

Dear Common Council members,

My name is Taffie Foster-Toney, I am a Milwaukee county resident. I'm writing today to express my support for the proposed zoning ordinance for smoke and vape shops. The tobacco industry continues to have a significant impact on the health of many communities. The negative health impact is more prevalent in communities of color. Tobacco rates amongst blacks is 30% nearly three times higher than whites which is 12%, according to the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention. Each year 43, 000 African Americans die from smoking related deaths. It has personally affected my family on many occasions.

My Aunt who was a chain smoker died at an early age due to smoking. My Mom, who was a smoker, decided to stop smoking after my Aunt died. Years later my mother would be diagnosed with asthma. My mother's health would become affected by secondhand smoke, causing asthma attacks. Asthma would take my mother's life in her early 40's leaving behind a family of nine. Three of my sisters were diagnosed with asthma. Secondhand smoke negatively affects my sister's health causing breathing problems and asthma attacks.

In 2019 one of my sisters nearly lost her life when secondhand smoke triggered an asthma attack. Her inhaler, which is used to open one's lungs, did not work. My sister was rushed to the hospital. An EpiPen saved her life. Research has shown that having easier access to tobacco correlates to higher smoking rates, a harder time quitting, and worst of all, higher youth initiation rates. Given the fact that vaping has been an epidemic among youth and young adults, this zoning policy would have an even greater impact on community health. Thank you for your time and for your work in support of Milwaukee residents and our children.

Sincerely,

Taffie Foster-Toney

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