



Creating a Tobacco-Free Community

Hampshire Franklin Tobacco-Free Community Partnership

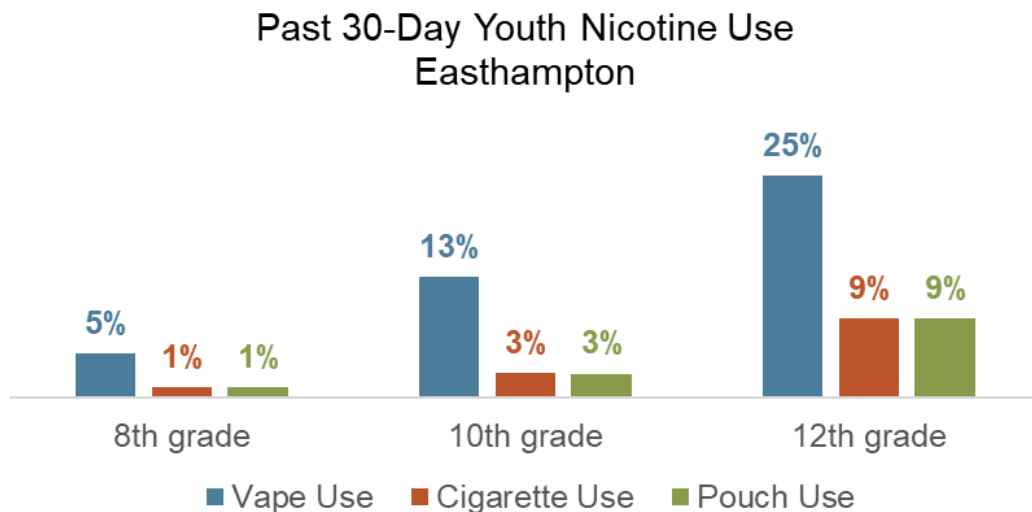
Letter to Easthampton Board of Health about Nicotine Free Generation

April 29, 2026

Dear Board of Health Members Elizabeth Rist (Chair) and Steven Coughlin, and Health Director Ryan Griffin,

I am writing in support of the proposed updates to the Easthampton Board of Health tobacco regulation including: restricting nicotine pouches to 21+ tobacco stores; updating cigar pricing; adopting a declining permit cap starting at 13—the current number of licenses; and adopting a Nicotine Free Generation (NFG) policy.

The adult smoking rate in Easthampton in 2023 was 17% which is higher than the state rate of 11%. Easthampton is also higher than the state for heart attacks and is similar to the state for Asthma (8%), and Hypertension (33%) which are tobacco related diseases (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2023). Below is a chart describing Easthampton's past 30-day youth nicotine use rates by grade in 2025 for tobacco, vaping and nicotine pouches (an emerging product that is marketed to youth and evades full FDA regulation).



Over the past two decades in my former role as SPIFFY Coalition Coordinator and now as the Director of the Hampshire Franklin Tobacco-Free Community Partnership, I have worked closely with the Easthampton Public Schools, the Health Department, retailers and law enforcement to ensure that substances remain out of the hands of young people. Over a decade ago, I chaired an Easthampton Task Force that later became the Easthampton Healthy Youth Coalition which received a \$1,250,000 federal grant to reduce youth substance use in Easthampton. I have worked with the Easthampton Police Department to do numerous compliance checks to ensure that youth are not sold alcohol or tobacco products. I am sensitive to the needs of the retail community. Because NFG is gradual, it provides retailers time to adjust their business model to be less reliant on nicotine while the market declines only marginally each year. These same retailers remained

open when flavored nicotine products were banned. They are innovative and flexible to ever changing community priorities and consumer demands.

24 Communities across the state have passed NFG including Northampton, South Hadley, Amherst, and Belchertown. Easthampton was a leader in passing age 21 nicotine sales and eliminating flavored nicotine products. As more communities across the state followed the lead of communities like Easthampton, it provided the needed momentum for legislators to enact similar laws for the state.

We need to ***protect teens from nicotine dependence by reducing access to tobacco and nicotine products***. Easy access to these products increases the likelihood that youth will start using and become dependent on nicotine¹. Some newer products have higher levels of nicotine and use synthetic nicotine salts which enter the bloodstream faster increasing the likelihood of addiction². The tobacco industry understands that the developing teen brain is particularly susceptible to nicotine dependence, which is why they relentlessly market to youth with new products that evade flavor regulations and dodge taxes making them more appealing and affordable to teens. **As adults in our community, we have both the ability and an obligation to make policies that keep pace with an industry business model that will always require a new generation of nicotine users.**

Why consider Nicotine-Free Generation?

Nicotine-Free Generation (NFG) policies phase out nicotine sales over generations, effectively cutting off the pipeline of future smokers. Importantly, this policy does not restrict adults who can currently buy nicotine products from continuing to buy them. Considering these policies is prudent as part of a comprehensive approach because the nicotine industry continues to innovate, finding loopholes in our laws that allow them to pursue and addict teens.

Left unchecked, the tobacco and nicotine industry will continue to target disadvantaged and vulnerable communities including young people, BIPOC communities, and LGBTQAI+ communities. Massachusetts and local Health Boards have successfully worked to educate and activate communities on issues of health equity and against industry schemes that target youth.

By prioritizing the health of our youth we are building healthy communities for the future. I applaud the Boards of Health in our region for working to promote healthy communities and counter the big corporate profiteering that stands in the way of that goal.

Sincerely,

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Hampshire Franklin Tobacco-Free Community Partnership
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¹ Sweet, Cheap and Easy to Get. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/vapes-and-industry-tactics>

² Marketing of “Tobacco-Free” and “Synthetic Nicotine” Products, Ramamurthi D., Chau, S., Lu, Z., et al, White Paper Stanford Research into the Impact of Tobacco Advertising, Published March 8, 2022. Retrieved 12-10-24 at:

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://tobacco-img.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/13161808/Synthetic-Nicotine-White-Paper-3-8-2022F.pdf>

Below are additional resources on Nicotine Free Generation

- A NICOTINE FREE GENERATION POLICY GUIDE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS. Co-authored by staff from: Massachusetts Association of Health Boards, Massachusetts Health Officers' Association, Massachusetts Municipal Association, and The Public Health Advocacy Institute at Northeastern University School of Law.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1snPEHavk7m7vDXOcapEL91ks2G8doleM/view?usp=sharing>
- THE NICOTINE-FREE GENERATION APPROACH A Policy Option Overview. Public Health Law Center. January 2024. <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Nicotine-Free-Generation.pdf>
- CDC Surgeon General's Report: Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities, November 15, 2024.
<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-surgeon-general-reports/about/2024-end-tobacco-disparities.html>
- Washington Post July 10, 2024. Some Massachusetts towns are trying to say goodbye to tobacco forever. The moves are part of a global push to create a "nicotine-free generation." Retrieved 12/10/ 2024
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2024/07/10/nicotine-tobacco-ban-massachusetts/>
- Commonwealth Beacon-Mass. lawmakers weigh a statewide age-based nicotine ban Legislation would target anyone born after 2006, sparking a heated debate. by Bhaamati Borkhetaria. July 15, 2025.
<https://commonwealthbeacon.org/government/state-government/mass-lawmakers-weigh-a-statewide-age-based-nicotine-ban/>