

Key Messages About the Continued Need for Local Tobacco Control and Prevention Policy

February 2020

1. Local tobacco prevention policy can be passed, implemented and enforced quickly which is important when dealing with an epidemic such as vape use among young people.
2. Local tobacco retail licensing is effective and can have an immediate impact on reducing illegal sales rates. While the federal and state illegal sales rates remain high, 9 out of 11 communities with local tobacco retail licensing in Colorado have had strong reductions in illegal sales after implementing their licensing laws.
3. Proposed T21 and licensing legislation at the state level is not a guarantee of the passage a law. Over the past several legislative sessions, similar legislation was weakened substantially and ultimately failed.
4. There is always a chance that legislation at the state level could limit local control, putting communities at a disadvantage compared to neighboring communities which have already passed these laws or are in the process of considering these laws. The tobacco industry is a powerful player, and will continue to support preemptive language, harmful, ineffective and distracting penalties aimed at youth (such as purchase, use, and possession or “PUP” provisions), and other damaging policies that threaten to undo tobacco prevention gains.
5. State legislation, if passed, would not be implemented for 18 months (July 2021) and the federal law won’t be enforced for at least 9 months. A local law would assure that compliance inspections can be conducted sooner and at the frequency that is considered best practice.
6. Local legislation can include provisions pertaining to important services such as cessation support, educational and preventative materials, and other necessary assistance that is particularly important for young people struggling with addiction.
7. Local policies that are consistent with federal law provide clarity for responsible retailers who want to follow the law and make it easier for state and local authorities to enforce the law.
8. With local tobacco retail licensing, a community gets to maintain control over how they use the money they receive from the retailer licensing fees. So, even if federal / state laws pass, the local licensing fees can be allocated to directly support local efforts.
9. The effectiveness of any federal law and/or proposed state law depends largely on how well they are enforced. Regulatory agencies tasked with checking retailers are under resourced leaving many retailers unchecked for compliance with the law. Passing a local tobacco policy with strong enforcement can have a significant impact on tobacco illegal sales and use rates among those 21 years and younger.