



GRAND RAPIDS HIGH SCHOOL  
COUNSELING OFFICE

800 NW Conifer Drive  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-2499

218-327-5770  
Fax 218-327-5761

October 6, 2016

Dear Terry Snyder, Itasca County Commissioner,

We support the current proposal to prohibit people from using e-cigarettes in restaurants, workplaces and other indoor public spaces in Itasca County. This move would treat e-cigarettes the same as conventional cigarettes under the county's Clean Indoor Air policy.

Collectively we have 50 years of school counseling experience, averaging over 12 years individually, in the Grand Rapids Public School district. We have seen first-hand the negative impact tobacco has on the students in our schools (middle level and high school). We have also seen a significant spike in the popularity of e-cigarettes.

The increase in e-cigarette use was dramatic enough to lead to a new question on the Minnesota Student Survey which is conducted every 3 years. In 2013 there was no mention of e-cigarettes on the section titled "Tobacco Use" and in 2016 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were asked how many days in the last 30 they had used an e-cigarette. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade 6% of boys and 10% of girls had used one at least 1-2 days. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade 14% of boys and 17% of girls had and in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade 11% of boys and 23% of girls had used an e-cigarette at least one day out of 30 and up to daily for 2% of 11<sup>th</sup> grade girls!

Allowing e-cigarettes in public places can contribute to a re-normalization of smoking-like behavior. Far fewer kids smoke today than a decade ago but, according to the Minnesota Student Survey, this is changing for all types of tobacco use. There was increased use in 11<sup>th</sup> grade males and females for cigarette, cigars/cigarettos, and chewing tobacco on the 2016 survey as compared to the 2013. In considering this along with the dramatic increase in use and acceptance of e-cigarettes, we cannot help question whether there is a shift in perception of tobacco use as being more socially acceptable that's coming from the popularity of e-cigarettes.

The proposed prohibition on e-cigarette use in restaurants, workplaces and other public indoor spaces will help keep kids safe and our indoor air clean. Twenty-one counties and thirty cities in Minnesota have added e-cigarettes to their clean indoor air policies. Thank you for taking this important measure here in Itasca County.

Sincerely,

Sheila Anderson, Nathan Elsen, Carrie Fowler, Teresa Stephens – Grand Rapids High School Counselors