



Preserving Hookah Culture & Protecting Hookah Tradition across the USA

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The National Hookah Community Association (NHCA) brings together, and serves as the voice of, hookah producers, distributors, sellers, hookah lounge owners, consumers, and community members who support the preservation of hookah's cultural traditions. NHCA works with states and localities throughout the country to educate policymakers on hookah, its heritage, and its community.

We are writing to express our support for HB 5554 and HB 5555, both of which help protect the important social and cultural practice of hookah and hookah lounges.

Hookah is a small category in the tobacco space, making up only roughly 0.005% of nicotine product sales. However, hookah is an important cultural practice to many in Michigan and one that has existed for centuries, originating in the Middle East and India. Today, a broad cross-section of people from around the world enjoy hookah at home and in lounges as a centerpiece for cultural, business, and social gatherings. Hookah is widely used by Middle Eastern, Armenian, Turkish, East African, Indian, Persian, Indonesian, and other minority immigrant citizens. Hookah lounges serve as safe gathering places for many diverse ethnic and religious communities.

Shisha, the product used in hookah, is a combination of tobacco and a sugar substance such as honey or molasses, and the total product is only comprised of approximately 15% tobacco. As has been the practice for hundreds of years, hookah is, by nature, a flavored product. Hookah is legal in Michigan and throughout the U.S. As with all tobacco products, hookah is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration which reviews and issues marketing authorization or denial for tobacco products.

It is important to note that hookah is a unique product in the tobacco space and is unlikely to be obtained or consumed by youth. Hookah water pipes are expensive, several feet tall, not easily concealed, and the setup for use is a lengthy process involving the lighting of hot, slow burning coals. By restricting lounges that offer hookah to those 21 or older, HB 5555 will further prevent teens from accessing the product. Hookah is also not sold in convenience stores. You can only purchase it at ethnic grocers, specialty tobacco shops or lounges.

We ask that you vote yes on HB 5554 & 5555.

Christopher Hudgins  
President  
National Hookah Community Association