

Good Evening Mayor, City Council Members & City Officials
Agenda ITEM 7(c). Speaker Ma

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Council Meeting of: 5:15PM,
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Agenda Item: PUBLIC STATEMENTS 5-A
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TRL 6/21/2023 Public Comment

START: The Bakersfield American Indian Health Project believes that a comprehensive community strategy for reducing youth access to commercial tobacco products such as cigarettes, chew, snuff, e-cigarettes, and vapes, requires having a Tobacco Retailer License (TRL).

yes: A TRL will reduce youth access, uptake, and use while supporting breaking the cycle of addiction to harmful commercial tobacco and nicotine products among American Indian community members. A TRL helps protect the sacred relationship that many Indigenous communities in California have with tobacco. California Tribal communities have traditionally held a cultural and sacred relationship with tobacco that spans generations from pre-contact – oftentimes, tobacco was used as an offering to the Creator, used for healing, gifted out of respect, and used for smudging. Youth access to commercial tobacco products is an affront to American Indian cultural tobacco practices and traditions.

Commercial tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States and its use is inconsistent with a supportive and healthy lifestyle. American Indian people have some of the highest commercial tobacco use rates among all ethnicities in CA. In Kern County, which is the Bakersfield American Indian Health Project's service coverage area the smoking rate for AIAN is 30%, nearly three times the state prevalence. Regionally, in the Southern Central Valley (Kern, Kings, and Tulare counties), the smoking rate for AIAN adults is at 40.7%.

Commercial tobacco use causes health disparities related to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease – both from commercial tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. These disparities are driven, in part by a predatory industry that targets youth and uses Native American imagery on their products and in their advertisements and through the direct targeting of Tribal communities in the United States.

Many electronic delivery devices, commonly known as electronic cigarettes, resemble and purposefully mimic the act of smoking, and specifically entice youth with candy, fruit, and juice like flavors. They produce an aerosol of undetermined and harmful substances to the user and non-users and typically contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance, most of which is derived from commercial tobacco.

The use of electronic delivery devices re-normalizes tobacco use, risks secondhand exposure for non-users, and makes current law enforcement more difficult. Electronic cigarettes were developed in the last 20 years and like cigarettes which were developed in the late 1800s are NOT part of traditional use of tobacco for Tribal communities.

A recent study from the American Cancer Society shows that E-cigarette use increased between 2014 and 2018 among younger U.S. adults **who had never smoked combustible cigarettes**, potentially increasing nicotine addiction risk and progression to combustible tobacco products.

Research also demonstrates that commercial tobacco use is a threat to the health of everyone, both users and non-users. Decreasing youth access to commercial tobacco will reduce the prevalence of tobacco-related illness, and tobacco-related health conditions. Decreasing youth

access to commercial tobacco also reduces tobacco product waste, which harms the earth – cigarette butts, plastic packaging, plastic tips for cigars and cigarillos and disposable electronic cigarettes are commonly littered and continue to pollute soil, water, and air for days to years after they are littered.

- In AIAN Culture, there is a Seventh Generation Principle. This philosophy promotes that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future. Your vote today will help promote a sustainable future for seven generations.