

From: Buzby, Maureen <mbuzby@CityofMelrose.org>

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Subject: Letter to Board of Health regarding Nicotine Free Generation policy

To: acrete@townofware.com <acrete@townofware.com>

Dear Ms. Crete,

Please share this letter with Belchertown Board of Health Members at or prior to the December 11, 2024 meeting.

Dear Belchertown Board of Health Members:

In my role as Regional Tobacco Program Manager for seven Mystic Valley communities I get to see new products as they hit store shelves, and watch as they take up more and more shelf space, a sure sign that there is a market.

Smoking rates are down thanks to years of dedicated work by local public health to increase the minimum purchase age, ban flavored products, prohibit sales in pharmacies, and other local public health regulations, some of which are now state law.

But the industry needs new customers. They need replacement customers. So they spend billions on research, development, and marketing of new products, products designed to attract new users.

Two years ago, we were alarmed to learn about Zyn – tiny pouches you pop into your mouth. Saliva dissolves the nicotine salts for a quick zap to the brain. Zyn, still the most popular brand and a big profit maker for Phillip Morris, comes in 3, 6 and 9 milligrams of nicotine. In the past few months we've seen many other manufacturers enter the market and some of these newer brands have 14, 16, even 18 milligrams of nicotine – in one tiny pouch. Compare that to a pack of Marlboro's which has 24 milligram's – in the entire pack.

And pouches are so much cheaper. On average, \$5 for a tin of 15 pouches, compared to \$14.00 for a pack of Marlboro's. So cheaper, more nicotine, and much more discrete. Most adults do not even know what a nicotine pouch is, yet they are wildly popular with young people – the market Big Tobacco wants and needs.

But while pouches are getting a lot of attention these days, and they should, they are not the only new product we need to be concerned about.

Vaping may be down according to some studies – and we aren't the only ones monitoring youth vaping data – so is the industry. Remember Juuls, those clever, cool, discrete e-cigarettes that looked like flash drives and came in mango, Creme Brulee, and fruit medley flavors?

Massachusetts, among other states, sued Juul Labs which agreed to stop manufacturing flavored Juul pods and advertising aimed at youth.

Now we have Juul replacement products. Vapes with an LED screen that tells you how many puffs you have left – like the range indicator on your dashboard reminding you to fill up. It triggers you to go get another vape device. And even newer vapes on which you can play a video game – yes, play Mario Brothers while you vape. How cool is that? It's working. A couple of weeks ago my next-door neighbor, a school administrator, told me about an eighth grader in his school who is addicted to vaping. He wanted to know if I could help. Unfortunately, as hard as it is for adults to stop smoking, it's even harder for kids to stop vaping. And another acquaintance tracked me down on Facebook Messenger to ask for help with a senior in high school who admitted she is addicted to vaping. Again, very limited resources to help young people who are addicted to vaping.

We all know the history. Cartoon advertising. Grape flavored \$.79 cigarillos. E-cigarettes that look like flash drives. And now vapes that look just like hi-lighters or pens. In fact, they are actual pens. Pens that write. On which you can also vape.

We have introduced many tobacco sales regulations over the years. Good regulations. Regulations that helped reduce youth access to tobacco products. But we are always playing catch up. What's next? The tobacco industry invests billions in new products. It is never ending. And will never end. That is why the Nicotine Free Generation policy is so important.

Thank you,
Maureen Buzby

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