

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Representative Vanessa Brown Lowery

DATE: February 19, 2013

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship Request – Increasing Penalties for Selling Tobacco to Minors

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation amending the Crimes Code to increase the penalty for individuals who sell or provide minors with tobacco products by reclassifying the offense as a misdemeanor of the third degree.

According to the Teen Help Organization, approximately 6,000 children under the age of 18 start smoking every day. With approximately 440,000 Americans dying each year from diseases related to smoking, the Teen Help Organization estimated that 6.4 million children will die prematurely from a smoking-related disease. In order to diminish the occurrence of these preventable deaths, we, as State lawmakers, must continue to penalize those individuals who provide our children with tobacco products.

As established in Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, an individual will commit an offense if he or she sells or furnishes tobacco products to minors, locates tobacco vending machines in an area accessible to minors, displays or offers cigarettes for sale out of a pack, or displays tobacco products in a manner that provides store patrons the ability to physically handle the products prior to purchase. My legislation will modify the penalties imposed on offenders by increasing the current grading classification from a summary offense to a misdemeanor of the third degree.

Please join me in ensuring that the children of this Commonwealth are not provided with an opportunity to start smoking, which so many individuals already fall victim to each year.