

Good evening, Ryan Griffin HD

Thank you President Denham and Council

I'm here tonight on behalf of the Easthampton Board of Health to share that we have been discussing

proposed updates to our current tobacco regulations including a proposed Nicotine-Free Generation, or NFG, regulation. Similar policies have already been implemented in more than 20 municipalities across Massachusetts, including neighboring communities such as Belchertown, Amherst, South Hadley, and Leverett, with Northampton BOH also deciding on NFG at their BOH meeting tomorrow

The Nicotine-Free Generation policy is a public health strategy designed to gradually phase out the sale of nicotine products to future generations by establishing a birth-year cutoff for legal sales. Under the proposed regulation, individuals born on or after January 1, 2026, would not be able to purchase tobacco or nicotine products in Easthampton—even after turning 21.

Importantly, this approach does not impact current adult consumers.

The goal is to reduce nicotine addiction over time by preventing initiation among younger generations, while avoiding disruption for those who already legally use these products.

We know that nearly all lifelong nicotine addiction begins during adolescence, when the brain is especially vulnerable. Nicotine is highly addictive and can impact brain development, making prevention of early exposure one of the most effective public health strategies.

While youth cigarette smoking has declined, tobacco companies continue to introduce and heavily market new products—such as high-nicotine e-cigarettes and oral nicotine pouches—that appeal to young people. The Nicotine-Free Generation approach allows communities to respond proactively to these evolving products, rather than reacting after addiction has already taken hold.

Tobacco and nicotine use also remain a leading cause of preventable death—accounting for nearly 500,000 deaths annually in the United States and more than 9,000 each year in Massachusetts.

From an economic standpoint, Easthampton currently has 13 businesses that sell tobacco products, as only a portion of their overall sales. Because this policy is a gradual phase over time, the overall impact is expected to be minimal and allows businesses time to adapt.

After reviewing background information, experiences from other Massachusetts communities, and implementation considerations, the Board of Health is now seeking direct public input before making any decisions. The goal of the Board right now is to invite residents and business owners to learn more about the proposal and to provide feedback as part of a public review process.

You can also review both the current and proposed regulations on the City of Easthampton website under the Health Department page, in the section titled “Proposed Nicotine-Free Generation Policy.”

The BOH will be holding a public forum on Monday, April 13th, from 6:30 to 8:30 PM, here at City Hall in this room, and we strongly encourage anyone interested to attend and share their thoughts.

No Decision will be made at this forum just a place for the public to provide input .. Thank you.

As of March, 2026, the following Massachusetts communities have adopted NFG:

1. Brookline
2. Concord
3. Malden
4. Melrose
5. Reading
6. Stoneham
7. Wakefield
8. Winchester
9. Belchertown
10. Chelsea
11. Needham
12. Newton
13. Manchester-by-the-Sea
14. Conway
15. Pelham
16. Hopkinton
17. Somerville
18. Dover
19. South Hadley
20. Leverett
21. Amherst
22. Hardwick

Boards have authority to adopt and enforce reasonable health regulations under **M.G.L. c.111, s.31**. Case law upholds boards' authority to adopt regulations that are more restrictive than state standards so long as the local regulations do not conflict with state law and are not specifically preempted.

Board of Health has **broad authority** to create stronger local health protections than the state—**as long as those rules are reasonable and legally justified.**

Tobacco use costing more than 240 billion annually.

Hampshire County 12th graders reported higher smoking rates than the national average in 2025

survey

Approx 50% of the price of a pack of cigarettes is in the form of taxes, which does not remain in the community or benefit the store owner.

Public Education remains the main strategy in addition to this policy. Local organizations such as the pioneer valley tobacco control commission,