



## "Submit Comment to City Council" from Dustin A. Holfinger

**Bexley Website** <emcguinness@bexley.org>  
To: electedofficials@bexley.org

Mon, Mar 6, 2023 at 2:16 PM

Someone submitted this comment to City Council:

Would you like  
to submit a  
comment to  
City Council?: Yes

Your Name:: Dustin A. Holfinger

Your Email  
Address:: [dustin.holfinger@heart.org](mailto:dustin.holfinger@heart.org)

Your Home  
Address::

Your comment to the Bexley City Council: My name is Dustin Holfinger, the state government relations director for the American Heart Association (AHA). At the AHA, it is our mission to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public's health, and share lifesaving resources. We have been a leading source of health information for nearly a century.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on an ordinance that would require every store that sells tobacco and/or vaping products to apply for a retailer license. With strong retail licensure requirements, tobacco retailers and the tobacco industry can be held accountable for violations of current and future tobacco control laws. These requirements will allow officials from Franklin County Public Health to know where tobacco products are being sold and provide stronger oversight through regular compliance checks.

Tobacco products are sold seemingly everywhere—grocery stores, gas stations, convenience stores—making it far too easy for kids to obtain cigarettes, flavored cigars, snuff, and e-cigarettes. Too many youth are using tobacco products—including e-cigarettes—and tobacco companies continue to aggressively market these products to young people. We applaud the City of Bexley for wanting to do more to keep these dangerous and addictive products away from kids. A strong tobacco retail licensing program will reduce youth access to tobacco products by ensuring compliance and enforcement of laws that reduce youth tobacco use.

We see that there are far too many retailers unlawfully making sales of tobacco products to youth. This is due to a lack of enforcement of the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products. As a result, tobacco retailers are incentivized to continue selling tobacco products to kids—they can earn additional profits without facing meaningful consequences for violating the law. It is our hope to, again, keep these retailers accountable, not to put anyone out of business.

A key part of protecting people's health is reducing the overwhelming presence and influence of tobacco companies. Tobacco companies spend billions of dollars every year on ads and marketing in retail settings, offering price discounts and promotions on products sold in gas stations, convenience stores, and other retailers. These aggressive tactics hook kids on tobacco products and make it harder for current tobacco users to quit. Retail licensure will protect kids from predatory tobacco companies.

Research has shown that compliance is most effective when the tobacco retailer or license holder is held accountable, rather than non-management employees, who are often low-wage clerks, or the youth who purchase tobacco products. We appreciate that the penalties listed in this ordinance for underage sales are levied on the retailer or license holder, with penalties escalating with each violation and the final penalty of revocation of the license. Kids should not be penalized for purchase, use, or possession of harmful products that have been aggressively marketed and illegally sold to them. Strong tobacco licensure requirements shift penalties for ignoring tobacco control laws from youth to retailers.

The fees collected from retail licensing ensure funding for compliance checks and enforcement of tobacco laws without additional costs to taxpayers and will provide the opportunity for additional educational and cessation programs.

Do you wish to  
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regarding your  
comment?: Yes