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Poll: Minnesotans strongly support prohibiting e-cigarette use indoors

Public also supports regulation to prevent e-cigarette use by youth

Minneapolis, MN (February 26, 2014) – A poll released today shows that a strong majority of Minnesotans (79 percent) support prohibiting e-cigarette use indoors in places where smoking is prohibited. Other regulations to prevent youth from using e-cigarettes are also overwhelmingly supported by Minnesotans.

“This new poll shows that a strong majority of Minnesotans – **79 percent** – support prohibiting e-cigarette use in indoor public places, including workplaces,” said Janelle Waldock, Director of the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. “E-cigarette use threatens our high standard of clean indoor air. Limiting their use the same way we limit conventional cigarettes will protect the clean air that Minnesotans have come to expect and support.”

Studies have found that e-cigarette vapor contains nicotine, heavy metals and other toxic compounds. Representatives Laurie Halverson (D-Eagan) and Phyllis Kahn (D-Minneapolis) have introduced bills to limit e-cigarette use indoors.

The poll also found overwhelming support for limiting kids’ access to e-cigarettes. **Ninety-eight percent** of Minnesotans support prohibiting e-cigarette sales to minors, and **87 percent** support keeping e-cigarettes behind the counter so they are less visible and accessible to youth.

Rep. Halverson’s bill includes provisions to protect youth by placing e-cigarettes behind the counter and punishing retailers who sell them to minors. E-cigarette sales to minors are already prohibited by Minnesota law.

“The public has good reason to be concerned about youth use of e-cigarettes. They come in kid-friendly flavors like ‘gummy bear’ and ‘cotton candy,’ and we know flavored tobacco products are attractive to youth,” said Molly Moilanen, Director of Public Affairs at ClearWay Minnesota. “Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that the use among middle-school and high-school students more than doubled from 2011 to 2012. This increase is alarming.”

Both Rep. Halverson and Rep. Kahn’s bills are supported by a broad coalition of health organizations including Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, ClearWay Minnesota, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Lung Association in Minnesota, HealthPartners, Minnesota Medical Association and others.

"Even though e-cigarettes are relatively new products, Minnesotans have already concluded that the state should apply the same regulations on their sales and use that exist for conventional cigarettes," explained Dr. William Morris of the Morris Leatherman Company, the research firm that conducted the poll. "Strong support for clean indoor air in public places and concern for protecting kids are important factors shaping the opinions of Minnesota residents."

The study contains the results of a survey administered by Morris Leatherman of Minneapolis to 630 randomly selected adult residents across the state of Minnesota. Professional interviewers conducted the survey by telephone between January 7 and 17, 2014. The typical respondent took 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The results of the study are projectable to all adult residents in state of Minnesota within ± 4.0 percent in 95 out of 100 cases. This poll was funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (bluecrossmn.com), with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today as a health company: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. Blue Cross is a not-for-profit, taxable organization. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, headquartered in Chicago.

About ClearWay MinnesotaSM

The mission of ClearWay MinnesotaSM is to enhance life in Minnesota by reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke through research, action and collaboration. We were created in 1998 and entrusted with overseeing 3 percent of the state's tobacco settlement funds. We use our portion of the settlement to help Minnesotans quit smoking and tobacco use, and to fund tobacco-related research, programs and initiatives around the state. We work to raise people's awareness of the dangers of tobacco and to make Minnesota a healthier place.

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