

Recommendations for Policymakers

The TEROC Plan serves as a strategic plan for partners and allies in California but can also be used by policymakers when prioritizing a tobacco-related policy agenda. TEROC recognizes that change cannot happen without comprehensive policy efforts at the federal, state, and local levels. Therefore, TEROC has dedicated a section of the 2025–2026 Plan to policymakers as a call to action for critical policy efforts in California related to each of the eight Plan objectives. The following policy recommendations can be used to guide policy priorities that are necessary for ending the commercial tobacco epidemic in California.

Objective 1. Reduce Tobacco-Related Disparities

- Ensure that policy compliance efforts aimed at consumers emphasize education and social norm change, rather than fines and penalties, and that policy enforcement does not exacerbate social injustice.
- Reserve enforcement actions for upstream violators of laws restricting access to tobacco products, such as retailers who sell prohibited products or who sell to underage customers and advertisers who use illegal marketing tactics.

Objective 2. Build Capacity to End the Commercial Tobacco Epidemic

- Ensure that the tobacco prevention and cessation workforce reflects the communities it serves through organization-wide diversity initiatives and strategic succession planning to increase diversity and develop future leaders.
- Increase state funding for tobacco prevention to the level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; in 2024, California allocated only about 60% of the recommended amount.

Objective 3. Address the Evolving Tobacco Product Landscape

- Ensure that tobacco restrictions cover all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, and other combustibles; spit tobacco, snus, nicotine pouches, and other oral tobacco products; vape pens and other battery-operated devices that deliver nicotine or other vaporized liquids; products that can be used with either tobacco or cannabis, such as blunt wraps, hemp wraps, and rolling papers; and new and emerging products such as herbal vapes and heated tobacco products.
- As the California Attorney General develops a state-administered list of unflavored tobacco products allowed to be sold under SB 793, encourage local jurisdictions to adopt stronger ordinances by prohibiting the sale of all tobacco products, including those on the list.
- Strengthen enforcement of restrictions on tobacco and cannabis retailers to prevent illicit sales.

Objective 4. Protect Youth and Young Adults from Tobacco

- Increase the cost to purchase tobacco, such as by setting minimum prices and prohibiting discounts and giveaways of free product samples, as young people are more price-sensitive than older adults.
- Impose zoning restrictions on tobacco and cannabis retailers near schools and other youth-oriented facilities.

Objective 5. Promote Smokefree Environments

- Strengthen secondhand smoke laws to cover all indoor and outdoor workplaces, and outdoor public spaces, such as sidewalks and local parks.
- Avoid local ordinances that could undermine secondhand smoke laws and re-normalize tobacco product use in restaurants, bars, and other public indoor spaces by allowing cannabis and hookah lounges to serve food.
- Require disclosure of prior tobacco use in home sales, rental housing lease agreements, used car sales, and used car lease agreements, to protect new owners and tenants from thirdhand smoke.

Objective 6. Reduce Tobacco Product Waste

- To reduce tobacco product waste at the source, prohibit the sale of all tobacco products, if possible, or restrict the sale of those products that contribute the most to the problem of environmental pollution. These include tobacco products with single-use components like cigarette filters, single-use vape pods, and plastic cigarillo tips.
- Restrict the issuance of tobacco retailer licenses to reduce the density of retailers and the resulting accumulation of tobacco product waste, especially in the low-income communities most impacted by this problem.

Objective 7. Promote Tobacco Cessation

- Require managed care plans, especially Medi-Cal and other publicly funded plans, to provide, promote, and operationalize a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit including FDA-approved medications and behavioral counseling.
- Require all patient-care facilities to adopt tobacco-free policies, including mental health and substance use disorder treatment facilities.
- Encourage health systems and plans to implement tobacco cessation performance metrics requiring providers to screen all patients for tobacco use and provide appropriate cessation treatment.

Objective 8. Counter the Tobacco and Cannabis Industries

- Reduce the density of tobacco retailers operating in California by passing a statewide tobacco retailer density law and/or stronger local tobacco retailer density laws. These could include policies capping the number of retailer licenses available, restricting the proximity of retailers to schools and other youth-sensitive areas, limiting the types of retailers that are allowed to sell tobacco, and prohibiting certain types of retailers from selling tobacco, such as pharmacies and other health care-related businesses.
- Prohibit predatory marketing tactics, such as couponing and disproportionate advertising in low-income neighborhoods.
- Prohibit tobacco and cannabis industry representatives from participating in decision-making bodies governing public policy and the regulation of their products.