

2/1/19 Testimony in favor of HB19-1033 by Greg Poschman, Chair Pitkin County Board of Commissioners, Pitkin County Board of Health.

Dear Honored Chair Lontine and Committee members,

I am a Pitkin County Commissioner and I sit on our local board of health. I was shocked to learn that our three-county area on the western slope is among the highest in teen use of tobacco and nicotine products,- not only in the state of Colorado, but in the 37 states surveyed in the most recent Healthy Kids survey. According to the survey, Colorado kids are possibly the entire country's highest users. This should be surprising, in light of the image we Coloradans proudly promote as one of the healthiest states in the country.

Municipalities in our extended community are passing T21 bills to increase the legal age for purchase of tobacco and nicotine products to 21. Basalt, Carbondale and Aspen, Colorado passed it, Snowmass village will pass it next month... But the counties lack such authority at present, and our kids have only to leave the city limit to buy tobacco and vaping products. These measures will be ineffective at combating the high incidence of tobacco use and vaping among kids.- unless counties can close the loopholes, regulate, license and enforce sensible laws on nicotine.

We live in a world where dangerous new varieties and methods of self-medication are getting easier for children to acquire. But we know that if we can keep a child from picking up smoking before age 21, it dramatically cuts the propensity of that young person to become addicted to nicotine.

At public testimony before the FDA just 10 days ago, Dr. Susanne Tanski, former chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said, " These products deliver very high levels of nicotine, meaning that even brief experimentation is likely to put adolescents at risk for long term dependence." She also testified that, "There is virtually no data on how to treat an adolescent with e-cigarette dependence."

*(<https://www.thisinsider.com/fda-drug-therapy-teenage-vaping-tobacco-epidemic-2019-1>)

We must combat the big- tobacco and vaping companies, with their marketing budgets, and tactics targeted at youth. If I may remind you, Big Tobacco has known about and capitalized on youth nicotine addiction for decades.

An infamous RJ Reynolds tobacco company memo reads:: "If a man has never smoked by age 18, the odds are three-to-one he never will. By age 24, the odds are twenty to one." RJ Reynolds own research may be the best argument to reduce nicotine use by our kids.

*(RJ Reynolds report: "Estimated change in Industry Trend Following Federal Excise Tax Increase," Sept, 1982)

As a county commissioner and representative of the state of Colorado for my constituents, I can tell you how frustrating it is to not have parity with the municipalities. The urban areas, where

most of the population are, support T21. Not having the same rules in the county actually thwarts the will of the majority who want to see uniform and effective regulation....Counties must have the ability to regulate sales of these products. If the counties had retail licencing ability, we could pass T21 with "teeth", throughout the community.. The opposers of this bill should know, the counties don't want businesses outside the city limits to fail. We want to partner with them in the common goal of keeping tobacco products out of the hands of youth.

I call attention to the role county public health directors serve in the community. They look at a county in its ENTIRETY when working in the realm of emergency management, workforce housing and PUBLIC HEALTH. Counties and cities collaborate on community goals. This bill is our opportunity to work together for the health of our children- a bill that will positively affect their health for the rest of their lives.