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LETTER: Limiting teens' access to tobacco will save lives

By Craig Gaspard
Staff Director, BOLD Coalition
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This letter is in response to your March 1, Our View, "Smoke and mirrors." To expand on the beginning of the editorial, which correctly identifies Fall River as having very high smoking rates, not only for Fall River but also for the nation as a whole, and that the city would hardly be the first or even the fifth in the commonwealth to take a position limiting their availability, let's look at the consequences of continued inaction.

Using American Cancer Society statistics of 157,300 predicted lung cancer deaths — 90 percent of which are attributable to smoking — in the United States every year, that would translate into 50-60 deaths in Fall River alone, 45 or so from smoking.

Expanding tobacco use risk to all health effects, easily 100 to 125 people each year die of smoking-related illnesses in Fall River. That's more than two deaths each week. I bet most readers know a loved one who has died from this addiction. I know I do. Several scientifically based cancer studies also identify length of time smoking as being more important than number of cigarettes in determining the health risk.

Therefore, BOLD's desire to reduce access to tobacco products mainly in pharmacies in Fall River has, as its main goal, limiting access to underage smokers.

Many surveys report that most smokers begin their smoking dependency as youth!

Research has also proven time and again that limiting access and increasing costs are the best ways to keep cigarettes out of teenagers' hands. That and enforcing laws prohibiting their sale to minors can reduce young people from becoming dependent. I hope the readers can all agree that reducing young people becoming addicted in nicotine has merit.

I believe that your editorial misses the point that reducing access can and does limit sales to minors. As an ex-smoker, I know the challenges to quitting such a highly addictive, expensive and unhealthy product. The ordinance to be presented to the City Council tonight was initiated by us to prevent the pain, suffering and costs that early tobacco dependency starts. Perhaps young people have rights, too.

The Herald News is quick to defend their rights of the sellers of tobacco. Perhaps you should also consider the rights of youth to be tobacco- free.

Craig Gaspard
Staff Director
BOLD Coalition
Fall River

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Comments (7)
safado
3 weeks ago
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Isn't it illegal to sell tobacco products to minors - be it at a pharmacy, gas station or supermarket? If so, what right does the government have to deny pharmacists the same right to profits that other retailers enjoy? Don't get me wrong - I personally think tobacco should be banned, period. However, in the interim, let's not pick and choose which retailers can or can't sell the poison. BTW, is BOLD an acronym? If so, what is it?
JT
3 weeks ago
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Are there any statistics to show that in the 4 other Massachusetts communities that have instituted a similar ordinance that the number of smokers have decreased as a result. I highly doubt it. You are proposing that the sale of a legal product be banned in only certain retail settings.I am not a smoker but if I go to say the CVS on President Ave and they are not allowed to sell cigarettes and I wanted to buy some I would simply go to either the market or the liquor store located in the same plaza. It stops nothing. It simply discriminates against certain retailers.
medeiros38
3 weeks ago
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Is this issue really that big a deal?
A few less places for people to buy their cancer sticks.
Yes it is a legal product but yes we know for sure it kills people.
Billions of government dollars are spent every year on health care for poor people and welfare cases that make the choice to smoke and then come down with cancer or any of the other numerous diseases that people should be smart enough to know come from smoking.
So you make it a little more inconvenient for those people to buy their cancer sticks. If those people are going to complain about having a free choice as to where they can buy their cancer sticks then I want to have the freedom not to have my taxpayer dollars go toward their health care bills.
FRVMAN02
3 weeks ago
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Does this Bold Coalition receive taxpayer money if so maybe we should no longer fund this program since they want to regulate where legal cigarettes can be purchased we should have a say as to if they should get any funding .
DoWhatsRight
3 weeks ago
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Safado -- you are right on point. BOLD means 'Building Our Lives Drug Free'. They are publicly funded and are a noble cause. However, in this instance they have erred in involving themselves with an obvious violation of the Constitution. Banning an establishment from selling a legal item? Not good. Also, BOLD, if you are targeting youth then rather than illegally precluding these stores from selling a legal product, why don't you continue your focus on establishments that illegally sell to minors as you have been. This idea may have sounded wonderful at first glance for you guys, but it is ill advised and very obviously illegal. You need to rethink your efforts here... this is going to backfire AND do nothing whatsoever to preclude youth from obtaining smokes. Nothing! Bad bad idea as well as violative of free enterprise and the Constituion.
anawansrevenge
3 weeks ago
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The pharmacies are full of deadly drugs. Why single out one of them?
highball
2 weeks ago
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Where in the Constitution does is state the right to sell tobacco products in pharmacies. I must have missed that.
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