Re: **Tobacco Point of Purchase Warnings**
To: **Board of Health**
From: **Philadelphia Department of Public Health**
Date: **September 8, 2011**

Summary
The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) requests that the Board of Health considers a regulation requiring tobacco retailers in Philadelphia to post, at the point of purchase, a government warning about the health effects of tobacco use and how to get help with quitting. Such a warning, which would include text and an image, is warranted for the following reasons:

- Despite existing laws and policies, tobacco use remains extremely common in Philadelphia and leads to devastating health and economic consequences for individuals, families, communities, and businesses;
- Many people, particularly those with low socioeconomic status, continue to underestimate the health risks of tobacco use;
- Health warnings, especially when conveyed through text and images, increase people's knowledge of the harms of tobacco use and lead to quitting or cutting down;
- Providing information about how to get help with quitting leads to increased use of cessation resources; and
- Providing health information at the point of sale enables consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

While legal and logistical concerns exist, PDPH believes that this approach for reducing the burden of tobacco use in Philadelphia will be permissible, feasible, and effective.

Tobacco use remains prevalent and has devastating consequences in Philadelphia.

1. Of the 10 largest U.S. cities, Philadelphia has the highest rate of adult smoking.[1] In 2010, 25.2% adults in Philadelphia were smokers, and more than 1 in 3 poor adults were smokers.[2]
2. Of the 10 largest U.S. cities, Philadelphia has the highest rate of youth smoking.[3] Four percent of all youth and 16% of White youth in Philadelphia are regular smokers.[4] Eleven percent of all youth in Philadelphia have smoked at least once in the past 30 days.[5]
3. While use of non-cigarette tobacco products is less common than cigarette smoking, it does occur in Philadelphia. Three percent of youth in Philadelphia used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip at least once in the past 30 days, and 7% of youth in Philadelphia smoked cigars, cigarillos, or little cigars at least once in the past 30 days.[6]
4. Tobacco use led to 2,468 deaths in Philadelphia in 2007, accounting for 17% of all deaths in the city and exceeding the number of deaths due to homicide, suicide, accidents, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS combined.[7]
5. Tobacco use resulted in over $800 million in productivity losses in Philadelphia in 2007.[8] This equals approximately $15 of productivity losses for every pack of cigarettes sold.[9]

People continue to underestimate the health risks of tobacco use.

1. While many smokers are aware of the links between smoking and heart and lung disease, they are less likely to know about the increased risk for stroke, non-lung cancers, poor reproductive health, and disability.[10,11,12] Similar findings have been found among cigar smokers.[13]
2. Adults with low socioeconomic status are less knowledgeable about the negative health effects of smoking than those with higher socioeconomic status.[14,15]

3. At least one study shows that smokers even underestimate their risk of lung cancer and believe that exercise undoes most of the negative effects of smoking.[16]
4. Smokers with greater knowledge of smoking's health effects are more likely to intend to quit.[17,18]

Health warnings can increase knowledge about the harms of tobacco use and foster quitting.

1. Much of the research describing the effects of health warnings on tobacco use have been done in the context of cigarette package warning labels. Point of purchase warnings for tobacco products are new.
2. Multiple studies demonstrate that health warnings that make use of text and images are more effective than warnings that just make use of text.[19,20,21,22,23] Warnings inclusive of images seem particularly effective for youth.[24]
3. When the term *graphic* is used to describe effective warnings, this does not necessarily mean *explicit* or *gruesome* but rather *illustrative* or *pictorial*. In other words it refers to a warning that makes use of an image.
4. Exposure to health warnings is associated with greater knowledge about the health effects of tobacco use,[25,26] greater intentions to quit,[27,28] lesser intentions to initiate use,[29] and quitting or cutting down.[30,31]

Many tobacco users do not make use of available quit resources, but providing information about them can increase utilization.

1. Quitlines are phone-based tobacco cessation resources available in the U.S. (via 1-800-QUIT-NOW) and internationally. Use of quitlines doubles the chances of successful quitting.[32]
2. Most smokers in Philadelphia who try to quit do so on their own ("cold turkey") despite existing phone, clinical, and community-based resources.[33] This is particularly true for African-American and Hispanic smokers.[34]
3. Of the nearly 300,000 smokers in Philadelphia, only 852 called the Pennsylvania Free Quitline in 2008.[35] This represents less than 0.3% of all smokers in the city.
4. Based on local mass media and digital media efforts, 2,903 Philadelphians called the Quitline between December 2010 and May of 2011.[36] When extrapolated over the course of a full year, this represents a seven-fold increase compared to 2008. However, it still only represents 1.9% of all smokers in the city.
5. Including information about quitlines in tobacco-related health warnings significantly increases recognition and use of quitlines as demonstrated in New Zealand,[37]Australia,[38] and the Netherlands.[39]

Point of purchase information can lead to healthier decisions.

1. Menu labeling laws make nutrition information available at the point of purchase in chain restaurants. As demonstrated in multiple U.S. cities, menu labeling can lead to healthier choices by consumers.[40,41,42] In Philadelphia, 38% of adults who ate at a fast food restaurant used calorie labeling information to choose a lower calorie item.[43]
2. When nutrition information is not available at the point of purchase, only 0.1% of patrons access nutrition information from other sources (e.g., a pamphlet available upon request) before making their purchases.[44] However, up to 70 percent of patrons notice multiple types of nutrition information when printed on the menu.[45]
3. Nearly 20 states and numerous cities require businesses that sell alcohol to post warnings about the harms of alcohol use. Analyses suggest that such signs increase awareness and may reduce alcohol consumption among light to moderate drinkers.[46]

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