

# TOBACCO RETAIL LICENSING



*Improving health outcomes with better business practices*

## Better Health

Tobacco retail licensing helps local governments manage the amount of tobacco selling retailers within their jurisdictions, cutting down smoking rates and improving health outcomes.

## Better Practices

With tobacco retail licensing, businesses that sell to minors can be properly dealt with by local governments, helping communities prevent bad actors from repeatedly breaking the law.

Limits on  
the distances  
between retailers  
could reduce store density by

**20%**

on the county level

Regulating tobacco sales at pharmacies or near schools could cut retail density by nearly

**30%**

on the county level

South Carolina has nearly

**7,000**

open tobacco  
retailers

Density policies  
can reduce on overall  
tobacco licenses by around

**8%**

in the first 10 months

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## Control where tobacco can be sold:

Tobacco retail licensing can be a powerful tool for local governments to control, tax and regulate the amount and location of tobacco selling establishments within their jurisdiction. By mandating businesses to possess a license to sell tobacco (like with alcohol), local governments would be more able to control and, if they so choose, limit overall tobacco sales. Furthermore, such a regulatory approach can allow local governments to prevent the sale of tobacco near sensitive areas like schools and prevent areas from becoming oversaturated with tobacco selling establishments, considerable risk factors in both youth and adult smoking.

## Control who can sell tobacco:

Aside from empowering local governments to regulate where tobacco can be sold, tobacco retail licensing also allows for more control over who can sell tobacco. The best example of this in practice in other states has been the recent efforts in getting tobacco products out of pharmacies. With licensing, local governments could prevent pharmacies, stores intended to improve the health of their clientele, from selling tobacco alongside health products. Such regulation could be used to prevent tobacco sales at any type of business ruled problematic or a public health risk by the local government.

## Keep businesses honest:

One of the most important elements of licensing is its ability to penalize businesses that violate state and federal law by selling tobacco products to minors. State law regarding sales to minors is rather anemic in its consequences, allowing bad actors to make repeated violations without any significant penalty. With licensing, penalties can be created to serve the needs of the local government, be that fines or revocation of the license. To ensure compliance with the license requirements, enforcement checks, funded by the licensing fees, would be needed to make sure everyone plays by the rules.

## Sources:

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- <https://countertobacco.org/policy/licensing-and-zoning/>
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- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25689540>
- <http://sanfranciscotobaccofreeproject.org/case-studies/reducing-tobacco-retail-density-in-san-francisco/>

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