



**RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION®**

**Matt Maloney, Director of Health Policy, Respiratory Health Association**

Good evening members of the Cook County Board. I am Matt Maloney, Director of Health Policy for Respiratory Health Association, a 109 year-old Chicago-based non-profit organization committed to healthy lungs and the fight against lung disease.

The Cook County Board has made great strides in tobacco control through taxes and the innovative outreach being done by the Cook County Department of Public Health. RHA has supported tobacco tax increases by Cook County as a win-win for taxpayers. These policies raise revenue for the County and improve health outcomes by decreasing tobacco use. While tobacco use has not stopped altogether, we should all be proud that the smoking rates in our area are now the lowest they have been since record-keeping began.

I am here today to speak in support of the proposed tax on what are known as e-cigarettes, those little vaporizer devices that deliver nicotine to our young people and promote yet another generation of smoking behavior in our county.

From 2011 to 2014, use of e-cigarettes increased nationally nine-fold for high school students and more than six-fold for middle school students. Recent studies published by the American Medical Association found that kids who use e-cigarettes are more likely to start smoking traditional cigarettes a year later.

The increased youth use of e-cigarettes poses a grave public health concern.

For purposes of the proposed tax before you, we need not enter the debate over the safety of these products, which are unregulated and contain nicotine, heavy metals, ultrafine particles, and other carcinogens. You should know that e-cigarettes are not a recognized tobacco cessation product and that e-cigarette vapor is not just water vapor.

You should also know that when it comes to tobacco, increasing the price is one of the most effective means of reducing youth smoking uptake. Every 10 percent increase in cigarette prices reduces youth smoking by about seven percent and total cigarette consumption by about four percent. Given the considerable data on youth price sensitivity to traditional tobacco products, we would also expect a tax on e-cigarettes to deter youth use.

This proposal will help the County achieve health and revenue gains. By enacting an e-cigarette tax, the Cook County Board will be taking the next necessary step to protect our youth from new or prolonged nicotine addiction. Cook County would show itself to be leader that puts children's health over the interests of the tobacco industry.