

San Francisco weighs 1st US city ban on e-cigarette sales

June 18 2019, by Samantha Maldonado



In this Monday, June 17, 2019, photo, Joshua Ni, 24, and Fritz Ramirez, 23, vape from electronic cigarettes in San Francisco. San Francisco supervisors are considering whether to move the city toward becoming the first in the United States to ban all sales of electronic cigarettes in an effort to crack down on youth vaping. The plan would ban the sale and distribution of e-cigarettes, as well as prohibit e-cigarette manufacturing on city property. (AP Photo/Samantha Maldonado)

San Francisco supervisors are considering whether to move the city toward becoming the first in the United States to ban all sales of electronic cigarettes to crack down on youth vaping.

Supervisors on Tuesday were set to weigh a ban on the sale and distribution of e-cigarettes until the Food and Drug Administration completes a review of the effects of e-cigarettes on public health, as well as ban the manufacturing e-cigarettes on city property.

If supervisors approve the measures, they will require a subsequent vote before becoming law.

"Young people have almost indiscriminate access to a product that shouldn't even be on the market," said City Attorney Dennis Herrera. Because the FDA has not acted, he said, "it's unfortunately falling to states and localities to step into the breach."

Since 2014, e-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among young people in the country. Last year, 1 in 5 U.S. high school students reported vaping in the previous month, according to a government survey .

FDA spokesman Michael Felberbaum said in a statement that the agency will continue to "tackle the troubling epidemic of e-cigarette use among kids."

"This includes preventing youth access to, and appeal of, flavored tobacco products like e-cigarettes and cigars, taking action against manufacturers and retailers who illegally market or sell these products to minors, and educating youth about the dangers of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products," he said.



In this Monday, June 17, 2019, photo, Jacky Chan, 23, refills his electronic cigarette with vaping liquid in San Francisco. San Francisco supervisors are considering whether to move the city toward becoming the first in the United States to ban all sales of electronic cigarettes in an effort to crack down on youth vaping. The plan would ban the sale and distribution of e-cigarettes, as well as prohibit e-cigarette manufacturing on city property. (AP Photo/Samantha Maldonado)

Leading San Francisco-based e-cigarette company Juul frames vaping as a healthier alternative to smoking tobacco. Juul has said it has taken steps to deter children from using its products. The company said in a statement that it has made its online age-verification process more robust and shut down its Instagram and Facebook accounts to try to discourage vaping by those under 21 years old.

"But the prohibition of vapor products for all adults in San Francisco will not effectively address underage use and will leave cigarettes on shelves as the only choice for adult smokers, even though they kill 40,000 Californians every year," said Juul spokesman Ted Kwong.

Tuesday's expected vote also sets the stage for a November ballot fight over e-cigarettes. Juul has already contributed \$500,000 to the Coalition for Reasonable Vaping Regulation, which is set to gather signatures to put an initiative on the issue before voters.

The American Vaping Association also opposes San Francisco's proposal, saying adult smokers deserve access to less hazardous alternatives.



In this Monday, June 17, 2019, photo, a cashier displays a packet of tobacco-flavored Juul pods at a store in San Francisco. San Francisco supervisors are considering whether to move the city toward becoming the first in the United States to ban all sales of electronic cigarettes in an effort to crack down on youth vaping. The plan would ban the sale and distribution of e-cigarettes, as well as prohibit e-cigarette manufacturing on city property. Business owners say it would hurt their businesses. (AP Photo/Samantha Maldonado)

"Going after youth is a step that you can take before taking these out of the hands of adults," said association president Gregory Conley.

Groups representing small businesses also oppose the measures, which they say could force stores to close.

"We need to enforce the rules that we have in place already," said Carlos Solórzano, CEO of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco.

Although San Francisco's proposed ban is unlike any other in the country, the Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law reports that all but two states have at least one law restricting youth access to e-cigarettes. City voters last year approved a ban on sales of candy and fruit-flavored tobacco products.



In this Monday, June 17, 2019, photo, Jacky Chan, 23, takes a vaping break from his job at a smoke shop in San Francisco. San Francisco supervisors are considering whether to move the city toward becoming the first in the United States to ban all sales of electronic cigarettes in an effort to crack down on youth vaping. The plan would ban the sale and distribution of e-cigarettes, as well as prohibit e-cigarette manufacturing on city property. (AP Photo/Samantha Maldonado)

Stanton Glantz, a professor of medicine at the University of California San Francisco Center for Tobacco Control and Research and a supporter of the measures, said e-cigarettes are associated with heart attacks, strokes and lung disease.

The presence of e-cigarettes has "completely reversed the progress we've

made in youth smoking in the last few years," he said.

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