

# Why Tobacco Retail Licensing Matters

**Background.** We are in the midst of a youth vaping epidemic. We know that nicotine is addictive, and vaping can lead to future cigarette smoking. Far too many kids are putting themselves at risk for a lifetime of nicotine addiction and severe health problems.

The Colorado Springs City Council is encouraged to pass legislation which will:

1. Require retailers to obtain a license to sell tobacco products;
2. Increase the minimum legal sales age to 21 years for all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices, including refillable cartridges; and
3. Create an enforcement program that holds tobacco retail businesses responsible for breaking tobacco-related laws, by means of fines and/or suspension of the license.

**Tobacco 21 and Retail Licensing.** In places that have raised the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21, rates of teen tobacco use and vaping have decreased by 25 to 45%. To be effective, the age limit for tobacco sales needs to be enforced. Requiring a tobacco retail license (TRL) is a proven way to enforce the legal age for tobacco sales, by means of fines or suspension of the license. The fee for the license should fund the licensing, enforcement, and retailer education efforts.

**Colorado House Bill 20-1001.** Introduced on January 8, 2020, Colorado House Bill 20-1001 provides for statewide licensing and regulation of businesses that sell cigarettes, tobacco products, and nicotine products. It sets a statewide minimum standard upon which locals can build, and provides for coordination with communities that enact local TRL. However, passage of HB 20-1001 is not guaranteed, and local laws will still provide the strongest enforcement. 9 out of 11 Colorado communities with local tobacco retail licensing have demonstrated strong reductions in illegal sales.

## Why should communities pass local TRL legislation?

Implementation and enforcement of a local tobacco retail license allows for:

- Comprehensive enforcement of federal, state, and local tobacco laws
- Accurate tracking of every tobacco retailer in the community
- Inspections and compliance checks at every store in the community
- Allocation of local licensing fees to local retailer education and enforcement

## Shouldn't local communities wait for State and Federal government action?

No. Colorado House Bill 20-1001, if passed, would not be implemented until July 1, 2021. Federal enforcement for Tobacco 21 will not be in place until late 2020, and federal enforcement has been weak in the past. Colorado Springs should act now to address the teen vaping epidemic.