

# public citizens for children + youth

Public Citizens for Children and Youth  
Testimony before Philadelphia City Council Finance Committee on Bill #180522

June 6, 2018

Thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell, and members of the Finance Committee for this opportunity to discuss Bill #180522 that seeks to limit the power of the Board of Health to regulate permits and locations of tobacco retailers and, consequently, increase children's exposure to cigarette marketing and potentially increase their cigarette use as well. My name is Colleen McCauley, and I am the Health Policy Director at Public Citizens for Children and Youth.

I am also a registered nurse, and for 10 years I helped manage a Federally Qualified Health Center in the Abbottsford Homes public housing community. From my experience at Abbottsford, I can tell you that in addition to caring for seniors struggling with a variety of serious health problems related to cigarette smoking, I also cared for way too many middle-aged adults with adult asthma, congestive heart failure, exacerbation of their diabetes and cancer. I provided the smoking cessation services too, and I can tell you that every person I worked with told me they started smoking as a kid, and they wished they'd never picked up a cigarette in the first place.

As you know, cigarette smoking is now banned in public housing not only in Philadelphia but in HUD properties across the country. So when it comes to establishing pro-public health, tobacco-related ordinances to protect children and adults alike, we should be taking a page out of HUD's book – and this bill is not in that book.

Back in 2016, PCCY publicly supported the Board of Public Health's common-sense measures to protect children from the deadly and addictive properties of tobacco which included limiting the number and locations of retailers near schools and initiating a standard penalty for repeatedly selling tobacco to minors. This bill would effectively reverse these protections by allowing new retailers near schools in areas that are already densely populated with tobacco sales. Thousands of retailers who were ineligible for tobacco retail permits would be able to get them if this bill is passed, including those with a known history of selling tobacco to children. How in good conscience can we let this happen?

**This bill hits Philadelphia's poorest children hardest, leaving them more vulnerable to tobacco marketing and starting smoking as a youth.** This bill will increase tobacco retailers operating in the City's low-income neighborhoods, which already have nearly 70% more tobacco retailers *overall* and over 60% more retailers *within 500 feet of schools* compared to higher income neighborhoods. There is also evidence that tobacco retailers near schools frequently place more marketing materials near candy and other child-centric products than retailers in other locations.

**Adding insult to injury, Philadelphia has the highest youth tobacco sales violation rate in Pennsylvania.** In 2015, almost 1 in 4 Philadelphia tobacco retailers sold tobacco to youth, more



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than twice the state average. It bears repeating that this bill would allow tobacco retailers who have sold to children in the past obtain permits and sell tobacco near schools.

**Tobacco use is currently the leading cause of death in Philadelphia, and we have got to turn this around for our city's youngest residents.** I live in West Philly, and I don't want my 15 year old son or your child or your grandchild or any Philly youth to be unduly enticed in their neighborhood on their way to school to pick up a tobacco product, risk becoming addicted and eventually die from using it. My job and our 'job' generally as adults is to lay a foundation for children to thrive and succeed. I believe this bill impedes our job, and I urge you to reject it.