

## Del Norte County to consider license to curtail teen tobacco use

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The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors agreed to consider implementing a tobacco retail license in an attempt to slow down youth vaping.

Amber Wier, project director for NorCal 4 Health, asked supervisors to take the step during a regular meeting this week. Wier said she has worked in tobacco use prevention for five years.

"This last year, I have had a renewed sense of urgency to deal with this issue," Wier said. "I have it because my daughter started high school. She came home and told me what she has seen. It's really scared me about what's going on."

At the supervisor's meeting, Wier brought two members of the Del Norte High School STORM Youth Coalition. She said a recent study in the county revealed 11% of seventh graders, 9% of ninth graders and 22% of 11th graders reported vaping in the last month.

One teen said the STORM coalition interviewed their peers about vaping.

"What stood out to me is it was the kids I wasn't expecting who were vaping," she said. "Addictive flavors are what encourages students to vape. Cigarettes are known as stress relievers, however due to the stigma of cigarettes, students have turned to vapes."

The student said vaping has become popular because of the fancy flavors added, pointing to cotton candy, grape and other fruit flavors.

"These exotic flavors encourage students to vape more," she said. "If you want to decrease teen vaping, we can remove the flavors."

Sienna, a sophomore at Del Norte High, said she sees vaping every day.

Over time, I have tried to use the bathroom, and they have been constantly full of girls vaping. It smells disgusting," she said. "Teens are getting these products from family members and friends who are over 21. It is passed around among students who want to vape. Basically it takes one sibling over 21 to do it and a teen becomes a dealer.

We're asking you to help us. We think the most effective thing you can do is get rid of flavors altogether."

Wier said there are already educational programs at the schools, with close to \$1 million spent annually in Del Norte County alone.

"Education is good, it's needed, but it hasn't been enough," Wier said.

She then recommended the county put in tobacco retail licenses in coordination with Crescent City. Wier said Crescent City discussed the issue, but the council wanted to make any move in coordination with the county.

A tobacco retail license can be tailored to a community, and Wier suggested the county look at a license that would eliminate the sale of flavored tobacco while capping the number of licenses at the 23 in existence today.

"From talking to youth, that is the easiest step that would eliminate youth use," Wier said. "From talking to them, that's all the youth are doing, smoking flavored vapes."

After Wier made her presentation, the supervisors agreed to look more into the idea, saying they would like to form a committee made up of supervisors and Crescent City council members to come up with a plan.

The supervisors agreed to discuss the issue again at its second meeting in March.