



**RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT**  
ONE UNION STATION  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903  
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

**Testimony Re: H7725 Tobacco Control Enabling Legislation**  
**House Housing and Municipal Government Committee**  
**April 12, 2022**  
**Kaitlyn Rabb, Policy Analyst**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 7725. This bill would give cities and towns throughout Rhode Island the ability to pass and enforce local tobacco control laws. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to thank Representative Cortvriend for sponsoring this bill and thank the cosponsors, Representatives Knight, Tanzi, Speakman, Kislak, Cassar, Caldwell, and Henries.



**Tobacco control policies in RI**

Beginning in 1988, when tobacco was included in health education to March 2020 when RI permanently banned the sale of flavored vaping products through now, our state has continued to prioritize tobacco control. Also included on this timeline are public health measures that we now take for granted but that weren't always the norm, such as smoking being prohibited in school buildings, indoor smoking being banned, the minimum tobacco sale age being set to 18, insurance companies being mandated to cover smoking cessation programs, and cigarette taxes. This graphic demonstrates that tobacco control has been a priority in RI for decades and that we have made much progress to reduce youth tobacco use, although a significant amount of work still lies ahead of us.

**Cities and towns can better address tobacco control at the community level and meet the needs of their communities.**

Our federal and state governments are composed of diverse constituencies, and policies adopted on a broad national or state level do not always address

health equity and issues unique to our local communities. To address community-specific public health issues, it is therefore important that local communities retain the power to adopt public health measures tailored to their needs. From a health equity standpoint, the use of local knowledge to forge community-specific solutions enables localities to employ a targeted approach to combat health disparities and ensure equitable access to better public health. Additionally, public health policies are most likely to succeed when they are adopted in a democratic process that ensures meaningful and direct engagement by the people most affected. Localities are in the best position to provide this type of engagement with community stakeholders and residents.

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports H7725 which would give municipalities the power to not only enact but also enforce local policies to address tobacco control on the community level.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

