



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Safeguarding Student Health

PATTY RITCHIE June 30, 2017



As a mother and a grandmother, I know how important it is to safeguard our children from harm and to deter them from picking up habits that could negatively affect their health. That's why I'm pleased to report that legislation that I sponsor that bans the use of electronic cigarettes—commonly known as e-cigarettes—on school property is now headed to the Governor's desk to be signed into law.

E-cigarettes are not permitted to be sold to minors and many districts have taken steps on their own to prohibit their use on school grounds. However, while tobacco use is banned on

school grounds, current law does not prohibit e-cigarettes—which are not regulated by the FDA and as such are not subject to tobacco law—on school property.

This important effort to protect student health was prompted in part by the advocacy of local students who are part of Reality Check, a group that aims to protect people from the dangers of tobacco. Reality Check works to help eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke, decrease youth tobacco use and protect young people from tobacco marketing. Recently, local Reality Check students from St. Lawrence County visited my office to share information on their work to stop the spread of tobacco, including organizing a cigarette butt cleanup event.

According to recent studies by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the usage of e-cigarettes has skyrocketed 800 percent among teens over the past six years. In addition, studies show that e-cigarettes are not less harmful than regular cigarettes and can actually lead people to start smoking cigarettes, making efforts like the legislation I sponsored even more important when it comes to protecting public health.

Moving forward, I am committed to building on efforts to protect children from the dangers of tobacco and keep them healthy. To stay up to date on my efforts, be sure to visit my website at [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).