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Town of Bethlehem Passes New Law to License Tobacco Retailers and Disallow the Sale of Vape Products Near Schools

BETHLEHEM, N.Y. – Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities and Town of Bethlehem residents applaud the Bethlehem Town Board for passing today new measures to protect its residents, especially children and young people, from the impact of tobacco marketing. The new law will require a local license for retailers to sell tobacco and vape products and will gradually decrease the number of licenses available. In addition, tobacco retailers located within 1000 feet of schools will no longer be allowed to sell vape products.

The law comes after the Town undertook an extensive review of policy options after a vape shop applied to locate directly in front of Elsmere Elementary School in 2019. The Town solicited written comments on the proposed law and held public hearings virtually on May 27 and June 10. About a dozen residents submitted comments and all expressed support for the proposal, many citing the desire to address the youth vaping epidemic and to create a healthier environment for their children.

"I fully believe that where we learn and where we live matters to our health. Having tobacco retailers market their products near places frequented by children says tobacco products are normal, everyday products rather than what they really are—products that when used as directed sickens and kills," said Alyssa Joseph, Bethlehem resident. ***"I thank the Town Board for listening to me and the voices of the other residents and taking action to protect the health of our community."***

The purpose of the law includes the findings that:

- Tobacco product marketing causes youth initiation and thwarts cessation attempts by the majority of users who want to quit.
- E-cigarettes and similar devices pose health hazards and renormalize tobacco use, regardless of nicotine content.
- Tobacco products are highly addictive and inherently toxic and should not be treated as a benign consumer product, readily available in every store.

"Despite all the progress we have made, tobacco use continues to be an urgent public health challenge. With the passage of this local law, the Town of Bethlehem has taken a significant step to make tobacco products less accessible and appealing to young people and to smokers who want to quit," said Judy Rightmyer, Director of Capital District-Tobacco Free Communities. "They join a growing number of municipalities that are choosing to improve community health by reducing the impact of tobacco marketing."

Municipalities throughout New York state have passed laws restricting the sale of tobacco products through limiting the location, number and type of outlets that can sell tobacco products, as well as regulating price discounting. For a full list of New York local laws affecting the retail sale of tobacco products, see the [Public Health and Tobacco Policy Center's New York Communities Taking Action](#).

About Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities Capital District Tobacco-Free Communities (CDTFC) is a NYS Bureau of Tobacco Control grant funded program held by St. Peter's Health Partners. CDTFC works to increase support for New York State's tobacco-free norm through youth action and community engagement. Efforts are evidence-based, policy-driven, and cost-effective approaches that decrease youth tobacco use, motivate adult smokers to quit, and eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. Visit www.SmokeFreeCapital.org for more information.

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