Youth tobacco use – specifically e-cigarettes or vaping – is a widespread issue in middle and high schools across the state and poses a significant threat to the health and well-being of Kentucky’s future generations. In addition to costing Kentucky more than $2.23 billion in health care costs every year, smoking impacts our economy and is responsible for $6.3 billion in lost productivity each year.

Addressing the issue early on reduces the likelihood that youth will begin using products containing nicotine and become addicted. Nearly 90% of tobacco users first try a tobacco product by age 18. But, those who didn’t start using nicotine by age 26 are likely to never start. Strong tobacco retailer licensing laws can help prevent youth tobacco use initiation for both traditional cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

Kentucky can... Prevent youth from initiating tobacco use and vaping and becoming addicted to nicotine

**Vaping Among Kentucky Youth:**
- More than 1 in 4 12th graders and 1 in 5 10th graders report vaping in the past year.
- Of youth who have vaped in the last 30 days, nearly 1 in 4 report they bought the products at a convenience store, supermarket, gas station, or vape shop – notably more prevalent than purchasing online or through a person of legal purchase age.

Kentucky can protect youth from the harmful effects of vaping by establishing a statewide tobacco retail license which would require retail stores who wish to sell tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vapes, to apply for, receive, and maintain a license.

In addition to providing data on who sells these products, a tobacco retail license would provide oversight for retail stores to ensure purchase age enforcement and that other retail policies are being followed to help prevent youth from accessing harmful tobacco products.

Kentucky can follow more than 35 other states that require retailers to hold a license to sell tobacco products. We have the opportunity to break the cycle of early tobacco initiation and prevent youth nicotine addiction in the Commonwealth.

**Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Policy Solution:**
Establish a statewide tobacco retail license that ensures retailers are selling tobacco products only to those 21 years and older.

kyyouth.org/blueprintky/