

https://www.postandcourier.com/health/sc-fails-tobacco-prevention-analysis-lacks-measures-to-protect-kids-from-smoking/article_517caod6-9cca-11ed-9998-9b12c32e57e2.html

SC fails tobacco prevention analysis, lacks measures to protect kids from smoking

BY TOM CORWIN TCORWIN@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

JAN 25, 2023



South Carolina got an F on a tobacco-control report card from the American Lung Association for its lack of funding and enforcement that could help prevent kids from starting smoking. Rep. Beth Bernstein, D-Columbia, has filed a bill requiring tobacco sellers to obtain a state licenses so the industry can be more easily regulated. File/AP

FILE/DANIEL OCHOA DE LOZA/AP

South Carolina flunked the latest report card on its efforts to control tobacco use and prevent children from starting smoking or vaping, a national advocacy group said.

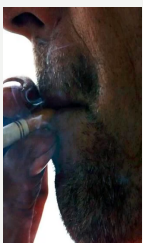
A large contributor is that the Palmetto State is one of the few that don't regulate tobacco or nicotine sellers and lacks enforcement to protect children, advocates said.

In its "State of Tobacco Control 2023," the American Lung Association gives the state an F in most areas, notably in applying funds intended for tobacco control for that purpose.

Of the roughly \$227 million the state receives from the tobacco settlement and from tobacco taxes during fiscal 2023, it will devote \$6.7 million to control and prevention. The state's figure includes \$1.7 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for smoking cessation and other programs.

That funding is 13.2 percent of the \$51 million the CDC is recommending South Carolina should spend to have an effective program, according to the report.

"South Carolina lags behind when it comes to tobacco-control policies and, as a result, the adult average smoking rate is higher than the national average at 15.5 percent, and 27.5 percent of high school students use tobacco products," said Danna Thompson, the lung association's director of advocacy for South Carolina.



HEALTH

How to quit: MUSC, Trident offer ways for smokers to cut back and end tobacco use

BY ISABELLE ALTMAN IALTMAN@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

South Carolina law prohibits selling cigarettes or other nicotine products to those under 18 years old. But Rep. Beth Bernstein, D-Columbia, said the law may have no teeth.

“We’re trying to keep those kinds of products away from teenagers and pre-teenagers,” she said. “But then we realized there really is no enforcement to regulate the convenience stores or the ones who are selling it. I don’t know how we can implement laws if we don’t have an enforcement mechanism.”

That’s why she has again filed a bill to require tobacco sellers to obtain a state license, with an annual fee of \$500 that would cover the cost of regulation and enforcement.

The effect would be that the state “just like with alcohol, can go in there and make sure that the retailers are complying with the statutes and not selling to minors,” Bernstein said. “The only way to have an enforcement mechanism is to have licensure.”

This is a critical area to keep kids from starting smoking, Thompson said.



EDUCATION LAB

Vape, e-cig usage more than doubles among Charleston County School District students

BY DEVNA BOSE DBOSE@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

“The most important battle in the fight against youth tobacco use happens on the front lines of the point of sale,” she said.

South Carolina is one of only 10 states that do not license tobacco sellers, the lung association said. A bill to do so last session got stuck in subcommittee after it ran into vocal opposition from convenience store owners, and then the session ended.

“We kind of ran out of time last year,” Bernstein said. She has tweaked it and refiled it but conceded “it is going to be hard.” Yet she is not giving up.

The state’s lone bright spot in the report is a B grade on smoking cessation, which includes the state Medicaid program covering all seven medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration to help people stop smoking, as well as counseling, with few barriers to access.

The Healthy Connections Medicaid program made a conscious decision to help its Medicaid members quit because “smoking affects more than the smoker,” spokesman Jeff Leieritz said. “Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer in children and adults who don’t smoke.”

Healthy Connections covers 60 percent of the state’s children, he said so the “targeted investment” in those programs supports its goal of improving their health overall.

Other legislation proposed in South Carolina this year would make it harder for cities like Charleston, Greenville or Myrtle Beach to enact their own local ordinances for smoke-free workplaces or to regulate vape shops. There are at least three “pre-emption” bills pending this legislature that would prohibit local laws from being more strict than state law.

COLUMBIA BUSINESS

For Columbia vape and tattoo shops, finding space to rent offers an extra challenge



BY MIKE FITTS MFITTS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

“These (bills) would be a huge win for the tobacco industry in general,” Thompson said. “What we’ve seen is that local control is critical across the country. This current legislation would take away the rights of those local communities to pass policies that would prevent youth access to tobacco.”

The consequences of starting young are apparent to Dr. Jared Intaphan of Lowcountry Lung and Critical Care in North Charleston. Smoking is the leading cause for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, where people find it progressively harder to breathe. It is usually seen in older smokers. But Intaphan has seen those in their 20s and 30s who are already suffering from it, most of whom started smoking very young.

“The problem with the young folks getting this illness at such a young age is COPD isn’t curable,” he said.

Reach Tom Corwin at [843-214-6584](tel:843-214-6584). Follow him on Twitter at [@AUG_SciMed](https://twitter.com/AUG_SciMed).

TOM CORWIN