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House Passes First-in-the-Nation Legislation to Modernize Tobacco Control

Bans all flavored tobacco products, taxes vaping products

Nov. 15, 2019 – BOSTON – This week, **Representative Michelle Ciccolo (D-Lexington)**, along with her colleagues in the House of Representatives, passed legislation to ban all flavored tobacco products and tax vaping products in an effort to protect young people from the harmful effects of tobacco use.

Known as *An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control*, the legislation also requires commercial health insurers and MassHealth to cover tobacco cessation counseling and all nicotine replacement therapies with generics offered without any copays. The flavor ban includes menthol cigarettes and restricts the sale of products with higher nicotine levels to those over 21.

“In keeping with our focus on youth wellness this session, the House took a nation-leading step today to modernize our laws that regulate tobacco,” said **House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo, (D – Winthrop)**. “By prohibiting the sale of all flavored products, we are making tobacco less enticing for young people, while also making it easier for people to access the tools they need to quit tobacco use. This truly is a public health crisis that requires a bold step, and I thank Chair Mahoney and Chair Gregoire for their important work on this issue. This legislation will save lives.”

“With teenage smoking rates on the rise in recent years, it was imperative that we in the General Court take action to combat this epidemic,” said **Representative Ciccolo**. “As an original cosponsor of the measure, I was happy to support *An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control* and vote for it as it moved out of the Joint Committee on Public Health, of which I am a member. I was even more pleased to see it pass so overwhelmingly in the full House of Representatives.”

In Massachusetts, 9,300 adults die annually from smoking, and more than 20 percent of high school students report having used vaping products. More than 80 percent of teens who have used a tobacco product started with a flavored product, such as mint or menthol. The

Massachusetts Department of Public Health has reported three vaping-related deaths to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In Massachusetts, smoking is estimated to cost more than \$4 billion in direct health care costs annually.

The bill will now go to the Senate.

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