



June 29, 2023

Governor Mike DeWine  
Riffe Center, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

Thank you for your continued leadership and service to the State of Ohio. The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO) is a non-profit, 501(c)(6) professional organization representing Northern Ohio's medical community. Our mission is to support physicians in being strong advocates for all patients and to promote the highest quality of medicine. Founded in 1824, we are the oldest professional organization in Ohio, and we are proud to be the voice of medicine for Cleveland's past, present, and future.

Please see our comments below on two areas of the operating budget which we urge you to veto.

**1. Tobacco Flavor Ban (DOHCD32)**

The AMCNO appreciates the legislature's attempt to keep tobacco products out of the hands of Ohio's youth. However, the proposed language addresses only flavored e-cigarette products and allows for the continued sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored products like snus, dip, and chewing tobacco.

Additionally, this provision preempts legislation at the local level targeting tobacco retail licenses which is an evidence-based way to reduce sales to underage youth tobacco use by tracking businesses who sell tobacco and removing bad actors from the market if necessary.<sup>1</sup> This addition will negate every tobacco retail license passed at the local level and could even negate additional non-smoking policies enacted by school and park districts.

The current language is also difficult for law enforcement to enforce, especially given the current shortage in their workforce. Implementing this language would reverse tobacco legislation in Ohio by 10 years and allow easier sale of tobacco products in Ohio. Ohio has always been a home rule state supporting local decision making, and we urge you to continue this tradition by letting local officials dictate the tobacco regulations in their counties.

**2. Student Authority to decline vaccines (BORCD133)**

The Executive version of the budget maintains current law allowing colleges in Ohio to have their own vaccination standards. Given that Ohio does not mandate vaccines for entry into college, this language is both unnecessary and could lead to unintended consequences if schools' existing public health infrastructure is made to change. Allowing this language to

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<sup>1</sup> Counter Tools. *Licensing, Zoning, and Retailer Density*. <https://countertobacco.org/policy/licensing-and-zoning/>

remain in the budget could weaken public health protections for college students, faculty, and staff by limiting the ability of the institutions to manage campus safety.

We urge you to veto the above sections to protect Ohio residents from health outbreaks and predatory tactics from tobacco companies. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen Johns". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jen" and the last name "Johns" clearly legible.

Jen Johns, MPH  
Executive Director