation program that will provide nearly 20,000 incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Chicago Public Schools (CPS) high schools with a week of programming that will help them form good study habits, learn the ropes at their new school, and get to know their teachers and peers. Universal high school orientation is part of a larger menu of efforts to help CPS students to reach a graduation rate of 85 percent by 2019—a commitment made by Mayor Emanuel in his second term.

The program will also include a more intensive, mandatory two-week summer program for rising 8<sup>th</sup> graders at risk of dropping out of school that will provide remedial academic support and social emotional learning. In addition to these high school preparation programs, CPS will also incorporate expanded smoking prevention curriculum, beginning as early as fifth grade, to ensure that students are educated on the harmful effects of tobacco, and to further reduce youths from ever picking up a habit.

A tax on smokeless tobacco was proposed by 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Alderman Joe Moreno in fall of 2015 as a means to generate further revenue and build on City efforts to curb smoking. The ordinance approved today to fill the tobacco tax gap and protect youth was co-sponsored by Alderman Moreno and 42<sup>nd</sup> Ward Alderman Ameya Pawar, with support by other members of the Council.

Under Mayor Emanuel, Chicago has become a national leader in reducing tobacco use by launching an innovative array of programs and laws. Working with partners in the public health community, the City has helped reduce youth smoking to an all-time low. Following years of tobacco reduction

efforts, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found in 2013 that only 10.7 percent of Chicago high school students were smokers—down from 13.6 percent in 2011, when Mayor Emanuel took office.

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