



FOUNDATION FOR A
**HEALTHY
KENTUCKY**

Dear Kentucky Legislator,

We have an epidemic nationwide and in Kentucky that is threatening the health and development of our adolescents and teens. It's the epidemic of youth e-cigarette use, or "vaping." In just the last year, high school student e-cigarette use has surged by 78 percent, and middle schooler vaping has jumped 48 percent.ⁱ Focus groups in Kentucky indicate that this national trend is mirrored in Kentucky schools.ⁱⁱ

As a result, one in four high schoolers and one in 14 middle schoolers now use some kind of tobacco product. ⁱⁱⁱ

E-cigarettes can contain very high levels of nicotine, which harms kids' developing brains, causing attention deficits, impairing cognitive function and reducing impulse control.^{iv} In addition to nicotine, the aerosol also contains fine particles, toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and flavorings that harm the lungs of both the user, and bystanders who are not vaping.^v Studies show that teen vaping also leads to smoking conventional cigarettes.^{vi}

House Bill 11, the tobacco-free schools bill, would create an environment where smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes is not the norm, reduce youth tobacco initiation, provide positive adult role modeling, and protect students, faculty, and visitors from the harms of secondhand smoke and aerosol 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The bill is supported by a strong majority of your colleagues. Moreover, 87 percent of Kentucky adults favor 100-percent tobacco-free policies for schools. HB11 passed unanimously out of the House Health and Family Services Committee on Feb. 7, and deserves to be called for a vote on the floor of the House.

Kentucky was making great headway in reducing youth tobacco use until the e-cigarette epidemic, making tobacco use socially acceptable again, especially among youth, including teens and adolescents who never considered using other types of tobacco products. Kentucky must move quickly to enact a statewide tobacco-free schools law, a strongly-supported, evidence-based measure to help address this epidemic. Kentucky's health and its budget simply cannot afford to allow a whole new generation of kids to become addicted to nicotine and face a lifetime of tobacco-related illness and disease.

We respectfully urge the Kentucky House of Representatives to call HB 11 for a vote on the House floor as soon as possible. Please do not sacrifice the health of all of our school children to the convenience of fewer than a quarter of Kentucky adults who use tobacco.

Toward a healthier Kentucky,

American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Baptist Health, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, Kentucky Cancer Foundation, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Council of Churches, Kentucky Equal Justice Center, Kentucky Health Collaborative, Kentucky Health Departments Association, Kentucky Hospital Association, Kentucky Medical Association, Kentucky School Boards Association, and Kentucky Youth Advocates.

i. <https://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/PublicHealthEducation/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/ucm405173.htm>

ii. <https://www.healthy-ky.org/newsroom/news-releases/article/265/kentucky-teens-say-e-cig-use-rampant-adults-unaware>

iii. <https://www.fda.gov/TobaccoProducts/PublicHealthEducation/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/ucm405173.htm>

iv. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3543069/>

v. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html

vi. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/teens-e-cigarettes>