

Rhode Island Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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Testimony in support of House Bill 8346
House Committee on Health and Human Services
March 30, 2026

Dear Chairperson Donovan and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics **strongly supports H8346**, requiring the Department of Health to implement a tobacco control program that incorporates evidence-based best practices for tobacco prevention and cessation to prevent tobacco-related diseases and diminish tobacco use in the state.

Tobacco use continues to be an enormous problem, with over 47 million adults currently using a tobacco product in the US.¹ In Rhode Island, about 1,800 deaths each year are attributed to smoking and other tobacco use.² Tobacco use not only affects users, secondhand exposure can lead to numerous health problems in children including sudden infant death syndrome, increased incidence and severity of asthma and bronchiolitis, ear infections, and childhood cancers.³ For Rhode Island youth, 17.3% of high school students report current tobacco and nicotine use, with 16.5% using e-cigarettes.⁴

As a pediatrician, I hear from my patients about their struggles with e-cigarettes and other tobacco products almost every day. One 16-year-old explained that his vaping had "gotten out of control" and was pleading for help to quit. When I asked a 13-year-old why he was vaping with friends at his middle school, he explained that he liked the flavors saying, "I have a sweet tooth".

To combat this significant problem, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states, "evidence-based, statewide tobacco control programs that are comprehensive, sustained, and accountable have been shown to reduce smoking rates, as well as tobacco-related diseases and deaths."⁵ The National Academy of Medicine recommends that each state should fund a comprehensive tobacco control program at the level that the CDC recommends.⁶ Funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs is one of the most cost-effective investments states can make. One study of California's long-running tobacco control program found the state saved an estimated \$155 in healthcare costs for every \$1 invested.⁷

We urge you to pass H8346 to support tobacco prevention, education and cessation efforts in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Allison Heinly, MD, FAAP

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2. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/all-us-rhode-island>
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4. Rhode Island Department of Health. Center for Health Data Analysis. *Youth Risk Behavior Survey - 2023*
5. Institute of Medicine. *Using the Tobacco Problem: A Blueprint for the Nation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2007
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs: Executive Summary*, 2014
7. Lightwood JM, Anderson S, Glantz SA (2023) Smoking and healthcare expenditure reductions associated with the California Tobacco Control Program, 1989 to 2019: A predictive validation. *PLoS ONE* 18(3): e0263570