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September 13, 2016

Dear Itasca Board of Commissioners;

On behalf of The Physician Advocacy Network, a project of the Twin Cities Medical Society, 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.

Twin Cities Medical Society has worked in tobacco control and prevention for over 20 years. Our members have seen first-hand the negative impact tobacco has on members of our community. We have also seen the spike in popularity of e-cigarettes.

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.

Allowing e-cigarettes in public places can also contribute to a re-normalization of smoking-like behavior. Far fewer kids smoke today than a decade ago and many kids don't even remember when there was such a thing as a "smoking section" in restaurants. Why would we want to reverse this healthy societal shift by making e-cigarette use appear publicly acceptable?

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 up this important measure here in Itasca. We will be watching the outcome closely.

Sincerely,

Pete Dehnel, MD
Medical Director
Physician Advocacy Network

Carolyn McClain, MD
President
Twin Cities Medical Society