



YES on EE

Tobacco - Vape Tax for Bright, Healthy Kids

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor Jared Polis lends his voice to support education and anti-vaping advocates

Yes on EE campaign launches effort to curb teen vaping and fund universal preschool

(DENVER Sept. 10) -- With ballots mailing one month from today, Gov. Jared Polis joined a broad coalition of advocates to launch "Yes on EE," the campaign to pass the statewide ballot measure that would increase taxes on tobacco and vaping products to stave off cuts to K12 education in the short term and fund universal preschool as well as nicotine cessation and education programs.

If approved by voters in November, the measure is expected to generate \$375 million for K-12 schools to reduce budget cuts from the pandemic, \$110 million in new dollars for nicotine cessation and education and more than \$2 billion over 10 years for universal preschool for all Colorado 4-year-olds.

"Supporting Proposition EE is one of the most important things Coloradans can do this fall to help our health, our kids, our public schools, and our economy. Passing Proposition EE means crucial funding to help schools retain teachers, nurses, custodians, and coaches," said Gov. Jared Polis. "It means targeted funding for rural school districts who often face particular budget challenges. And it means the opportunity to attend preschool for thousands of Colorado children who otherwise wouldn't get it. I urge Coloradans across our state to come together and vote Yes on EE so that every child gets the strong start they need to realize their full potential."

Health advocates for the measure point out that Colorado's teen vaping has reached epidemic proportions with 29 percent of teens reporting they vape regularly. Research is clear that taxing products like vape and tobacco drives down existing use and discourages people from starting, particularly price-sensitive teens.

“I’m particularly worried about my kids experimenting with these dangerous products because far too many people in my family have struggled with heart disease and we have seen the pain and suffering it causes,” said Lori Pace, a Central Park mother and anti-vape activist for the American Heart Association. “Predatory marketing by Big tobacco and the vape industry is hard to combat as a parent.”

Along with the benefit to community health, the measure would provide immediate help to mitigate the half a billion in cuts to Colorado’s K-12 schools driven by the pandemic. Education advocates from across the state including the Colorado Parent Teacher Association and the Colorado Education Association have endorsed the measure. As part of the K-12 support, the measure would provide \$90 million specifically for rural schools, which are typically hit hardest by budget cuts. Organizations like Pro 15 representing counties on the Eastern Plains and the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance were early endorsers of the measure.

Once the immediate budget relief needs are met for K-12, the measure would provide funding to move Colorado toward universal free preschool for every 4-year-old in the state, providing \$242 million per year when fully phased in by 2027. While the research is clear that preschool works for all children, and particularly those who have other risk factors like poverty, Colorado has some of the lowest funding in the state for preschool. Currently, the Colorado Preschool Program can serve only 40 percent of children eligible for the program.

“I have worked in early education and seen first-hand the amazing growth that our youngest learners achieve in preschool. It gives kids the academic and social emotional foundation they need to thrive,” said Dawnae Dent, an education coach with Mile High Early Learning Center. “But you don’t have to take it from me. Decades of research tells us that preschool improves educational, economic, and health outcomes throughout a child’s life, including higher graduation rates and higher wages.”

The measure was referred to the ballot by the Colorado Legislature with bipartisan support in June. If approved by voters in November, revenue generated would begin flowing to K-12 schools and cessation programs immediately.