

Letter of Support

21056 Shallow Lake Road
Warba, MN 55793

October 13, 2016

Dear Itasca Board of Commissioners:

I support the 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.

I was a school counselor in Grand Rapids for 25 years and have first hand experience in seeing the impact of tobacco products on students and on their families. The impact on the health of students and their parents, the cost of smoking which takes resources away from the family, and the academic impact when a student is disciplined for tobacco use is significant.

E-cigarettes are a new technology and are not yet regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Because they are so new and their content is currently unregulated, we simply don't know what their long-term effects may be. Studies have shown that e-cigarette aerosol contains heavy metals, formaldehyde and other carcinogens. Permitting people to exhale that toxic cocktail of chemicals into our shared air is not acceptable. It is only fair to prohibit people from using e-cigarettes in indoor public spaces where others may be exposed to the aerosol without their consent.

The Minnesota Student Survey is given every 3 years to all Minnesota students and provides long term trends in a great many fields regarding safety and health both statewide and by district. In 2016 for the first time an e-cigarette question was included, asking about use in the past 30 days. At Robert J Elkington Middle School, 6% of eighth grade boys and 10% of eighth grade girls had used an e-cigarette at least 1-2 days. At Grand Rapids High School in ninth grade, 14% of the boys and 17% of the girls had, and in the 11th grade, 11% of the boys and 23% of the girls had. In addition 2% of the 11th grade girls admitted to daily use! We may assume that these schools reflect the trend in all Itasca County students, though you may want to ask for data from other schools.

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. It will block the re-normalization of smoking-like behavior. Twenty-one counties and thirty cities in Minnesota have added e-cigarettes to their clean indoor air policies. I encourage you all to vote to add e-cigarettes to the Clean Indoor Air policy and take a stand for a healthier Minnesota. I will be watching the outcome closely.

Sincerely,
Jan Bilden