

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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PRESS RELEASE

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Massachusetts Senate Passes Omnibus Tobacco Bill

Legislation seeks to reduce tobacco use and nicotine addiction among youth and establish a uniform law across the Commonwealth

BOSTON – **Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** has announced that the Massachusetts Senate passed S. 2234, An Act to Protect Youth from the Health Risks of Tobacco and Nicotine Addiction, an omnibus bill that seeks to reduce tobacco use and nicotine addiction among youth. Among other provisions, the legislation will prohibit the sale of all tobacco and nicotine delivery products to individuals under the age of 21. The legislation received bi-partisan support, passing 32-2.

Senator Gobi supported a military exemption amendment that would have allowed anyone 18 and older with a military ID to continue to purchase tobacco; however the amendment was defeated 19-14. Gobi also supported an amendment that would have allowed retailers within 3 miles of a state whose law is 18, 19 or 20 years of age to sell at that state's legal limit, but the amendment was also defeated.

“Massachusetts has made tremendous strides in reducing youth smoking and implementing policies that limit the harmful impacts of tobacco and nicotine use, including our new regulations to prevent the sale of e-cigarettes to children,” said Attorney General Maura Healey. “Unfortunately, the tobacco industry continues to pose a serious public health risk to our residents. This legislation is an important step to further reduce nicotine addiction among young people.”

“Tobacco kills more Americans annually than car accidents, alcohol, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides - combined,” said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst). “That’s why today the Senate took action to further curtail access to this harmful substance and reduce youth tobacco use. I hope other states around the country follow our lead, and I look forward to working with the House and Governor Baker to move this important policy forward.”

Tobacco and nicotine use remains the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in Massachusetts, requiring the Commonwealth and our residents to spend more than \$4 billion in healthcare related costs each year. Smoking practices begin at a young age; a 2015 report from

the Institute of Medicine found that 9 out of 10 daily smokers first tried a cigarette before age 19. This omnibus tobacco bill was created to prevent teenagers from starting to smoke by removing sources of tobacco and nicotine delivery products from their reach.

The Commonwealth has collectively made progress in reducing rates of youth smoking; according to the Center for Disease Control, cigarette smoking among high school students in Massachusetts has declined from 21% in 2005 to 11% in 2013. However, the tobacco industry is changing and innovating, introducing new products and marketing strategies directed to appeal to youth. As a result, the Commonwealth now faces growing use by young people of other nicotine delivery products such as e-cigarettes; according to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, use of e-cigarettes among high school students has risen alarmingly from 2% in 2011 to 13% in 2014.

Worcester pediatrician Lynda Young, M.D., Chair of Tobacco Free Mass, said “We applaud moving this critically important bill forward. Enactment of this bill will be a giant step forward for public health, as it will have an immediate, positive impact on the well-being of our young people. We urge its quick passage by the legislature.”

This bill also:

- Responsibly regulates nicotine delivery products such as e-cigarettes by prohibiting their use at schools, including vocational schools and technical institutes, and in any workplace;
- Requires child-resistant packaging for e-cigarettes;
- Prohibits tobacco vending machines;
- Prohibits the sale of all tobacco and nicotine delivery products in pharmacies and other healthcare institutions;
- Grants the Department of Public Health the authority to regulate new, emerging tobacco and nicotine delivery products; and,
- Requires the Center for Health Information and Analysis to study the current tobacco cessation benefits offered by commercial insurers, MassHealth, and the Government Insurance Commission to determine how these benefit levels compare to CDC guidelines and best practices.

These provisions were adopted into the omnibus legislation from eight specific tobacco-related bills that were heard by the Joint Committee on Public Health. The legislation will now move to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

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