

February 10, 2026

Members of the Aurora City Council
City of Aurora
15151 E. Alameda Parkway
Aurora, CO 80012

Re: Support for a Tobacco Retail Licensing Ordinance in Aurora

Dear Members of the Aurora City Council,

On behalf of the Arapahoe County Board of Health, we express our strong support for adoption of a comprehensive Tobacco Retail Licensing (TRL) ordinance in the City of Aurora. TRL is a proven public health strategy that strengthens enforcement of local laws designed to protect youth from the harms of tobacco and nicotine products, aligning the sale of these addictive products with other regulated items such as alcohol and firearms.

Aurora faces urgent, well-documented challenges regarding youth access:

- 84% of Aurora youth who tried to buy tobacco or vaping products in a store were not turned away.
- 101 tobacco retailers are located within 1,000 feet of schools and recreation centers; 30 are within 500 feet of a school.
- 8% have violations for selling to minors, likely an undercount.
- 162 retailers cluster around high-poverty schools.

A TRL framework directly addresses these gaps by:

- Requiring retailers to obtain and renew a local license, enabling accurate vendor records and regular compliance checks to prevent sales to individuals under 21.
- Establishing graduated civil penalties, including fines, license suspension, and revocation that shift accountability from individual clerks to business owners.
- Complementing federal enforcement (e.g., FDA compliance checks) and helping Colorado meet federal requirements, such as maintaining a retailer violation rate below 20% to secure continued SAMHSA block grant funding.
- Funding retailer education and enforcement through annual license fees while allowing routine compliance checks to ensure age-restricted sales are upheld.

We also underscore what TRL does and does not do. A TRL ordinance improves enforcement and accountability for age-restricted products, including emerging items such as kratom and certain hemp-derived THC products, without restricting adult access to tobacco or nicotine products.

From a broader health standpoint, tobacco remains a leading cause of preventable, premature death; research indicates that most lifelong nicotine addiction begins before age 18, and flavored nicotine products have become the most commonly used among youth. Local TRL ordinances have been shown to strengthen enforcement, ensure consistent and educational approaches, and create fair competition by holding all retailers to the same standards.

For these reasons, the Arapahoe County Board of Health respectfully urges the Aurora City Council to adopt the proposed TRL ordinance. We stand ready to support implementation through retailer education, compliance collaboration, and community outreach so Aurora can protect its youth, advance health equity, and promote responsible retail practices.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical public health issue.

Sincerely,

Shawn Davis, Chair
Arapahoe County Board of Health

Bebe Kleinman, Vice Chair
Arapahoe County Board of Health