

Wilmington, Delaware
June 22, 2025

#xxxx

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Owens**

WHEREAS, the Wilmington City Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan envisions a “Healthy Wilmington,” by advocating for and enacting legislative measures to address preventable health threats; and

WHEREAS, more than one in 10 adult Delawareans smoke cigarettes. The IMPACT Tobacco Prevention Coalition estimates that about 600 children become daily smokers in Delaware each year. The costs of tobacco-related harms to Delawareans include \$391 million in workplace productivity losses, \$532 million in direct medical services, including \$95 million in Medicaid expenditures, and more than 1,400 deaths on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, research has repeatedly shown that cigarette smokers have higher probabilities of suffering from respiratory diseases, such as lung cancer, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, asthma, and tuberculosis; cardiovascular diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, aortic aneurysm, and peripheral artery disease; cancers, including lung cancer, oral cancer, esophageal cancer, pancreatic cancer, and bladder cancer; and other health problems, like periodontal disease, cataracts, diabetes, and Rheumatoid arthritis; and

WHEREAS, Wilmington has the highest tobacco retail density in the State of Delaware, with as many as 18.32 retailers per 1000 people in some census tracts. The saturation of access to tobacco products has been detrimental to the health of City residents. The Delaware Health and Social Services Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS) found that from 2013 to 2014, the most recent period for which such data is available, Wilmington reported a smoking prevalence of 30.5%, compared with a smoking prevalence of 19.7% statewide during the same timeframe; and

WHEREAS, excise taxes on cigarettes have been upheld as an effective strategy to prevent cigarette consumption by youth and reduce smoking among heavy users. The current cigarette tax levied by the State of Delaware is 105.0 mills per cigarette, or \$2.10 per 20-cigarette pack. Over 700 local jurisdictions have enacted excise taxes on cigarettes to complement their state’s smoking cessation policies; and

WHEREAS, the American Lung Association recommends that taxes on cigarettes be increased by at least \$1.00 per pack to “create greater parity between the tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products.” Local excise taxes on cigarettes vary widely. Regionally, local taxes on cigarettes range from \$1.50 per pack in New York City to \$4.50 in Washington, D.C.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that this Council requests that the Delaware General Assembly make the necessary provisions to authorize the City of Wilmington to enact an excise tax on the retail sales of cigarettes within the City’s boundaries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that cigarettes are the most popular form of tobacco consumption in the nation. Tobacco-related illnesses contribute to more than 1,400 deaths annually in the State of Delaware and millions of dollars in public health expenditures. Permitting a local excise tax on cigarettes would constitute a critical step towards improving the health and well-being of the residents of the City of Wilmington.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: The Wilmington City Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan envisions a “Healthy Wilmington,” by advocating for and enacting legislative measures to address preventable health threats. Tobacco-related illnesses contribute to more than 1,400 deaths annually in the State of Delaware and millions of dollars in public health expenditures. The City of Wilmington has the highest tobacco retail density in the State of Delaware, with as many as 18.32 retailers per 1000 people in some census tracts. This Resolution requests that the Delaware General Assembly make allowances for the City to levy an excise tax on cigarettes locally to prevent and reduce tobacco consumption.

DRAFT