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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Truth About Tobacco Licensing and Retailer Density-A Predictor of Youth Smoking

According to researchers at The Truth Initiative, retailer density is an important predictor of youth and young adult smoking. This is unsurprising as youth are especially susceptible to marketing in the retail environment. As the number of tobacco retailers increases, so does exposure to tobacco advertising and promotion. As of 2022, an estimated 380,000 retailers sell tobacco products in the U.S. This number is equivalent to 25 tobacco retailers for every Starbucks or 28 tobacco retailers for every McDonalds. An estimated 48% were convenience stores (with and without gas), 25% were supermarkets, 13% were off-premises liquor stores, 7% were pharmacies, 4% were tobacco shops, and 3% were discount department stores, warehouse stores, and newsstands. The number of tobacco retailers that are pharmacies may be underestimated as many supermarkets and warehouses also contain retail pharmacies.

Experimental smoking among youth is correlated with the number of tobacco retailers in high school neighborhoods and in communities where youth live. In one study, the incidence of smoking was significantly higher among students in schools with the highest density of surrounding tobacco retailers compared with students in schools without any tobacco retail outlets.

Tobacco retailers are often more heavily populated in areas with a greater number of minority and low-income residents. This may account for the significantly higher prevalence of youth and adult smoking found within populations with low socioeconomic status (SES). Young adults living in communities having a high density of residents from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds and/or lower socioeconomic statuses are more likely to be exposed to tobacco marketing, especially flavored tobacco marketing, than those who live outside these communities

Truth Initiative researchers say that Pharmacies play an important role in our health system as community resources for health information and services. Despite their increasing importance in health care, pharmacies are also leading retailers of tobacco products. In 2014, CVS Health stopped selling tobacco products and eight months later reported that cigarette purchases had dropped a percentage point in states where the company has a large presence. That amounted to 95 million fewer packs of cigarettes sold in those states in the eight months following the tobacco removal. Consumers who purchased cigarettes exclusively at CVS were 38% more likely to cease buying cigarettes after their removal. Those who had bought three-or-more packs during the study's baseline, or had greater baseline cigarette consumption, were more than twice as

likely to cease buying cigarettes. Furthermore, a study using CDC data found 66% of U.S. adults favor a ban on tobacco products in pharmacy stores, including nearly half of smokers. In 2015, almost 54,000 pharmacies in the United States sold tobacco products.

The tobacco industry understands the impact of policies that limit tobacco retailer licensing and density and has in fact sued to prevent such regulations. In 1999, Lorillard Tobacco Company sued over a regulation prohibiting outdoor advertising within 1,000 feet of a school or playground.

Keep aware, stay informed and avoid unhealthy behaviors. “Live SAFE!”. The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition works diligently to protect youth and inform parents through prevention education to avoid the negative consequence of nicotine addiction.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is concerned with alcohol, tobacco and other drug use-especially its consequences on the health and development of youth. In 2023, the Coalition’s Community Committee embarked on an effort to draft, propose and pass a new law restricting incoming tobacco retail stores to B2 District areas as strong and effective laws and regulations were needed to protect young people from deadly addiction by reducing access to edibles, tobacco, vaping products and other drug paraphernalia.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition employs environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Youth and Tobacco Use and Vaping Facts and Myths Pages of SAFE’s website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health at www.safeglencove.org.

The Truth Initiative is the nation’s largest nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empowering quitting. Research is conducted through the Truth Initiative Schroeder Institute that produces independent research to provide evidence for policy change and leadership in cessation research. For more information, please visit www.truthinitiative.org.