
Sponsor: Public Health

Meeting Date: 10/12/2021

Title: Minimum Floor Price on Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco in Ramsey County

File Number: 2021-585

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County is committed to being a vibrant community where all are valued and thrive and seeks to strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being through prevention and early intervention. Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease and death, and Public Health, acting in the health interests of both the residents of the city of Saint Paul and Ramsey County, seeks to reduce tobacco use rates and tobacco-related disease prevalence among adults and youth. Long-term tobacco use is directly related to many illnesses, including lung, oral and pharyngeal cancer, heart disease, and lung diseases such as emphysema and bronchitis. People who receive price discounting coupons and promotions are more likely to start using tobacco and less likely to stop.

Increasing the price of tobacco products is important:

- In 2018, tobacco companies spent \$9.1 billion to reduce the price of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco for consumers (Federal Trade Commission, 2019).
- In Minnesota, adult smokers who redeemed cigarette coupons were less likely to quit smoking than those who didn't use coupons (Choi, et al., 2013; Choi & Forester, 2014; Slater, et al., 2007).
- Price is the most effective tool in reducing smoking in adults and preventing youth from starting.
- Studies have shown that a \$10 per pack retail price and regulating discounts could result in (Marynak, et al., 2016):
 - 637,270 fewer smokers aged 12-17 years
 - 4,186,954 fewer smokers aged 18-25 years
 - 7,722,460 fewer smokers aged 26 and older
- When prices are higher, tobacco use decreases, especially among youth and low-income smokers. It prevents youth from starting and helps people quit (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014; Institute of Medicine, 1998).

Prohibiting the redemption of coupons and promotions on all tobacco products is important:

- Tobacco companies use coupons and retail promotions to lower the price of products, making them much more appealing to youth and young adults.
- About 50 percent of Minnesota smokers have used tobacco coupons or promotions in the past year to save money on cigarettes and one-third of adult smokers use tobacco coupons or discounts every time they see one (Choi, et al., 2013; White, et al., 2006).
- Coupons also undermine smokers' attempts to quit. Minnesota adult smokers who redeemed cigarette coupons were less likely to quit smoking than those who didn't use coupons (Choi, et al., 2013; Choi & Forester, 2014; Slater, et al., 2007).
- Doing a complete ban on redemption of coupons and promotions would also apply to electronic cigarettes, which are known to be more commonly used among youth. Because there are so many electronic cigarette products available, banning the redemption of

coupons and promotions would help keep the price of these products high.

The impacts to racially and ethnically diverse and other underrepresented communities because of price discounting are important:

- Price discounting is targeted at communities disproportionately impacted by the harms of tobacco: African Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, women, youth, and low-income populations.
- Because of the harms caused by tobacco products, these communities experience tobacco-related illnesses at greater rates.
 - Lower-income populations have less access to health care, making it more likely that they are diagnosed at later stages of diseases and conditions (CDC, 2019).
 - LGBT individuals are less likely to have health insurance than straight individuals, which may negatively affect health as well as access to cessation treatments, including counseling and medication (CDC, 2019).
- Keeping tobacco prices low means people of color and low-income communities will continue to experience health disparities and inequities.

Between October 6 and 27, 2021, the Saint Paul City Council will review and vote on a proposed ordinance to ban tobacco price discounting in Saint Paul. This ordinance proposes that the city of Saint Paul require a minimum floor price on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco and ban the redemption of coupons on all tobacco products. A resolution from the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners would help advise and support this proposed ordinance and future Ramsey County cities and municipalities that wish to pass similar ordinances.

Public Health, in partnership with the Association for Non-Smokers Rights Minnesota, supports a minimum floor price on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco and a ban on the redemption of coupons and in-store discounts on all tobacco products. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners has previously taken actions to regulate tobacco and smoking to promote public health and community well-being as additional data and information about the harmful effects of smoking have emerged. This includes adoption of the Ramsey County Clean Indoor Air Ordinance in 2015 and the support of municipal restrictions on menthol tobacco products to adult only access in 2017.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

Support a minimum floor price on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco and ban the redemption of coupons and in-store discounts on all tobacco products in Ramsey County.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner MatasCastillo, seconded by Commissioner Frethem.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

Absent: - 1: McDonough

By: 

Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board