

# Chippewa Valley Coalition supports Macomb e-cigarette ordinance

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By Nicole Tuttle, Voice Reporter



On Oct. 22 at a Macomb Township Board of Trustees meeting, Macomb Township Trustee Clifford Freitas made a motion to adopt an e-cigarette ordinance banning sales to minors or possession by minors. Photo by NICOLE TUTTLE

Macomb Township's recently approved ordinance banning e-cigarette sales to minors or possession by minors, including a \$500 fine, earned support from the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families.

"We had heard something might be in the works," Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families Executive Director Dr. Charlene McGunn said. "Many municipalities, we understand, are beginning to look at this issue. We very much appreciate that."

McGunn said that the coalition did not approach the township about adopting such an ordinance but that it strongly supports local regulation of e-cigarettes because of their accessibility to youth.

On Oct. 22, the Macomb Township Board of Trustees adopted an e-cigarette ordinance. The ordinance bans e-cigarette sales to minors and e-cigarette possession by minors.

"I would like to make a motion to pass this with the addition of a maximum fine of \$500 rather than \$50," Macomb Township Trustee Clifford Freitas said, "and when state legislation comes back and adopts a law, we will revert back to what the state says."

The motion was seconded by Macomb Township Trustee Roger Krzeminski and unanimously approved by the board on Oct. 22.

The Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families is an anti-drug coalition that combines schools, families and the community in a partnership to prevent and reduce youth substance use and its consequences. It serves the geographic area of the Chippewa Valley Schools district, including parts of Clinton and Macomb townships.

McGunn said that the township board's decision to adopt the motion with a larger fine was an important one.

"I think \$50 is very, very low and I think most people that sell tobacco products consider it very, very low," McGunn said. "We applaud the idea of any stiffer penalty for selling to minors and so if the Macomb Township ordinance increases that fine, we think that is a much more realistic deterrent for sale to minors."

Minors generally do not understand the risks that can be associated with e-cigarette use and often perceive them as healthier than regular cigarettes despite the nicotine they contain, according to McGunn.

“We handle tobacco use issues in health classes, because we are hearing more recently from our students about e-cigarettes and vapor pens and other delivery systems for tobacco,” McGunn said. “One of the other enticing elements is the flavoring. It sends kids a message that it is floral, that it is healthy. There is that element. We really want to take this on more. It is clearly another trend that is moving forward.”

The Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth data does not include the use of e-cigarettes among youth, according to McGunn.

“That is a state survey. We did conduct focus groups with youth in February of this year to supplement ... And what we were hearing from our students, which was very similar to what we were hearing from other communities and school districts, is an increase in the use of e-cigarettes,” McGunn said.

Some studies have indicated that just being in the presence of e-cigarettes prompts youth to want to use them, and e-cigarettes can also be used to smoke marijuana, according to McGunn.

“First of all, there is much that is not known about e-cigarettes. There needs to be a great deal of additional research and the FDA is poised to do that, but there are not a lot of outcomes that we have seen. The health risks are not fully known and those health risks include the addictive properties of e-cigarettes; because they have nicotine in them, they are highly addictive substances,” McGunn said.

E-cigarettes and cartridges also could contain toxins, according to McGunn.

“There is information, not a lot – that is definitive. There are potentially toxic metal substances in some of the cartridges and refillable canisters,” McGunn said. “We are finding in reports that there are concerns in that direction.”

*Nicole Tuttle is a freelance reporter. She can be contacted at [ntuttle.reporter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ntuttle.reporter@sbcglobal.net).*