

January 23, 2019

Cook County Commissioners: I am Dr. Don Zeigler of Evanston, IL. I address you as Chair of the Evanston Health Advisory Council, Heart Association volunteer, and on the School of Public Health faculty at UIC and Loyola University.

Since the 1st Surgeon General's report on *Smoking and Health* in 1964 smoking rates in the U.S. have decreased dramatically. However, it remains the number one preventable cause of death killing nearly half a million Americans each year and costing almost \$200 billion in health care expenses and lost productivity annually. One in five people who die today in Cook County die because of tobacco-related illnesses. Costly, regrettable, and totally preventable. You can change that.

Tobacco companies spend millions to allure youth to their deadly products. 95% of all adult smokers begin smoking before age 21. The 18-21 age range is a time when many smokers transition to regular, daily tobacco users having a heightened susceptibility to the addictive effects of nicotine. Now vaping by our youth is exploding – leading to rapid addiction.

Not sitting back, Evanston adopted Tobacco 21 in 2014 - the first city in the entire Midwest to do so – followed by Columbia, Missouri. Eight states and hundreds of cities and counties have done so including 35 Illinois communities. 10 of our 135 incorporated municipalities in Cook County passed Tobacco 21 - leaving the rest to your action.

Evanston now has significantly lower tobacco use by our youth than our neighboring communities. Evanston retailers are complying and none has gone out of business. Research shows that sales to those 18-20 represent 2% of tobacco sales - so adopting Tobacco21 has minimal impact on business.

When we adopt Tobacco 21 far fewer of our youth get hooked and are less likely to start. I know you've heard that our youth can fight for our country so why can't they buy a cigarette or vape? Because the Department of Defense itself is very concerned about the impact of tobacco use on military readiness. When Hawaii adopted Tobacco21 military bases there opted to comply fully with the higher age in recognition of its benefits to readiness, health and finances.

Commissioners, adopt Tobacco21 for the entire County. This is "low hanging fruit" – simple, easy, good public policy that protects our young people from preventable health problems and reduces the future health burden that the County must care for.

Do your jobs and pass this measure NOW without delay!

Sincerely, Donald W. Zeigler, PhD  
Chair, Evanston Health Advisory Council  
Member, Illinois Advocacy Committee, American Heart/Stroke Associations  
Adjunct Associate Professor  
School of Public Health  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
C: 847-989-4908      donaldz@uic.edu