



Date: March 19, 2026

To: Chair Aragona and Members of the House Regulatory Reform Committee

From: Rachel Richards, Fiscal Policy & Government Relations Director, Michigan League for Public Policy

Subject: Support for HB 5368-5372 (Wortz, Slagh, Scott, Young) – Protect MI Kids: Strengthen Laws on Youth Tobacco

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The Michigan League for Public Policy is pleased to support House Bills 5368-5372 (Wortz, Slagh, Scott, Young), which are part of an important bipartisan package to improve Michigan's laws that keep harmful tobacco products out of the hands of our youth. Reducing young peoples' access to tobacco products will help reduce tobacco-related deaths, reduce healthcare costs and improve long-term health outcomes for Michiganders statewide.

The League is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization that promotes economic opportunity for all and analyzes the impact of public policy and budget decisions on the lives of Michiganders who have been systemically left out of prosperity. The League is also the state's Kids Count organization, working as a part of a national effort to measure child well-being at the state and local levels and use that information to shape public policies and programs to improve the lives of children and their families.

Despite long-term declines in the percentage of children using tobacco, use of tobacco products – including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaporizing devices and other tobacco products – among Michigan youth remains too high, especially among high school students. Unfortunately, many of these students gain access to tobacco products while in middle school. Michigan students report getting tobacco products, especially e-cigarettes, not only from friends and family but also by purchasing them from convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores and vape shops. And children are bombarded with tobacco products and ads when they go to these stores, watch movies or surf the internet. In all, despite the gains we have made, youth exposure to tobacco products, whether at home, in school or out in the community, remains too widespread and access to tobacco products remains too easy.

These five bills are important parts of a vital package to strengthen Michigan's laws to stop illegal sales, hold retailers accountable and keep addictive tobacco products out of the hands of our children. House Bills 5368-5370, sponsored by Representatives Wortz and Slagh, will require the licensure and regulation of tobacco retailers, just like we license alcohol and marijuana retailers. Tobacco products are widely available in Michigan, including at tobacco and vape

Using data to educate, advocate and fight for policy solutions that undo historic and systemic racial and economic inequities to lift up Michiganders who have been left out of prosperity.

shops, but also at convenience stores, grocery stores, gas stations and other shops. This makes it difficult to track and limit the sales of tobacco products in individual communities and statewide. Additionally, Michigan is one of only nine states that does not require a license to sell e-cigarettes, tobacco products (not including e-cigarettes) or both. These bills will allow Michigan to join the majority of states, including all of our Great Lakes neighbors, that require licensing of retailers. By doing so, Michigan would have a deeper ability to track tobacco sales, enforce tobacco laws and reduce access to tobacco products by Michigan's youth.

House Bills 5371 and 5372, sponsored by Representatives Scott and Young, will repeal the ineffective and inequitable "purchase, use and possession" (PUP) laws that penalize the youths purchasing tobacco products rather than the companies that market and sell them to youths. Penalizing children is not an effective strategy for reducing youth smoking, and PUP laws often disproportionately harm youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth and youth from low-income communities, all of whom are aggressively targeted for tobacco marketing. It is also more challenging to enforce PUP laws than it is to enforce laws that restrict sales to minors. Instead, we should be focusing our enforcement on stopping the illegal sale of these products by retailers to minors. Recent surveys continue to show that the majority of underage kids who try to buy tobacco products are not refused the sale because of their age, meaning that sellers of these products are either not checking to make sure they aren't selling harmful cigarettes, e-cigarettes or other tobacco products to children or that they are checking but still allow the sale to go through, therefore knowingly selling to underage children.

While these bills will go a long way to bring Michigan in line with other states, especially neighboring ones, we also urge the committee to consider legislation that would increase the taxes on tobacco products (which haven't been adjusted in years), tax vapor products, and increase dedicated support to tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Michigan is one of only 16 states – and the only state in the Great Lakes region – that does not tax vapor products. Michigan also ranks at the bottom of states – and nowhere near what the Centers for Disease Control recommend – in our state spending on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, and these bills are necessary to ensure sufficient funding for important programs.

We are pleased to support the package and urge the Legislature's swift action on these bills.