
OPPOSE GENERATIONAL TOBACCO & NICOTINE PROHIBITION

3 messages

Stephen Helfer <shelfer@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 10, 2025 at 4:54 PM

To: rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov, jschmidt@easthamptonma.gov, kdenham@easthamptonma.gov, jtirrell@easthamptonma.gov, fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov, jkwiecinski@easthamptonma.gov, tpeake@easthamptonma.gov, tsmith@easthamptonma.gov, anewton@easthamptonma.gov

To the Board of Health & City Council:

Please do not approve Generational Tobacco & Nicotine Prohibition.

1) If the tobacco industry is trying to attract youth, it is not succeeding. The Centers for Disease Control reports teenage smoking at a 25-year low. The Food & Drug Administration reports youth vaping at a 10-year low & their nicotine pouch use "low." A Generational Tobacco & Nicotine Prohibition does not affect youth, it affects persons over 21 only.

2) Most of the stores that sell tobacco & nicotine products are owned by Immigrants of color. This prohibition may not close their businesses, but it would hurt & devalue them. Brookline merchants Elias Audy & Fahad Iqbal saw overall sales declines, not just tobacco & nicotine, after the town imposed this ban. The ability to successfully run a small business is vital to public health.

3) Massachusetts residents 21 & over are deemed competent to decide whether or not to buy alcohol or marijuana--both intoxicants. These same adults need not be prohibited from making their own decisions regarding tobacco & nicotine--neither of which impairs judgment or compromises driving ability.

Stephen Helfer (617) 876-2457
Cambridge Citizens for Smokers' Rights
(We receive no funding from any source whatsoever)

Sources:

Cigarette smoking reached the lowest level ever recorded by the survey, with only 1.4% of students reporting current use in 2024.
CDC Newsroom, Oct. 17, 2024
<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/p1017-youth-tobacco-use.html>

Youth E-Cigarette Use Drops to Lowest Level in a Decade: Youth Use of Nicotine Pouches Remains Low
FDA News Release, Sept. 5, 2024
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/youth-e-cigarette-use-drops-lowest-level-decade>

Elias Audy owns Village Mobil. He has seen a 5% to 8% reduction in sales of gas, cigarettes, and other store items & expects to see a continued reduction of sales. "Sunny" Iqbal owns a gas station & a convenience store. Since COVID he saw a 30% drop in overall store revenue and lost many customers born after 2000,
Brookline News, Oct. 26, 2023
<https://brookline.news/brooklines-tobacco-free-generation-law-facing-challenge-in-mas-highest-court/>

Nicotine does not disturb consciousness, impair judgement or social behavior and, if anything, it enhances rather than impairs cognitive and psychomotor performance and the capacity to work.

Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Thu, Dec 11, 2025 at 11:29 AM

To: Stephen Helfer <shelfer@gmail.com>

Cc: jschmidt@easthamptonma.gov, kdenham@easthamptonma.gov, jtirrell@easthamptonma.gov, fjadczak@easthamptonma.gov, jkwiencinski@easthamptonma.gov, tpeake@easthamptonma.gov, tsmith@easthamptonma.gov, anewton@easthamptonma.gov

Stephen,

Thank you for your email and for sharing several informative articles.

The CDC (2024) reports that tobacco product use among U.S. middle and high school students is at a 25-year low. This decline is likely the result of multiple factors, including strong tobacco-prevention strategies, public education campaigns on the harms of tobacco, increased prices, and comprehensive smoke-free policies. While these trends are encouraging, the CDC emphasizes that **any** tobacco use is unsafe and that nearly all tobacco product use begins during adolescence. As the article notes, *"Given the negative health consequences of tobacco use and the unique harms associated with teenage nicotine exposure, preventing youth tobacco product use is imperative."*

Similarly, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2024) reported that youth e-cigarette use has dropped to its lowest level in a decade. As FDA Center for Tobacco Products Director Dr. King stated—and I agree—"we can't rest on our laurels, as there's still more work to do to further reduce youth e-cigarette use."

The goal of a Nicotine-Free Generation policy is to gradually reduce tobacco sales over time by ensuring that individuals who are not yet 21 today do not become tobacco consumers in the future. This is a gradual, phased transition for business owners, allowing for significant time to adjust. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, accounting for **1 in 5 deaths** (CDC, 2022).

I would also strongly caution against citing articles from 1991, as much of that information has since been disproven or superseded by decades of scientific evidence.

The 2016 Surgeon General's Report extensively reviewed the public health impacts of nicotine exposure on adolescents. It found that adolescents have a unique biological vulnerability to nicotine, including increased risk for drug-seeking behaviors (Kandel & Kandel, 2014), deficits in attention and cognition, and mood disorders (Yuan et al., 2015). Animal models also demonstrate that chronic nicotine exposure during adolescence leads to **long-lasting and unique neurobiological effects** not seen in adults, particularly in the limbic system, which is still maturing during this period and is susceptible to long-term modification by nicotine.

I would also like to emphasize that the Nicotine-Free Generation (NFG) policy would not restrict adults who are already legally able to purchase tobacco products. Those 21 and older who currently use tobacco would be able to continue purchasing and using these products. The policy is designed specifically to limit access for individuals who have not yet started using tobacco, preventing initiation rather than restricting current use.

That being said, this implementation has only been discussed, and if it is something the Easthampton Board of Health decides it would like to move forward with, my strong recommendation will be to hold an in-person hearing, although not required, before implementing this regulation, where Easthampton residents and all tobacco establishments will be notified and allowed to speak.

Thank you, and I will forward this email to the Board.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, July 29). *Diseases and death* [Fact sheet]. https://archive.cdc.gov/www_cdc_gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/diseases-and-death.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, October 17). *Youth tobacco product use at a 25-year low, yet disparities persist* [Press release]. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/p1017-youth-tobacco-use.html>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2024, September 5). *Youth e-cigarette use drops to lowest level in a decade* [Press release]. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/youth-e-cigarette-use-drops-lowest-level-decade>

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Stephen Helfer <shelfer@gmail.com>
To: Ryan Griffin <rgriffin@easthamptonma.gov>

Fri, Dec 12, 2025 at 8:07 PM

Ryan,

Thank you for your response and distributing my email to the rest of the Board.

I hope to respond to more of your points soon, but one point I would like to make now.

The 1988 SG's report (C. Everett Koop's) claimed that annual smoking "related" deaths amounted to "more than 300,000." Now that the smoking rate is at an 80-year low (according to Gallup), the CDC declares smoking "related" deaths to be at 480,000. As the smoking rate has steadily decreased since 1988, the number of deaths attributed to it by the CDC, has increased 60%. Also, when only about 10% of adults smoke, how could it cause 20% (1 in 5) of deaths.

Thank you again.

Stephen Helfer
Cambridge Citizens for Smokers' Rights
facebook.com/ccsr.org

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