

2026 -- S 2860

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LC005853
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Introduced By: Senators Vargas, Urso, Murray, Lauria, Mack, DiMario, and DiPalma

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Purpose. To prevent tobacco-related diseases and diminish tobacco use, the
2 department of health shall implement a tobacco control program that incorporates evidence-based
3 best practices for tobacco prevention and cessation.

4 SECTION 2. Chapter 23-1 of the General Laws entitled "Department of Health" is hereby
5 amended by adding thereto the following section:

6 **23-1-59. Tobacco control program.**

7 (a) The department of health ("the department") shall conduct statewide surveillance of
8 tobacco-related behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and periodically evaluate the progress of the
9 department's tobacco control programs, in reducing tobacco use. Benchmark rates could include:
10 the adult smoking prevalence rate from the 2024 benchmark rate of nine and nine-tenths percent
11 (9.9%), youth tobacco use rate from the 2023 benchmark rate of seventeen and one-third percent
12 (17.3%) and youth e-cigarette rate of sixteen and one-half percent (16.5%).

13 (b) The department shall conduct an ongoing public awareness of tobacco related diseases
14 program, by developing an information campaign using a variety of media approaches. Any media
15 campaign funded under the tobacco control program shall stress the importance of both preventing
16 the initiation of tobacco use and quitting tobacco use and shall be based on professional market
17 research and surveys, necessary to determine the most effective method of diminishing tobacco use
18 among specified target population and/or demonstrated effectiveness campaigns used in other
19 states.

1 (c) The department shall award and administer grants for projects directed at preventing
2 and reducing the use of tobacco and tobacco-related diseases. The purpose of the grant program is
3 to conduct health education and promotion activities and tobacco cessation and enforcement
4 programs, designed to reduce the number of people beginning to use tobacco, continuing to use
5 tobacco, or developing tobacco related diseases. In awarding grants, the department shall select a
6 variety of projects and grantees, consider the current availability of similar services and the need
7 to target resources to programs serving populations at high risk of starting tobacco use or
8 developing tobacco related diseases.

9 (d) The department shall evaluate and assess efficacy for each component of the Rhode
10 Island tobacco control program. This evaluation shall be submitted annually to the general
11 assembly and the director of the department of health.

12 (e)(1) Commencing with fiscal years beginning on and after July 1, 2026, funding for
13 subsection (e)(2) of this section shall consist of an amount equal to the greater of:

14 (i) Five percent (5%) of the total revenues collected annually from chapter 20 of title 44
15 ("cigarette and other tobacco products tax") and chapter 20.2 of title 44 ("little cigar tax"); or

16 (ii) Three million two hundred thousand dollars (\$3,200,000), with an additional five
17 percent (5%) increase year-over-year to meet the Centers for Disease Control recommended
18 funding level for tobacco control and prevention in Rhode Island.

19 (2) The amounts referenced in this subsection shall be directed to the tobacco control
20 program at the department of health to fund tobacco control initiatives and implement evidence-
21 based programs for tobacco prevention and cessation and that align with the goals of preventing
22 youth initiation of tobacco usage, reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, and promoting
23 cessation. The funding shall be spent in accordance with evidence-based best practices for tobacco
24 prevention and cessation.

25 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T
RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1 This act would require the department of health to implement a tobacco control program
2 that incorporates evidence-based best practices for tobacco prevention and cessation to prevent
3 tobacco-related diseases and diminish tobacco use in the state.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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